

DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR CHRISTLIKENESS USING JESUS'S  
SERMON ON THE MOUNT (MATTHEW 5-7)

by

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We hereby approve this Ministry Research Project

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entitled

Developing a Curriculum for Christlikeness from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount  
(Matthew 5-7)

As Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree

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## **ABSTRACT**

The researcher developed a “Curriculum for Christlikeness” for Keystone Nazarene Church, an English-speaking international congregation in Okinawa, Japan, using Dallas Willard’s approach to Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5–7 as a biblical foundation for congregant character development. The curriculum was developed as a way of fulfilling the church’s mission statement of “Making Christlike Disciples” and in response to the reality that Christians often do not obey the teachings of Jesus or reflect his character. The twenty-four-week “Curriculum for Christlikeness” consisted of three curricular venues: the corporate worship service, a weekly guided reflection journal, and discipleship groups for discussion and accountability. The researcher used a mixed method approach to evaluate if congregant growth occurred and if higher engagement in the various curricular venues brought about more growth than lower engagement. Research data showed that implementation of the Curriculum of Christlikeness at Keystone Nazarene Church played a part in congregant character development in Christlikeness. The data also showed that higher participation across the three curricular venues generally led to greater perceived growth than lower participation.

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## CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

When I became the pastor of Keystone Nazarene Church in 2010, God began to reveal behaviors and character traits that did not reflect him, despite very real encounters with Jesus throughout life.<sup>1</sup> I realized that as I continued to grow and deal with life, there were specific areas where my behaviors were continually inconsistent with the teachings and character of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> In my case, it was often not because I did not know what I should say or do, but that in the pressure of the moment I would react and not do it. Frequently, I tried but without success. I wanted to follow Jesus—indeed it was my vocation—but I was not consistently doing what Jesus said, and in certain situations, I was poised to respond contrary to my stated belief.<sup>3</sup>

As I began to interact with church members, I found that I was not alone. Many grew up in the church but in various areas of life seemed to be struggling against a worldview in which disobedience to Jesus's teachings seemed almost inevitable. For example, I once observed a very active person in the church, who had been a Christian for many years, in a fit of rage at a stoplight when someone was not turning quickly enough to suit him. He was ready to let anger fly when inconvenienced, which clearly does not conform to the attitude or teaching of Jesus. This is one example of a pervasive reality in my life and the lives of the people to whom I ministered. Two 2003 Gallup

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1. Hereafter referred to as Keystone.

2. See terms, below.

3. See terms, below.

polls also found that within the United States knowing Christian doctrine did not necessarily bring about life transformation seen in actions such as self-control.<sup>4</sup> I couldn't help but ask myself why professing Christians often continue in or justify wrongs. What are we missing?

### Statement of the Problem

The observed problem is followers of Jesus who do not consistently obey his instructions or reflect his character. Dallas Willard, in his book *The Divine Conspiracy*, addresses this problem and gives reasons for it. Willard blames articulations of the gospel that omit Jesus from the fundamental and routine non-religious aspects of life and thought that compose a large part of the human experience.<sup>5</sup> In these articulations, Jesus's invitation to eternal life is often reduced to a forgiveness useful for securing a future existence that does not encompass Christ's new manner of living available for the here and now.<sup>6</sup> In this understanding, calling oneself a Christian is not connected to knowing or following his teachings; people can be saved without the ongoing transformation of the human character towards Christlikeness.<sup>7</sup> The result of such a shallow teaching is easily seen in the current stream of moral failures being daily revealed among professing believers and leaders which destroys marriages, families, and churches.

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4. Gallup Inc, "How Are American Christians Living Their Faith?," *Gallup.Com*, last modified August 19, 2003, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/9088/How-American-Christians-Living-Their-Faith.aspx>. See also "Youth Ministries Teaching Behavior Modification, Not Gospel?," accessed September 23, 2020, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/youth-ministries-teaching-behavior-modification-not-gospel.html>.

5. See terms, below. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 5–6.

6. *Ibid.*, 35–42, 55–57.

7. See terms, below.

Willard concludes the sad result is that people often know this is not how things should be but come to the painful conclusion that this is the way things simply are. Christian life becomes split between sacred and secular and certain non-Christlike character issues are justified and remain unaddressed.

But Willard highlights that Jesus has given clear instructions for Kingdom living in his Sermon on the Mount—hereafter also referred to as the Sermon—in the gospel of Matthew.<sup>8</sup> For Willard, Jesus is the master of “every phase of reality: physical, moral, and spiritual. He always has the best information on everything and certainly also on the things that matter most in human life.”<sup>9</sup> In his Sermon Jesus helps to illuminate answers to the fundamental questions of living: “What is a good life?” and “How does one become a good person?”<sup>10</sup> Every person must answer these questions as a necessary part of human growth and meeting human needs. The conclusions to these questions shape one’s view of the world, actions, and character and have great impact for good or ill. In the Sermon, Willard sees Jesus laying out a comprehensive summary of God’s Kingdom life that meets the depth of human questions and needs.<sup>11</sup> Jesus invites people to become his apprentices, or disciples, in this manner of living which gives access to God’s

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8. Willard’s belief is that the Sermon in Matthew is a different one from the Sermon in Luke while many of the same topics are treated. Thus, this project focused on the Matthean Sermon as a distinct unit from the Lukan and did not seek to compare them. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 114–5. Willard cites Alfred Plummer’s commentary for a summary of exegetical positions on the relationship of these passages. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), 176.

9. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 95.

10. Willard’s treatment of the Sermon on the Mount is found in chapters 4–7 of *The Divine Conspiracy*, 97–270.

11. “Kingdom” is used to refer uniquely to God while “kingdom” is used to refer to those of humans or generically.

resources and power that guides human growth rightly and into its intended character and purposes.<sup>12</sup>

In *The Divine Conspiracy* Willard characterizes Jesus's approach in the Sermon as a progressive explanation of a comprehensive view of life in the Kingdom of the Heavens and which Jesus himself lived out and embodied (Matt 4:17).<sup>13</sup> The Sermon, and much of Matthew, is written in such a way as to be easily memorized and could be viewed as a catechism for believers.<sup>14</sup>

Jesus invites an individual to become his apprentice, learning how to base his or her life upon him through the way he explains in the Sermon. The Sermon begins by addressing the fundamental issues of how to experience the good life—receiving God's Kingdom presence as opposed to independently achieving some particular external condition— (Matt 5:1–16). Jesus goes on to lay out illustrations of the outcomes of independently seeking to achieve the good life through some external conditions—anger, lust and obsessive desires, a manipulative way of using words, the desire for revenge, and interacting with enemies (Matt 5:21–48)—and principles of how to respond with a Kingdom heart in God that goes beyond the mere external religious conformity (Matt

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12. See terms, below.

13. See terms, below. This is not unique to Willard but is also the view of the church father John Chrysostom who approached the Sermon as a progressive lesson in the growth in virtue, healing one's whole being: mind, body, and soul. John Chrysostom, *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 10, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.), 93, accessed February 28, 2019, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf110.iii.XV.html>.

14. Biblical scholar Donald Hagner notes that much of Matthew, and particularly the sermon, are written in a way to make it easy to memorize. While modern biblical scholarship and textual criticism puts emphasis upon the division of a passage, the early and medieval writers sought various creative ways in which to seek unity by which to direct understanding and action. Interestingly, in the survey given in *The Sermon on the Mount Through the Centuries*, Chrysostom, Hugh of St. Victor, Dante, and Chaucer share a similar view of the Sermon as a catechesis, not so much as things to memorize, but rather a journey of character transformation of the spirit, mind, and body. Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds., *The Sermon on the Mount Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 42, 83, 61, 78–9, 83, 107.



5:17–20) to the perfect heart of Kingdom love. Jesus moves from doing wrong, to doing right for right reasons, confronting issues like hypocrisy and the motivations behind our actions (Matt 6:1–18). He explores the ways in which Kingdom life reorders our values and alleviates our anxieties, in contrast to the values and response to anxieties available outside of the Kingdom (Matt 6:19–34), and he also discusses how to relate to people with whom one disagrees and right ways of navigating interpersonal relationships (Matt 7:1–12). This is a manner of living, Jesus says, that must be chosen but that can reliably provide security when weathering the storms of life (Matt 7:12–27).

Thus, the primary question this project sought to address is: How can the Sermon on the Mount be developed into a discipleship curriculum that would result in transformation in behavior and character of Keystone church congregants?<sup>15</sup> The results of the curriculum development and implementation were evaluated by three secondary questions: Did the congregation express perceived growth over the course of the curriculum based on survey responses? Did a more frequent degree of participation in the various curricular venues (worship service, reflection journal, and discipleship group) show a greater amount of perceived growth? Was there a correlation between demographic categories and perceived growth? The answer to these three secondary questions was designed to bring the overall answer for the main question.

The researcher's goal in implementing the curriculum was to track the transformation of character across four categories: familiarity with, understanding of, self-reflection on, and obedient practice of Jesus's teachings in the Sermon. The question about congregation perceived growth was assessed through four sub questions.

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15. See terms, below.

1. Will participants show a quantitative or qualitative perceived growth in familiarity with Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount?
2. Will participants show a quantitative or qualitative perceived growth in understanding of Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount?
3. Will participants show a quantitative or qualitative perceived growth in recognition of Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount in their lives or around them?
4. Will participants show a quantitative or qualitative perceived growth in behavior aligned with Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount?

### **Statement of Purpose**

Willard notes the popular management quote, "Your system is perfectly designed to yield the results you are getting."<sup>16</sup> As stated previously, religious observance and stated devotion do not imply that one will consistently obey Jesus's teachings. The researcher took people in his church through Willard's book on four occasions, and realized that for transformation to occur, content and theory must be combined with consistent practice.<sup>17</sup>

Changing behavior requires more than hearing a presentation and small-group conversation about a topic. Behaviors are the result of a constant layering of choices, experiences, and perspective, and they are often habitual, instinctual, cultural, and socialized. To confront these entrenched pathways with the perspective of God's

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16. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 58.

17. This was done twice in a small group setting and twice by preaching through the Sermon based on Willard's interpretation of it.

Kingdom made available through Jesus would necessitate a holistic spiritual formation that includes educational, psychological, behavioral, and spiritual tools designed to reform not just the spirit or mind, but the whole person.<sup>18</sup> Willard talks about behaviors as embodied practices, and the changing of behaviors as learning to replace certain embodied practices with new ones (Gal 3:12; Eph 3:24; Col 3:10).<sup>19</sup> James Estep says, “Curriculum is a means of transformation,” or to state it in another way, intentional transformation requires a curriculum or plan.<sup>20</sup> Willard himself noted at the end of his book the necessity of developing such a curriculum based on what has come before and offers some guides as to its construction.<sup>21</sup>

The development of such a curriculum was the essential last step of taking Willard’s understanding and approach to the Sermon on the Mount and guiding people into a consistent application for the purposes of becoming the kind of person the Sermon describes—which is precisely the kind of person Jesus himself was. The researcher hypothesized that congregants would be transformed in increasing Christlikeness as they engaged the four objectives of the curriculum: minds enthralled by a good, loving, and competent God experienced here and now in the Kingdom through the corporate worship service; increased understanding of Jesus’s explanation in the Sermon of the nature of life in that Kingdom; regular reflection upon their convictions, habits, and lives in light of

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18. See terms, below.

19. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 347, see also 105–6.

20. James R. Estep, “Supervising Tour Group Itineraries,” in *Mapping out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*, ed. James R. Estep, M. Roger White, and Karen L. Estep (Nashville: B&H Books, 2012), 234, Kindle.

21. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 315–23.

Jesus's instructions; and the embodied practice of obedience to the Kingdom manner of living that Jesus modeled.

This project aimed to develop a "Curriculum for Christlikeness" based on Willard's approach to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1–7:27. The goal of this curriculum was to enable a person to learn to live his or her life as if Jesus himself were living it. It would first help people know what Jesus said and then provide instructions for how to put what he said into practice until alignment with his teachings becomes a natural way of thinking and responding in everyday living.

At the end of the Sermon, Jesus says, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matt 7:24).<sup>22</sup> It would logically follow that the men and women who live in such a way are able to respond well to the storms and pressures that life inevitably brings. The resurrected Jesus makes such an obedience possible through the Spirit who empowers and guides his disciples into the abundance of the Kingdom life in relationships, in vocation, in community, and beyond.

This curriculum was developed for and implemented at Keystone Nazarene Church, in Okinawa, Japan. The Keystone community was ideal for testing the curriculum because the researcher serves as the pastor and has a long-term relationship with the congregation. This congregation is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational group in which the transferability of the curriculum could be observed. In addition, the community was aware and supportive of the research and is in agreement with its implementation.

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22. All Scripture citations are taken from the New International Version (2011) of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

Keystone is an English-speaking international congregation of approximately 100 people in Okinawa, Japan, and belongs to the Japan Nazarene District. The majority of attendees are American (~70%), while the rest represent the Philippines, Japan, and a few other nationalities. The church is primarily comprised of expatriate communities. While they are very diverse groups, what ties them together is the shared sub-cultural experience of living outside their native nation/culture.<sup>23</sup>

### **Significance of the Study**

Jesus's final command to his followers, his Great Commission, is to make disciples wherever one is and wherever one goes (Matt 28:19–20). The Sermon gives the greatest summary of the content of what that discipleship entails: the presence and power of the Kingdom of the Heavens guiding fundamental behaviors which result in Christlike/Kingdom living. Understanding and experience of this way of Jesus would be essential to fulfill the Great Commission to teach all nations to do what he has said. The mission statement of Keystone is making Christlike disciples in Okinawa.<sup>24</sup> This curriculum would help Keystone practically to fulfill its mission by teaching them to do what Jesus said to do (Matt 28:20).

While Keystone's mission is clear, it does not answer specifically the overarching and often unarticulated question of *how* to become a Christlike disciple.<sup>25</sup> One Japanese

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23. This would be true for non-Okinawan Japanese who have moved to Okinawa. Okinawan culture is very distinct from that of mainland Japan from differences of history, infrastructure, and language. Japanese mainlanders often remark that moving to Okinawa is like moving to a different country.

24. This is drawn from the Church of the Nazarene denominational mission statement of "Making Christlike Disciples in the Nations."

25. "Without a roadmap, an articulated recognizable curriculum, the education ministry lacks intentionality and creates bewildered wanderers rather than faithful pilgrims." James R. Estep, "Wherever

congregant told the researcher that he grew up hearing at church the “what” to do, but he was increasingly frustrated in light of his own struggles that the church did not explain “how” to go about it. This essential question would be addressed, however, by the development of a practical and contextually appropriate character formation curriculum that would guide people in a journey of Christlikeness in which one learns to practice the teachings of Jesus found in the Sermon. Often the lack of obedience stems not from a lack of desire but the lack of a clear method. Simply wanting to be better does not produce growth. While desire is a necessary first step, knowledge, training, method, and mentorship are also essential. Sermons and Bible studies alone, while essential, do not compose the holistic framework necessary for the consistent transformation of lives.<sup>26</sup> Richard Foster says, “We do not become godly by trying to become godly. We become godly as ‘holy habits’ such as love, joy and peace fill our character so that we do the right thing at the right time with the right motive, instinctively.... Without thinking about it.”<sup>27</sup> However, Willard presents Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount itself as the missing methodology needed to make that holistic framework effective in guiding disciples into Christlikeness.

One must first be a disciple, or apprentice, of Jesus in order to fulfill God’s instruction to make disciples effectively. As people grow in the knowledge of what Jesus said to do (the practice of doing it, and the character change that this brings about) one

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You Go, There You Are,” Estep, White, and Estep, eds., *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, 21, see also 63.

26. See terms, below. Willard argues that nature must be formed for obedience to occur. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 159.

27. Richard J. Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 155. This is a common principle in athletics, which is why coaches have specific drills for teams that may seemingly have nothing to do with the objectives of their sport, but which train the body to meet the demands required by the sport.

will grow in his or her capacity to make disciples. Like Jesus's own followers, who grew in their admiration of him as they applied his teachings in life and found the resources of the Kingdom made available through the Spirit, modern disciples will also experience good news as they pursue the same. They will join the work of God in sharing and applying this to others and as they do, they will also continue to grow in depth and mastery.

While this curriculum was developed specifically for Keystone, the researcher believes it has the potential to be helpful in a variety of other contexts. Biblical content is universal, and the methods of presentation utilized disciplines of the Christian life that have endured across time and culture. He also believes that the multi-cultural context of Keystone would provide a wider platform of experience and input to explore the implications of Kingdom life presented in the Sermon in a multitude of situations, nations, and settings.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The problem this project sought to address is the professing Christian's habitual misalignment with or misunderstanding of the heart-character and corresponding behavior illustrated by the teachings of Jesus. Dallas Willard argues that Jesus, in his Sermon, gives fundamental instruction on human flourishing through God's abundant Kingdom life here and now.

Educational design theorist Charles Reigeluth states, "The purpose of any design activity is to devise optimal means to achieve the desired ends."<sup>28</sup> Designing a curriculum

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28. Charles M. Reigeluth, ed., *Instructional-Design Theories and Models: A New Paradigm of Instructional Theory, Volume II* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999), 4.

to apply Jesus's teachings in the Sermon would help followers of Jesus learn to apply these principles in such a way that they become habitual and instinctual; in other words, part of their transformed character. Such a holistic curriculum required some guiding principles that clarify God's role, our role, and the realities of life in the application of Jesus's instructions.

After and in light of his discussion of the Sermon in *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard developed a triangular framework of spiritual growth that takes into account the role of the Holy Spirit, the realities of life, and the believer's intention to follow Jesus (figure 1).<sup>29</sup> The pinnacle of the triangle is the action of the Holy Spirit, illustrating His fundamental role in the whole process of spiritual formation. The lower two corners of the triangle focus upon a) life as it is experienced and lived—the events that happen to and around us, the temptations we are drawn to, and the tests thrust upon us—and b) the disciplines Scripture provides us that “engag[e] in ways of using the body differently, to disrupt and conquer habits of thought, feeling, and action that govern our lives as if we or someone other than God were God and as if his Kingdom were irrelevant or inaccessible to us.”<sup>30</sup> Each topic of the Sermon is approached, then, in light of this theoretical lens: a) in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, b) with a firm intention because Jesus has proclaimed this as possible to experience, and c) with a sober view of the realities within and around an individual that lead him or her to act in contrary ways.

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29. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 347–66.

30. *Ibid.*, 354.



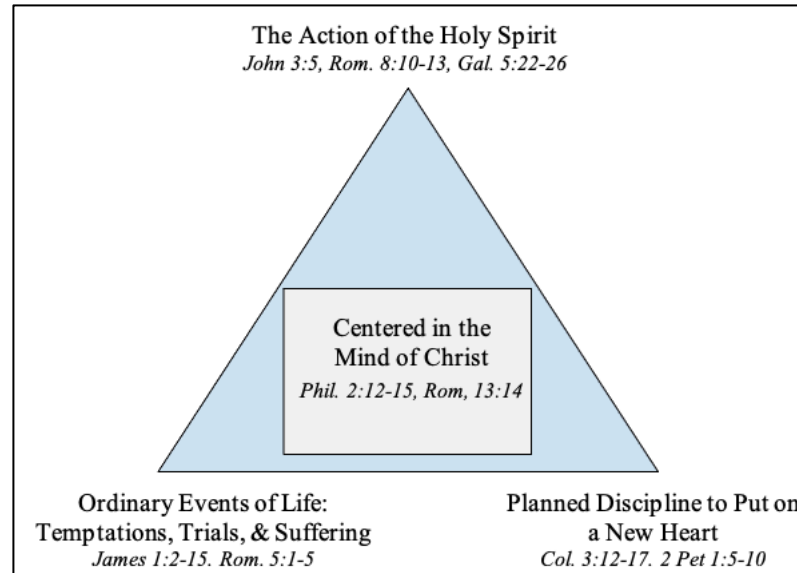


Figure 1. Willard's Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 347.

The researcher used this proposed framework, along with the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model of instructional design, and a backwards design methodology to guide the development of the curriculum.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This project established a specific curriculum based on Willard's approach to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, using his theoretical model of the "Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation", for Keystone Nazarene Church. It centered on the message of Jesus and the power of the Kingdom of the Heavens as made available through Jesus and the Spirit and progressed methodically and holistically through the specific teachings therein.

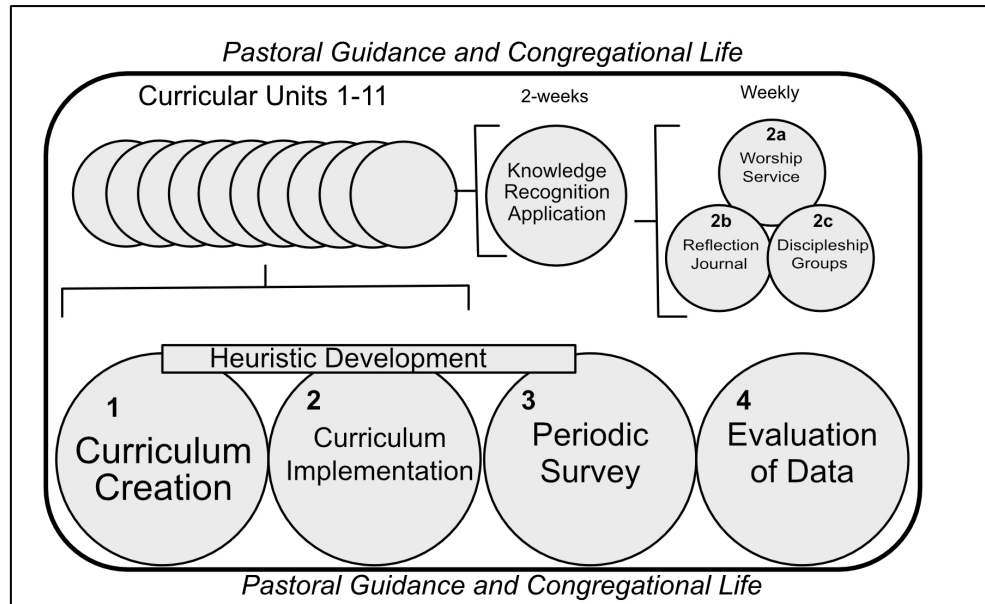


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

The Sermon on the Mount was divided into eleven two-week units (figure 2). Each unit used a cycle of a) knowledge, b) recognition, and c) application to foster a process of character formation/transformation. The first element of this cycle focused on ensuring people know what Jesus has said in each part of the Sermon, as well as what he means. The second element helped them to recognize how each issue Jesus addresses is present in the ordinary situations of their lives, the tests and temptations referenced in Willard's theoretical framework. The purpose of this step was to help congregants understand why they respond the way they do and to explore whether their underlying belief is built upon the Kingdom view of reality Jesus proclaims or on some other false view of reality. The third element encouraged people to engage in specific practices that help interrupt wrong habits and begin to form habits that align with Jesus's teaching of the reality and resources of the Kingdom.

The researcher created and implemented each unit individually. Each week of the unit consisted of three curricular venues: the Sunday worship service, a reflection journal,

and small groups. The Sunday sermon, which was about 30 minutes in length, was the primary method of presenting the necessary knowledge. Recognition and application occurred through specific practices during corporate worship, a voluntary daily reflection journal which took between twenty minutes and one hour, and a voluntary weekly small group discussion and accountability which lasted between an hour to an hour and a half.

Eight surveys were given periodically throughout the curriculum. The evaluation of survey and other data were primarily done at the end of the curriculum. The curriculum all occurred within the researcher's role as pastor of the Keystone Nazarene Church and the realities and needs of congregational life.

The researcher used participatory action research (PAR) in the design, implementation, and analysis of results of the Curriculum for Christlikeness.<sup>31</sup> Such a method was ideal as it focused upon the change of practice which Jesus emphasized as the point of his Sermon (Matt 7:25). Such practice, both in the ongoing development of the curriculum as well as the congregational application, was ongoing and cyclical. The focus of the curriculum fulfills the three primary goals of PAR: "to produce practical knowledge, to take action to make that knowledge available, and to be transformative both socially and for the individuals who take part."<sup>32</sup>

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31. The researcher tended more toward the action research approach of Karl Lewin than that of Paulo Freire, Mohammad Rahman, and Orlando Fals Bora. For a helpful breakdown of Participatory Action Research, its history, and ways in which it can be utilized in research, see Barbara Schneider, "Participatory Action Research, Mental Health Service User Research, and the Hearing (Our) Voices Projects," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 11, no. 2 (April 2012): 152–165. See also Kurt Lewin, "Action Research and Minority Problems," *Journal of Social Issues* 2, no. 4 (1946): 35.

32. Schneider, "Participatory Action Research, Mental Health Service User Research, and the Hearing (Our) Voices Projects," 153. See also Kurt Lewin, "Action Research and Minority Problems," *Journal of Social Issues* 2, no. 4 (1946): 35.

The researcher sought to involve participants in a consultation role in the curricular design. The curriculum itself was based upon Willard's "Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation" model shown above and worked out in the realities of congregants' own daily lives. Participants chose the degree to which they desired to participate in the research through personal reflection, small group discussions, and data-gathering.

Analysis centered on quantitative responses from participants on perceived improvement in four categories that compose character formation: familiarity, understanding, personal recognition, and behavior. These quantitative findings were triangulated with qualitative feedback given on the surveys and in various curricular settings such as small groups. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

Character formation is a process that one must actively engage and necessitates both desire and follow-through. This study was based on the basic assumption that change is possible as people willingly engage in the given practices, such as consistent Sunday attendance, completion of the daily reflection journal, and small group participation. It was also assumed that some of the various spiritual disciplines are both timeless and cross-cultural and would thus be meaningful as congregants contextualize them in their own unique lives and personalities. While it was expected that there would be varying levels of involvement in each practice, which were evaluated through surveys, the researcher assumed a sufficient amount of people would be consistent enough to be able to gather data.

Related to this, the researcher also assumed that participants would intentionally engage and respond to God through the material. This was essential for any real personal growth to occur, as is shown in the theoretical framework. The researcher also realized that a culture of passive religiosity could prevent significant engagement and would therefore need to be addressed.

The researcher assumed that participants were honest to the best of their abilities in the surveys about their participation and reflections upon perceived growth. While the triangulation of data occurred through qualitative requests for feedback, the research depended upon the willingness of congregants to fill out the surveys and give feedback. This study happened within the non-control group realities of congregational life and within the larger scope of the researcher's role as pastor of Keystone Nazarene Church.

As PAR, this project did not have control groups, isolate all possible variables, nor parse the reliability of self-reflection. The researcher did not seek to test the difference in growth of congregants participating in this curriculum versus growth in other series or church activities. Thus, the observations and conclusions do not have the same degree of scientific verifiability, but met all the standards of a Ministry Research Project.

Additionally, it was assumed that, despite being a highly transient congregation, Keystone would be able to move through the whole curriculum together. While absences are inevitable, large inconsistencies would greatly inhibit a momentum of practice required for change.

Finally, it was assumed that the content as it is presented was meaningful for a multicultural setting, with English being the language of presentation.<sup>33</sup> The person and teachings of Jesus, and the Scriptures as a whole, were assumed to speak to all times and cultures. To ensure that the presentation of Jesus's teachings in the Sermon were not limited to one particular culture's way of articulating or understanding them, the researcher sought to include writers and illustrations from the various represented cultures in the presentation of the curriculum. To date, the researcher has lived for extended periods in the United States, the Philippines, and Japan, the three largest cultural groups represented at Keystone.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Behavior.** The actions and practices of an individual that reveal what one believes.

**Belief.** A learned and chosen view of reality that is revealed and proved by one's actions.<sup>34</sup> Beliefs often are accepted passively and move into unconscious constructs that guide choices and behavior.

**Character.** The nature of a person, which is built by consistent choices based on belief and conviction. These choices lead to actions which, over time, settle into habits, automatic responses, and predispositions to situations.<sup>35</sup> Character is also revealed

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33. Keystone is an English-speaking congregation. Congregants, particularly those who do not speak English as a first language, choose to come to Keystone primarily because it is English-speaking. Congregants by-and-large are conversationally fluent in English to highly fluent.

34. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 348; Willard, "Definitions."

35. Willard, *Renovation*, 162; Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 5; Willard, "Definitions."

and developed by what one recognizes and repents of after thinking about his or her actions, and by what one does in response.<sup>36</sup>

**Christlike(ness).** The result of discipleship to Jesus, in which one experiences the reality of the goodness of God in the Kingdom of the Heavens as Jesus himself did, as evidenced by the increase of patterns of behavior and the corresponding character development that align with his teachings and example.

**Disciple or Apprentice.** A person who desires to be with and learn from Jesus, doing what he said, in order to become the kind of person that he himself was, acting in the same character and from the same loving perspective, power, and presence—drawn from the Kingdom—as he himself did.<sup>37</sup>

**Discipleship or Apprenticeship.** The process of learning from Jesus how to live one's life as though Jesus himself were living that life. The venue for discipleship is life as it is experienced here and now.<sup>38</sup>

**Grace.** The power of God that enables a person to do what he or she could not on his or her own (2 Tim 2:1). Grace is the relational connection that not only leads one to Christ but also enables him or her to grow in Christ, but which one must actively choose and respond to in order to access its effects.<sup>39</sup> Grace, like gasoline, is a potential source of power that must be accepted and put to use. Thus, grace

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36. Willard, *Renovation*, 144–5.

37. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 309. Dallas Willard, “Rethinking Evangelism,” accessed May 23, 2019, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/individual/rethinking-evangelism>.

38. Dallas Willard, “Definitions,” accessed March 20, 2020, <http://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/dwillard/Willard-Definitions.pdf>.

39. Dallas Willard, “Definitions.”

requires “an active agency in the psychological and biological reality of the disciple.”<sup>40</sup>

**Kingdom.** The range of a person’s will and sphere of physical and relational influence in which he or she is a free and autonomous being created in God’s image. This is necessary for mental and physical health and well-being; it can also be described as governance. “A realm uniquely our own, where our choice determines what happens.”<sup>41</sup> Individual kingdoms will join, or come into conflict, with those of others and will coalesce to form, as well as are deeply formed and shaped by, larger kingdoms of families, communities, and societies.<sup>42</sup>

**Kingdom of the Heavens (or Kingdom of God).** The arena here and now where what God wants is done which has been inaugurated in Jesus (already), and will be consummated at his return (not yet). This is the environment in which humans, created in his image, are intended to be in relationship and ever-increasing creative governance with him allowing their kingdoms to join his. The result of such alignment is rightly to be joined to the kingdoms of other people—and right relationship with creation itself—in love of and collaboration with God. As a God of love who has given humans choice, personality, and freedom, God allows kingdoms other than his to exist for a time.<sup>43</sup> Kingdom of the Heavens (plural) is the literal translation of the Greek term used throughout the Gospel of Matthew,

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40. Ibid.

41. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 21.

42. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 21–23. Willard’s definition of kingdom in light of individuals can be seen as idiosyncratic yet is grounded firmly in the Biblical text. N.T. Wright argues a similar view drawing extensively from Scripture. See N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010), chap. 3, Kindle.

43. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 21–30.



which Willard argues was written intentionally by Matthew to convey the nearness or imminence of God’s presence, activity, and reign.<sup>44</sup> Such a view is contrary to a Platonic or distant view of heaven as an alternative place, time, location easily implied by most biblical translations’ use of the singular.

**(Human) Self, Soul, Life.** The integration of the aspects that make up a person:

“Thoughts (images, concepts, judgments, inferences), feelings (sensation, emotion), choices (will, decision, character), body (action, interaction with the physical world), social context (person and structural relations to others).”<sup>45</sup>

**Spiritual formation.** General: The shaping of the human spirit—or will—which continually occurs for every individual as he or she responds to his or her environment.<sup>46</sup> In Jesus: The Spirit-guided process of growing in likeness of character and action to Jesus, by relating with God interactionally as Jesus did, using the practices Jesus himself applied to give shape to that relationship, and joining God’s desires through obedient action as Jesus himself did.<sup>47</sup>

**Spiritual disciplines.** The practices of body and mind, based primarily on the life of Jesus, that form the spirit by moving one into the grace and presence of God and

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44. The implied imminence as well as transcendence of Kingdom of (the) Heaven(s) unique to Matthew as opposed to the use of Kingdom of God by the other synoptic writers, is reinforced by the Judaic three-tiered heaven: air, stars, heaven of heavens. See “Heaven,” in Allan C. Meyers, ed., *The Eerdmans’ Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 472. Such a view puts an emphasis on the special “here” and temporal “already” without excluding the special “beyond” and temporal future “not yet” of God’s Kingdom.

45. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 30–38.

46. Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006), 53.

47. Willard, *Renovation*, 22, 31.

his Kingdom. Spiritual disciplines train human lives to receive God’s power and perspective as one does his will. “Spiritual disciplines are activities in our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort.”<sup>48</sup>

**Transformation.** The process by which one comes to encounter new or different ways of looking at reality. This is the first and essential element of transformation.<sup>49</sup> As one systematically puts his or her trust in that reality or belief through practices, his or her behavior will begin to align. Over time this will bring about new habits which settle into character.<sup>50</sup> The result is a change from what was into something of a different kind. In Christianity such transformation is initiated and done only by the power which comes to us through the grace of God, but requires human cooperation.

### Summary

The call of Jesus is for people to become his disciples, sharing his character and living with him within the fellowship of the Father and Spirit and the resources of the Kingdom of the Heavens as he himself did. This is accomplished by doing what he taught. However, it is easy for Christian practice to teach about Jesus but to struggle to help people become like him. As the master teacher, Jesus has given us the fundamental content and curricular sequence in his Sermon. This project attempted to take Jesus’s teaching, guided by the perspective of Dallas Willard’s approach in *The Divine Conspiracy*, to develop a “Curriculum for Christlikeness” designed to help the people of

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48. Willard, *The Great Omission*, 52.

49. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 321–46.

50. For more, see Willard, *Renovation*, 41–2.

Keystone Nazarene Church learn and do what Jesus taught in such a way that their lives increasingly reflected his character, power, and purposes.

The following chapter will review literature covering the four main areas of this project. First, it will introduce Dallas Willard and particularly his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, in which he gives his understanding of the Sermon on the Mount and its implications. Second, it will compare Willard's theology and practical suggestions to that of John Wesley. Third, it will review Willard's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount in light of other interpretations. And finally, it will address curricular considerations of how Willard's teaching might be formed as a curriculum.

## CHAPTER 2: PRECEDENTS IN LITERATURE

The purpose of this project was to develop a “Curriculum for Christlikeness” to establish a biblical framework for character development based on Dallas Willard’s view of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 4:17–7:29. This was to address the problem of followers of Jesus who do not consistently obey his instructions or reflect his character. This curriculum was implemented in the Sunday corporate worship service at Keystone Nazarene Church in Okinawa, Japan.

This chapter will first introduce Dallas Willard and his work, *The Divine Conspiracy*. In this book, Willard lays out his argument that apprenticeship to Jesus is the scriptural view of salvation, and the remedy from the anemic Christianity revealed by many believers’ character and actions. As Keystone Nazarene Church is a church in the Wesleyan tradition, the chapter will secondly compare Willard’s understanding of and approach to spiritual formation to that of John Wesley. The third section will summarize Willard’s interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount from *The Divine Conspiracy* and compare it to interpretations by Wesley and other scholars and practitioners. A fourth and final section of this chapter will explore three curricular considerations to Willard’s challenge of creating a curriculum for Christlikeness based on the Sermon on the Mount from *The Divine Conspiracy*. The fourth section will be broken into three parts. Part one discusses the Sermon on the Mount within the larger context of curriculum theory and design. Part two evaluates two book-study curricula already in existence. Part three looks at the development of a curriculum centered in the corporate worship service.

### **An Introduction to Dallas Willard**

Dallas Willard wrote extensively on the hopefulness of the spiritual life which brings the teachings of Jesus into clearer understanding, leading Christians into consistent and joyful obedience. Willard was born in 1935 and raised in rural Missouri. He was a devout believer committed to understanding, and subsequently teaching, how the teachings of Jesus spoke directly to the fundamental questions of life that philosophers and societies have wrestled with for millennia. He was an ordained Southern Baptist minister and considered pastoral ministry, but after earning a B.A. in Psychology, Philosophy, and Religion and a Ph.D. in Philosophy with a minor in the history of science, he became a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California, chairing the department from 1982–85.<sup>1</sup>

Willard was passionate about applying a multidisciplinary synthesis of philosophy, theology, psychology, and science to the exploration of how Jesus and his teachings were God’s essential revelation to the core issues of human life and existence.<sup>2</sup> Willard’s pragmatism is unique in that he brought a keen, philosophically trained mind to the holistic interplay of biblical interpretation, theology, and human psychology. He also applied his multi-disciplinary approach to the task of spiritual formation, being active in the Renovare movement, founded by Richard Foster. Additionally, he was the author of numerous books and articles, most notably *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, Christianity Today’s book of the year for 1999, and *Renovation of*

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1. For a biography of Willard’s life and thought see Gary W. Moon, *Becoming Dallas Willard: The Formation of a Philosopher, Teacher, and Christ Follower* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018).

2. His interest in the interplay of knowledge and words with reality led him to do his doctoral dissertation on the work of philosophical realism of Edmond Husserl.

*the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, which also won numerous awards. Willard also wrote *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*, and *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*.<sup>3</sup> Willard described *Hearing God*, *Renovation of the Heart*, and *The Divine Conspiracy* as a “a trilogy on the spiritual life.”<sup>4</sup> Steve Porter, in his article “The Willardian Corpus,” argues that Willard’s later works continue to develop his view of spiritual formation. Porter adds to Willard’s trilogy, *Renovation of the Heart* and *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge*, asserting that these five form a “comprehensive account of spiritual growth in Christ” that emphasizes rigorous and robust holiness in applied theology.<sup>5</sup>

Willard’s thesis in his works is that following Christ is a choice of trust through obedience to his teachings into his own manner of life which results in Christlike spiritual formation. Routine disobedience to Jesus, highlighted in chapter 1 of this paper, is a reflection of an anemic spiritual formation in Christlikeness. It is for this reason that Willard views the Sermon on the Mount as central, and to which he turns his attention in *The Divine Conspiracy*. He begins this work outlining some critical contextual issues which must be understood in order to rightly understand the Sermon. Maturation into Christlikeness is revealed in knowledge of Jesus’s teachings, obedience to those teachings, and a progressive conformity to Christ’s character. The main issue Willard addresses comes from his observation of professing Christians’ stated belief in Jesus, yet

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3. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2009), Kindle.

4. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, xvii. The three which Willard refer to are Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*, updated and expanded edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012); Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*; Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*.

5. Dallas Willard, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), Kindle;.Steven L. Porter, “The Willardian Corpus,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 3, no. 2 (2010): 240–1.

their difference of character compared to Jesus, revealed in the scarcity of obedience to his teachings. This gap comes from a misunderstanding of what it means to have a relationship with God in Jesus, the methods by which that relationship is fostered, and a clear vision of what such a changed life would look like. Without right vision of what Jesus invites people to become, Christian faith becomes disconnected from Jesus and the life-giving instructions, understanding, and power he brings through God's Kingdom. This disconnection, even if religiosity is maintained, causes life to deteriorate, as people attempt to deal with sin and its effects with merely human resources.<sup>6</sup> What is missing, in Willard's view, is the central principle of apprenticeship to Jesus in which "I am learning from Jesus how to lead *my* life, my *whole* life, my real life," as Jesus himself lived with his Father.<sup>7</sup> Such a practical view is taken by the early church father John Chrysostom.<sup>8</sup> Willard notes how people often hear about Jesus, but his manner of life is understood as inaccessible to how such individuals could experience life. Willard's overarching goal throughout his writings is that through submitting oneself to loving discipleship—or apprenticeship—to Jesus within God's joyous and sufficient Kingdom, people increase in understanding, competence, and power of life, purpose, choices, and direction. Such apprenticeship, learning from Jesus how to respond to life as he would, helps people grow to fulfill God's purposes from the beginning: reigning over the earth and caring for

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6. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 35–59.

7. *Ibid.*, 283.

8. The early church father John Chrysostom viewed the Sermon on the Mount as a guide to the healing of the soul and growth in virtue which forms a people and society. Scholar Margaret Mitchell notes, "For John this *politeia* is a comprehensive vision of human life and society that has utterly vanquished every other option... both [as] a system of thought and a characteristic set of practices constituting a *bios*." Margaret M. Mitchell, "John Chrysostom," in *The Sermon on the Mount Through the Centuries*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 28, 31.

it in love and obedience to God (Gen 1:26; Rev 22:5) both here and now as well as in the new heavens and earth.<sup>9</sup>

Willard writes that Jesus's teaching in the Sermon deals directly and comprehensively with the fundamental questions of human life which all major philosophies and religions seek to address: What is real? Who has the good life?<sup>10</sup> Who is a good person? How does one become a good person? Jesus, God the Son, gives clear and practical answers to these most practical of issues. What is real? God and his Kingdom (Matt 4:17; cf. Exod 3:14; John 17:33). Who has the good—or blessed—life?<sup>11</sup> Anyone living and engaging in God's Kingdom (Matt 4:17–5:16). Who is a good person? Anyone permeated with God's love who responds in wholehearted love to him and loves one's neighbor by genuinely seeking his or her good (Matt 5:17–7:12; cf. John 4:9–11; Deut 6:4–5). How does one become a good person? By placing confidence in Jesus and becoming his apprentice in Kingdom life (Matt 7:13–27).<sup>12</sup>

Through the Sermon Jesus synthesizes the relational nature of interacting with God, the nature of the embodied human spirit and personality, and the role of human actions in engaging the necessary resources God has provided for Kingdom living. Jesus, the master of living, invites his apprentices to a different manner of living, outlined in the

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9. "Stated in other words, the intention of God is that we should each become the kind of person whom [God] can set free in his universe, empowered to do what we want to do. Just as we desire and intend this, so far as possible, for our own children and others we love, so God desires and intends it for his children. But character, the inner directedness of the self, must develop to the point where that is possible." Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 379.

10. Willard defines the good life as "What is generally in my interest, and how I may enter true well-being." *Ibid.*, 97. This more immediate self-centered view can also be expanded to what is generally good and in the interest of others, communities, and nations as well.

11. See p.44 footnote 79 for an alternate translation of "blessed" as "honored."

12. Willard, *Knowing Christ Today*, chap. 2. Cf. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 207, 215.



Sermon and illustrated in his own life, that is based on knowledge of the Kingdom and its resources. Willard sees Jesus's Sermon as a single, comprehensive strategy for living within God's wisdom and resources available to citizens of his Kingdom, which begins here and now and continues after death. In Jesus, people encounter God and discover both his actions for them and his teaching about what is true in life.<sup>13</sup> The book's title is a playful way of asserting how God's Kingdom involves the kinds of people illustrated in the Sermon through which God will overcome evil with good (cf. Rom 12:21).<sup>14</sup>

Willard's holistic approach, deep conceptual thinking, profound scriptural understanding, and constant emphasis on practical implications provides him a good perspective both to diagnose the reasons why followers of Jesus do not consistently obey his instructions or reflect his character and to suggest a remedy for this problem. Willard is not alone in such a view, but in many ways in the researcher's view is recontextualizing John Wesley's methodology for a modern audience.

### **The Spiritual Formation Methodologies of Willard and Wesley**

Like Willard, John Wesley saw the need for a clear understanding of Christian religion that led one, through specific practices, into a trusting and consistent obedience to Jesus. Since Keystone is a Church of the Nazarene from the Wesleyan tradition, it is both informative and helpful to compare Willard's approach to spiritual formation with that of John Wesley as Wesley's method was effective in helping people be spiritually formed into Christlikeness. While Willard did not belong to a denomination in the

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13. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 131–39.

14. *Ibid.*, 90.

Wesleyan tradition, he draws from the best of Wesley both in outlook and practical methodology.<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to note that like Wesley, Willard speaks to an audience where the church has held historical sway but in which profession of faith in Jesus and church attendance did not imply a vital and growing Christlikeness seen in one's habitual attitudes, outlook, and behavior.<sup>16</sup> Willard draws precisely from Wesley's *practical* theology, citing Wesley in almost every book he wrote. Wesley's theology, like Willard's, was shaped by a great optimistic vision of life with and in God.<sup>17</sup> They share a similar intention that salvation and life with God is not disconnected from daily living, but rather the very means of an eternal and Godly life.<sup>18</sup> Finally, both Willard and Wesley share a similar emphasis on the necessity of a specific method by which to act, practice, and grow in this new life.<sup>19</sup>

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15. Ibid., 370.

16. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 145. See also John A. Murdock, "Recovering a Willardian Wesleyanism," *Seedbed*, 2014, accessed August 26, 2020, <https://www.seedbed.com/recovering-willardian-wesleyanism/>.

17. Charles Spurgeon, "The Everlasting Arms," *The Spurgeon Center*, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-everlasting-arms/>. John Wesley, "Justification by Faith," in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 5, Sermon V (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1986), 54. Particularly I.1. cited in Katherine Simmons Conolly, "A Wesleyan Understanding of Grace As Responsible and Therapeutic: A Path to Transformational Spirituality" (George Fox University, 2002), 43–4, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1337&context=dmin>. See also Gordon Rupp, *Principalities and Powers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1952), 90. Cited in Henry Knight III, "The Heart of Wesley's Theology," n.d., accessed November 19, 2020, <https://www.catalystresources.org/consider-wesley-57/>. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 64.

18. John Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," 3rd ed., vol. 6, *The Works of John Wesley* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978). Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, xvii, 42–3.

19. D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Wilmore, KY: Evangel Publishing House, 2016), Introduction, Kindle. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Foreword.

Willard and Wesley share a similar foundation of understanding of the nature of salvation for present living, the role of the body in learning to do what Jesus did in order to fulfill his invitation to become like he himself was, and the need for practices to make this process concrete. What unites these two men is the way in which they understand theology as necessarily practical. This is highlighted in their treatment of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.

### **A Contextual Analysis of Willard's Interpretation of The Sermon on the Mount**

For followers of Jesus to "do all that [he] has commanded [them]" (Matt 28:20) and to gain a picture of the character of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is one of the longest sections of Jesus's specific instructions. These teachings also illustrate Jesus's own manner of living. In order to develop a curriculum based on Willard's view of and approach to the Sermon on the Mount, it will be helpful to place his interpretation in a larger context of interpretative tradition, both related specifically to the Nazarene tradition and to a broader scholarship.

One's approach to and understanding of the Sermon on the Mount will be shaped by some key interpretive questions. First, is the Sermon unified or a random collection of ethical teaching? Second, is it meant as present instruction or a future description of life? And third, if it is possible, is it for only a select few or everyone?

First, is the Sermon a unit or a random collection of sayings? Willard, like Wesley, understands the Sermon on the Mount as "a concise statement of Jesus's teachings on how to actually live in the reality of God's present Kingdom available to us from the very space surrounding our bodies," recognizing its coherence, order, and

comprehensiveness.<sup>20</sup> He comments that scholars' perplexity to understand the order of the Sermon reveals that they do not see a central purpose which would guide its meaning.<sup>21</sup> As Alfred North Whitehead points out in another context, "The result of teaching small parts of a large number of subjects is the passive reception of disconnected ideas, not illuminated with any spark of vitality."<sup>22</sup>

Instead, Willard argues, in line with Chrysostom and Wesley, that there is a profound unity and a logical flow in Jesus's Sermon. The Sermon must be read in light of Matthew 4, how the Kingdom presence of God sustained Jesus through his temptation and then through Jesus met the deep needs and overcame the sicknesses and diseases of the people who came to him.<sup>23</sup> The Sermon begins with Jesus emphasizing that the Kingdom brings about the good life, in spite of one's circumstances (Matt 5:1–16). According to Willard, Jesus goes on to clarify that this good life—defined as righteousness—is not brought about by religiosity, but rather by learning to see and respond to people and situations with Kingdom love, which will require unlearning

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20. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 97, 99. Wesley writes of the Sermon on the Mount, "[Jesus] is teaching us the true way to life everlasting" where "every subsequent part illustrating those that precede." The Sermon is unique and summative in Scripture because "never, besides here, does [it] give, of set purpose, a general view of the whole." John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 5 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1986), 248–51.

21. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 132–3. Willard quotes Clarence Bauman whose study of the various different and antithetical views of the Sermon led him to conclude that the Sermon was "an enigma to the modern conscience." *The Sermon on the Mount: The Modern Quest for Its Meaning* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), ix, 3. John Nolland notes, "While scholars broadly agree that the Sermon... is a highly structured piece, and the parts of the structuring are immediately evident, there is no clear consensus about the details of the structure." *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 196. Donald Hagner characterizes the Sermon as a compilation by the evangelist of various teachings of Jesus. He goes on to say, "To a considerable extent, the Sermon consists of an arbitrary gathering of ethical materials available to the evangelist." *Matthew 1–13*, ed. Ralph Martin, vol. 33a, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Nelson, 2008), 83–4.

22. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education & Other Essays* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1929), 14, accessed October 9, 2020, <http://archive.org/details/aimsofeducationo00whitrich>.

23. A point also noted by Douglas Hare. *Matthew*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 27.

certain wrong attitudes and behaviors (Matt 5:17–48). Jesus next deals with the issue of not doing good to be seen by others, but rather out of one’s treasuring of God (6:1–24). The result of such a treasuring is that one not only finds a way out of wrong actions, but one also finds freedom from worry, which is a result of the belief that one must secure one’s own life (6:25–34). The awareness of God’s Kingdom presence and resources helps one to treat others differently, learning to ask instead of seeking to judgmentally coerce (7:1–12). Jesus ends by stating that as one begins to put his words into practice, he or she will discover a stability and strength to life that will safely keep him or her even through great storms (7:13–27). For Willard, the Sermon is a guide into Christlike Kingdom living as well as an illustration of an entirely different kind of life, which Jesus himself lived, empowered by the Kingdom presence and power of a loving and near Father.

A second question is whether the Sermon is meant to function as present instruction or as a future description of life. Views of the good news of the Sermon tend to either emphasize that it is for the eschatological future—or “not yet”—or that it is intended for the immanent present—or “already.” Willard, like Asian commentators Samson Uytanlet and Kiem-Kiok Kwa, sees Matthew 4:17–25 as the specific context in which interpretation of the Sermon as a whole must be interpreted, placing the primary emphasis upon the “already” presence and availability of God in Jesus.<sup>24</sup> Willard bases his view in part on the use of the plural *ouranōn* (heavens) in 4:17 arguing that this use is intentional, implying the immanence of God in his Kingdom.<sup>25</sup> He notes how “the

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24. Samson Uytanlet and Kiem-Kiok Kwa, *Matthew: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary*, Asia Bible Commentary (Langham Global Library, 2017), 49–51.

25. Heavens is plural in Matt 4:17; 5:3, 10, 12, 16, 19, 20, 45, 48; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21. Heaven is used in the singular in 5:16, 18, 34; 6:10, 14, 20, 26, 32. Willard cites John McClintock and James Strong, “Heaven,” *McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia Online*, accessed September 4, 2020, <https://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/H/heaven.html>.

heavens” is often used in Scripture to describe one’s immediate environment, and God’s presence in it, as close as the air surrounding them (Gen 21:17; 22:11; Acts 11:6). For Willard, the mistranslated singular “heaven,” and its current cultural understanding, presents heaven as far away and for another time—after death—and easily shifts one’s understanding of the Sermon to an idea of God’s presence and resources as distant. The result of such a view is that Jesus’s words in the Sermon would be impossible, impractical, or for a future time leaving one to deal with life on one’s own.<sup>26</sup>

The third interpretive question which shapes one’s view of the Sermon is the audience to which Jesus speaks. Is it for only a select few or everyone? Some scholars, like Hagner and France, see Jesus’s movement up the mountain as a drawing out of those he has called and/or those who will follow from the crowds in order to teach them.<sup>27</sup> Similarly Bonhoeffer and Chrysostom view “disciples” as anyone who has chosen to exclusively follow of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> It could be easy to imply that somehow this first message of Jesus is for some—the disciples—but not others—the crowd. According to Willard and Wesley, Jesus speaks to everyone who wanted to hear and to learn from him. Indeed,

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26. For an example see Shusaku Endo, *A Life of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 11. Willard argues, and perhaps Endo hints at in his final questions, that Jesus is proclaiming good news that is immediately accessible and available though in ways that might not match human expectations. While Willard makes a strong argument, Chrysostom is one example of an early church father whose singular translation of “heaven” still carried the idea of the imminence of God. Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 10:131.

27. Hagner sees Jesus as “escaping the crowds who pressed upon him to be healed” for “a special time of teaching for his disciples, who “came to him.” Hagner’s doctoral student Darin Land does not believe Hagner implied the Sermon was for a select few. My point here is to highlight how readers or hearers may perhaps misunderstand the setting and visualize a perceived audience, thereby projecting a somewhat exclusionary mindset toward the present. *Matthew 1–13*, 33a:86. R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 152, 55–6.

28. Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 10:169–70; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 2012), 104–5, Kindle.

we see this fact by the way the crowd responds at the end of the Sermon (Matt 7:28).<sup>29</sup>

Willard and Wesley also base their argument on the fact that in Matthew 4:18–25 Jesus has graciously called, invited, and extended the healing and restoring benefits of the Kingdom to anyone who simply came to him. Thus, for Willard, the Sermon is a proclamation of good news to all who will hear it and put it into practice.

The way one answers the previous three questions will shape one's interpretation of the Sermon as a whole, and this affects how one approaches Jesus's opening words in the Sermon in the Beatitudes (Matt 5:1–12). Interpretations of the Beatitudes will tend to fall between two poles: what humans must do and what God has done. Wesley, Chrysostom, and Sinclair Ferguson tend toward the former, seeing in the Beatitudes Jesus illustrating a progression of virtues to enact.<sup>30</sup> Willard, takes the latter approach. Drawing from Alfred Edersheim, Willard argues that Jesus, in his usual show-and-tell method of teaching, presents the Beatitudes not as prescriptions of what one must become but rather as illustrations, drawn from specific people in the crowd which Jesus has just been healing and with whom he has just been interacting, of what *God* has done *in spite of* their present condition.<sup>31</sup> When people simply admitted their need and came to Jesus, the Kingdom—not their moral, ethical, or religious achievement—gave their lives both good

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29. "Having ministered to the needs of the people crowding around him, he desired to teach them and moved to a higher position in the landscape...where they could see and hear him well. But he does not, as is so often suggested, withdraw from the crowd to give an esoteric discourse of sublime irrelevance to the crying need of those pressing upon him. Rather, in the *midst* of this mass of raw humanity, and with them hanging on every word—note that it is they who respond at the end of the discourse—Jesus teaches his students or apprentices, along with all who hear, about the meaning of the availability of the heavens." Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 100. See also, Wesley, *Works*, 5:249.

30. Wesley, *Works*, 5:251–2. Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 10:172. Sinclair Ferguson, *Kingdom Life in a Fallen World: Living out the Sermon on the Mount* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987), 29–30.

31. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.), 529, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/e/edersheim/lifetimes/cache/lifetimes.pdf>.

flavor and radiance (Matt 5:13–16). The Kingdom, as people simply receive it, is what restores their honor and removes their shame. Such individuals are freed to live in this truth and respond to it, even though their external situation may not have changed and others may still view them in terms of shame.<sup>32</sup> Willard explains that Jesus is illustrating to the people in the crowd that what is most real is not their situation but God and his Kingdom, that God does not simply promise good in the future but brings that very good into their present and often painful realities (Matt 4:17; cf. Exod 3:14; John 17:33).

Willard argues that human beings are seeking the good life—that which “is genuinely in [one’s] interest, and how [he or she may] enter true well-being”<sup>33</sup>—though this is defined differently and sought in different ways. Based upon the Beatitudes, Jesus is showing that the good life—Jesus’s beatitude pronouncements of blessed—is available to anyone living and engaging in God’s Kingdom, *even in the midst of painful circumstances* (Matt 4:17–5:16). Thus, Jesus is not simply speaking religiously but is

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32. K.C. Hanson argues that *makarios* would more appropriately be translated as “honored.” Such an interpretation provides a helpful way of looking at Willard’s approach to the Beatitudes. “How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew’s Makarisms and Reproaches,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 81–112. Willard looks at “blessed” as the “good life” that human beings are created to seek, and which can only be found in God and his Kingdom community. A more western view of this idea would perhaps understand this more individually in terms of possessions, or a condition such as health or self-esteem. Hanson’s view of honorable carries with it a more eastern view of community, acceptance by the community, and rightness in the eyes of the community. This is not an either/or but a both/and of human flourishing. The God who provides food and clothing to individuals (Matt 6:25–34) is the same who rewards what is done in secret and instructs to do good not for others’ honor but his (Matt 6:1–24). This honor in the Beatitudes is bestowed by God through Jesus, but also is upheld by the very crowd to whom the Beatitudes are a show-and-tell of what God has done. As Jesus announces each individual as “blessed” or “how honorable” the others agree, “Yes! Look what God has done!” There seems to be a tie between the *Makarismos* which leads to *doxology* to God (Matt 5:16, see also Jas 5:11). It is like when Jesus restored the dignity and honor to the woman at the well in a community where she lived in shame. The woman found a place of honor in that very community as they came to know and encounter Jesus (John 4:39, 42). In Jesus people experience the Kingdom which restores a dignity and honor, which then in turn uses them as a blessing like salt and light which others honor, “see[ing their] good deeds and glorify[ing their] Father in heaven” (Matt 5:13–16, see also Psalm 126:2).

33. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 97.



integrating the deepest truth of physical reality in a God-created and God-inhabited cosmos to what is often viewed as simply religious teaching.<sup>34</sup>

Such a view redefines human situations. God is not distant, giving unachievable commands centered on guilt or shame that do not deal with or take into account the difficult questions and realities one is facing.<sup>35</sup> Rather, God meets humans in Jesus to teach them precisely how to live in the midst of those realities in the life he has given. This does not disregard God's specific instructions but redefines how they are understood and approached (Matt 5:17–20).

Thus, the rest of the Sermon is Jesus's instructions of how to become "righteous"—a good person—with and in God's Kingdom (Matt 5:21–7:48). This is what Wesley calls "inward religion."<sup>36</sup> Willard challenges the often unconscious or unspoken assumption that to experience a good life one must unfortunately do wrong, as can be seen in the fact that most often people know when they are doing wrong.<sup>37</sup> This is Jesus's precise critique of the scribes and Pharisees, and the point of Jesus's teaching in Matt 5:44–45. But what is the connective logic, or the larger theory which ties together this section beginning with anger and ending with being perfect as our heavenly Father is

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34. *Ibid.*, 85.

35. *Ibid.*, 98–9. It is also important to note that such views may not be the intent of the interpreter but rather the wrong conclusion of the reader. Willard's emphasis is on God's initiation, to which humans then are free to respond. It is the view of this interpreter that Wesley's view of the Beatitudes is done from a similar heart as Willard's; but, while Willard focuses on God's primary action, Wesley approaches the Beatitudes as one writing to believers who have experienced God and who are now experiencing a deepening in their trusting response to God seen in specific traits of character that might leave them vulnerable to difficulty in the future.

36. Wesley, *Works*, 5:328.

37. Willard writes, "[Jesus] knows that people deeply hunger to be good but cannot find their way. No one wishes to do evil for its own sake, we just find it unfortunately 'necessary.' We want to be good but are ready to do evil, and we come prepared with lengthy justifications." *Divine Conspiracy*, 145.

perfect (Matt 5:48)? Wesley sees the connective logic as love: “The love of God as our Father and the love of all men [and women] for his sake.”<sup>38</sup> For Willard,

Having illustrated concretely, in situations of grimy realism (Matt 5:20–44), what it is like to be a really good person—one who has found the [K]ingdom and is living in its ways—Jesus then proceeds to give his overall picture of moral fulfillment and beauty in the [K]ingdom of the [H]eavens. It is one of heartfelt love toward all. . . . This love does not consist of acts and projects but is a pervasive condition in which we habitually reside. It is a love of the same quality as God’s love (Matt 5:45–48).<sup>39</sup>

Numerous commentators affirm that the Sermon is fundamentally good news, hopeful and positive.<sup>40</sup> At this point, what separates Willard from other commentators is his emphasis that Jesus is not simply giving expectations, or demands, but rather illustrations of the response of a Kingdom heart, which can be experimentally tried and applied in similar situations.<sup>41</sup> The difference of Willard at this point highlights the earlier interpretive step which tends to focus either on what one needs to do versus what God has done. Views which interpret these and later statements as prescriptions of attitude or behavior result in the Sermon being understood as a compiling of unstated “must” and “should” and set a tone, probably unintended, that can easily weary the reader or hearer to the point of dismissal of Jesus’s message as simply not possible. Willard’s approach to the Beatitudes as what God has done in the Kingdom, and clarification of the illustrative nature of the teachings of Kingdom life in Matthew 5:21–48 which can be experimentally

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38. Wesley, *Works*, 5:267.

39. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 130.

40. Wesley, *Works*, 5:313; Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 10:195; France, *Matthew*, 148; Nolland, *Matthew*, 225–6.

41. Uytanlet and Kwa, *Matthew*, 51; France, *Matthew*, 153; Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 178.

tried, maintain to the reader that the Sermon is good news; hopeful, possible, and exciting.

It seems obvious, and most scholars agree, that the Sermon is good news, yet there is a propensity in the exegesis to remove the affective sense of good and simply give news, or perhaps more tragically news that is stated in a way that is no longer understood as good. Willard and Wesley's method of explanation, as much as what they say, keep before the reader the affective and genuine sense that the Sermon is both good as well as possible.

Is there a way to reconcile Wesley and Willard's differing views of the Beatitudes, though? Perhaps this is not an either/or question but rather a both/and. Wesley, as well as most commentators, approach the interpretation of the Beatitudes from the perspective of faith and belief. Thus, to one who has already come to faith, the Beatitudes are challenges and invitations by Jesus into growth. However, Willard's unique perspective and genius is to view the Beatitudes in light of the crowd who have not yet necessarily come to faith, but rather are experiencing the goodness, generosity, power, and availability of Jesus and the Kingdom he proclaims for the first time. This centers in what God first does. However, as one begins to hear, understand, and apply Jesus's teachings in that context, as he or she comes back to the Beatitudes, he or she will encounter them differently, as invitations to virtue, much in the way Wesley and others describe them. The key is the order, which is based upon the psychology of the hearer, a "you can" as opposed to "you must," which makes all the difference.

Willard posits that, as the Sermon moves into Matthew 6, Jesus psychologically expands his scope of teaching, moving from the nature of the Kingdom heart illustrated

in Matthew 5:21–48 to “progressively incorporat[ing] all aspects of our life into the Kingdom, including, of course, the social and financial,” which Wesley characterizes as right intention guiding outward actions.<sup>42</sup>

As the Kingdom perspective of love formed the remedy, in Matthew 5, for recognizing and rightly dealing with human passions, so then in Matthew 6 the remedy given is the Kingdom principle of treasuring God who treasures people. This frees individuals and communities to treasure other things in the right order and ways, what Willard artfully describes as “playing to an audience of One.”<sup>43</sup> In this way, according to Willard, Jesus shifts the focus in Matthew 6 from the passive approach of simply not doing wrong to an active pursuit of doing right for right reasons.

This movement from passive to active engagement in Kingdom life illustrates the logical and psychologically progressive nature of how Jesus moves through the Sermon. Like Chrysostom, Wesley, and other commentators, Willard notes that each section within the Sermon builds on the character and skill development of that which comes before it.<sup>44</sup> This is especially true in order to understand Jesus’s move from chapter 6 to chapter 7 of the Sermon in Matthew.<sup>45</sup> The logical flow of the Sermon to this point is as

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42. Ibid., 188; Wesley, *Works*, 5:251. As Wesley also experienced, once the Methodists began to experience life-change they were sidelined by personal respectability and a lack of generosity. See “John Wesley on Giving,” *ResourceUMC*, accessed September 18, 2020, <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/john-wesley-on-giving>.

43. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 189. He clarifies how treasuring God is how we love him with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the means by which we understand how to treasure and love others as God also treasures and loves them. Ibid., 203. Willard’s astute spiritual psychology can be seen when he notes, “Our treasure focuses our heart (Matt 6:21)... Remember that our heart is our will, or our spirit: the center of our being from which our life flows. It is what gives orientation to everything we do. A heart rightly directed therefore brings health and wholeness to the entire personality.”

44. Nolland, *Matthew*, 317. See also, Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 33a:168. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 138–9; Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 10:179; Wesley, *Works*, 5:251.

45. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 238–9.

follows: as one aligns with God's Kingdom purposes and discovers the resources to know and do good (Matt 5), for right reasons rooted in the confidence of being treasured by God (Matt 6), he or she will cease trying to manage relationships by judging but learn how to ask of both God and others (Matt 7:1–12). Wesley and Willard agree that the common human practice of using condemnation or judgmentalism reveals a failure of understanding Kingdom love.<sup>46</sup> In place of judgmentalism, Jesus now moves to the heart of Kingdom interaction with both humans and God: the request.<sup>47</sup> By developing the habit of asking, one will receive God's wisdom and power to provide for all things good without the anxiety-induced need to judge; for judging does not help others but provokes (Matt 7:3–5) rather than reconciling (Matt 7:6). Here, Willard looks back to the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6 as a guide for making a correct, open-handed request in light of the clear picture of God's Fatherly goodness, competence, and love available in the Kingdom.<sup>48</sup>

Willard and Wesley highlight the unity of Jesus's message by his numerous calls to put his teachings into practice at the end of the Sermon (Matt 7:13–27).<sup>49</sup> Throughout the Sermon Jesus has defined and illustrated a different kind of life based on the presence of God in Jesus and reliance upon the Kingdom. What remains, both for the crowds as well as for current readers, is to put the words of Jesus to the test. The view that the Sermon is not an intellectual treatise but a project to be enacted drives Willard and Wesley's pragmatic realism in approaching Jesus's words. For both, Jesus's "practice of

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46. *Ibid.*, 243–5. See also Wesley, *Works*, 5:397.

47. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 259.

48. *Ibid.*, 253–269.

49. *Ibid.*, 273–5; Wesley, *Works*, 5:423–33.

routine obedience from the heart” is the essence of Christian discipleship and the heart of life in the Kingdom; therefore, it is also the heart of his instruction.<sup>50</sup> Neither religious orthodoxy—merely being able to state the right things—nor rightness of action—doing the right thing but for the wrong reasons—can replace the narrow gate of trust in and obedience to Jesus’s character as revealed in these teachings. Nor can any other way, besides trust in and reliance upon the Kingdom life Jesus has outlined, be adequate to uphold people through the storms of life (Matt 7:13–29).<sup>51</sup>

As has been shown, Willard sees in Jesus’s Sermon a unified message of the availability and power of God’s Kingdom which is available in the present to anyone who would trust Jesus and his teachings and begin to put them into practice. This aligns closely with Wesley’s own understanding of the Sermon and application of its teachings. Willard begins with the unique approach to the Beatitudes, seeing in them illustrations not of what people should do or become, but of what God has done. Such good news lays the foundation for human trust in Jesus’s teachings about and instruction of how to align with the manner of Kingdom living—becoming a good person—explained throughout the remainder of the Sermon. There seems to be a general flow in Willard’s interpretation of the Sermon which follows his understanding of the parts of the human self, described in *Renovation of the Heart*, in which the application of Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon lays out a pattern of character transformation.<sup>52</sup> God comes in Jesus through one’s social situation into one’s physical proximity in ways that reveal his love and develop trust

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50. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 299–300. Here one is able to see the candidness and honesty of Willard’s experimental outlook. “It is one of the major transitions of life to recognize who has taught us, mastered us, and then to evaluate the results in us of their teaching.” *Ibid.*, 298–9.

51. Wesley, *Works*, 5:424, 429–30. Cf. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, chap. 2.

52. For Willard’s view of the parts of the human self, see Willard, *Renovation*, chap. 2.

(Matt 4:17–5:16). This is the good life, not some personally manufactured situation. Jesus then begins to help people recognize and deal with core issues of the heart and mind and their impact upon the body (Matt 5:17–6:34). Jesus next leads them into issues of social interaction (Matt 7:1–12). These passages are instructions of how to become a good person, which aligns perfectly with the vision of the good life. As one puts these into practice, he or she will discover a radically different manner of Kingdom life that is both good and resilient (Matt 7:13–27). For both Willard and Wesley, the final point of the Sermon is that these are not merely words to ponder but a curriculum of apprenticeship to and with Jesus to enact.<sup>53</sup>

### **Curricular Considerations to the Development of a “Curriculum for Christlikeness”**

#### Willard’s Challenge and Curriculum Theory

Education serves to help people better understand themselves and the world in which they live in order to develop character and skills to enable them to live well with others.<sup>54</sup> A curriculum is a guide to the content and nature of that education. Christians who routinely do not obey or reflect Jesus’s character reveal inadequate education and spiritual formation in Christ. For Willard, Jesus’s Sermon is not merely beautiful literature, ethical maxims, or a new set of laws, but a curricular guide of how to become

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53. Willard states, “These words from Jesus show that it must be possible to hear and do what he said. It also must be possible to train his apprentices in such a way that they routinely do everything he said was best.” Uytanlet and Kwa also recognize the practical nature of the Sermon with Jesus in Matthew 7 emphasizing the necessity of “actions that are grounded on a heart of obedience.” Uytanlet and Kwa, *Matthew*, 82.

54. Drawn from a collection of definitions including those of Arthur Forshay, Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Dewey. “What Is the Purpose of Education?,” n.d., accessed December 7, 2020, [https://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed\\_update/eu201207\\_infographic.pdf](https://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_update/eu201207_infographic.pdf).

Kingdom people here and now, interacting with God as Jesus himself did. In this way the Sermon is a guide for living. Alfred North Whitehead wrote that the purpose of a good curriculum is to deal with “life and all of its manifestations,” which is precisely what Willard describes Jesus as doing in the Sermon.<sup>55</sup> Yet while Willard laid the foundational understandings of the Sermon, he left it to his readers to develop an instructional design that provides guided activities and practices to apply the teachings in a specific context. George Posner’s *Curriculum Analysis Questions* gives four sets of questions which are informative to apply to Willard’s approach to the Sermon.<sup>56</sup> These questions help us evaluate, from an educational perspective, the curricular nature of the Sermon from which one could create specific instructional designs and, furthermore, to evaluate the resulting curriculum developed.<sup>57</sup>

Willard does offer some guiding recommendations to take his curricular design into the specifics of instructional design. First, in designing the curriculum, Willard rejects aspects of the western schooling model for curriculum design which emphasizes the mastery of knowledge alone. Instead, he sees Jesus laying out a model that emphasizes a change of being as one comes to trust, model, and build his or her life upon—apprentice themselves to—Jesus, as revealed through his teachings.

Second, the purpose of the development of a “Curriculum for Christlikeness,” for Willard, is to bring people to a point where “they routinely do the things [Jesus] said

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55. Whitehead, *The Aims of Education & Other Essays*, 18.

56. The four sets are: 1) Curriculum Documentation and Origins including the documentation used and the reason for creation. 2) The Curriculum proper including: curricular perspective, content, purposes, organization, and assumptions. 3) The Curriculum in Use including implementation plans and evaluation. 4) Critique. George J. Posner, *Analyzing the Curriculum*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 22–3.

57. *Ibid.*, 20–22.



were good and right” because they are becoming this kind of person.<sup>58</sup> Willard notes that this moves one past being able to recite the right answers or to merely have a literalistic external conformity. Such surface evaluations easily fall into what Jesus specifically critiques as the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 5:17–20.<sup>59</sup> Rather, the goal of the curriculum is to become a different kind of person. Such transformation happens by integrating new information and perspectives from Jesus in the Sermon, with bodily responses empowered by God and his Kingdom. These responses settle into engrained habits and patterns of thinking, which then form an individual’s character.

Third, Willard identifies two objectives such a curriculum must entail: to enable people to deeply enjoy God and to remove old habits of thought and action grounded in non-Kingdom understandings of the world and of life.<sup>60</sup> Enjoying God highlights the personal as well as positive goal and nature of a relationship with God. Such a view challenges common yet unspoken foundational conceptions of God which disrupt heartfelt obedience, such as God is never pleased, distant, too busy, or unconcerned. Coming to know this God does not imply an immediate change in physical being. Changes in long-entrenched mental and bodily habits will need to be recognized, and a plan developed to address them based on the nature and desires of God as outlined by Jesus in the Sermon.

Willard sees Jesus as a teaching genius—revealed particularly in the Sermon on the Mount—who presents a practical, foundational, and comprehensive understanding of

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58. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 311.

59. *Ibid.*, 320.

60. *Ibid.*, 321–2.

and instruction about human living. It would not be surprising, then, to see the methods that Jesus uses supported within the best of educational theory. While to the knowledge of the researcher, the Sermon on the Mount has not been analyzed in light of such educational theories, there have been studies of Jesus's general teaching methods.<sup>61</sup> One such theory that might apply is Jack Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. Mezirow argues that one's perspective is transformed by "reinterpreting an old experience through a new set of expectations."<sup>62</sup> Willard's conviction is that the implications of Jesus's proclamation of the availability of the Kingdom of the Heavens are worked out as Jesus guides people through reinterpreting convictions about and responses to life situations.<sup>63</sup> Old experiences of conflict can be worked through in the assurance of God's presence, instruction, and power, which lead to far healthier ways of responding.

Willard's theory does not stand alone but finds good company across disciplines. Terry Hadaway successfully used Mezirow's approach as a theoretical model for adult Sunday School curriculum development, and Hadaway parallels Mezirow's

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61. See HeeKap Lee, "Jesus Teaching Through Discovery," *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal* 1, no. 2 (2006): 1–7. For a view of how Jesus's teaching methods are revealed in various educational theories, see Liv Fonnebo, "A Grounded-Theory Study of the Teaching Methods of Jesus: An Emergent Instructional Model" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2011), 94–105, 145–150, 176–193, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1368&context=dissertations>. See also PHEME PERKINS, *Jesus as Teacher* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); ROY PITCHER, *Jesus - A Master Teacher: Translating Jesus's Generic Teaching Strategies and Methods from the 1st to the 21st Centuries*, illustrated ed. (Milton Keynes, England: AuthorHouseUK, 2013).

62. Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 11.

63. Willard argues that Jesus redefines "the good life" in Matt 5:1–16 as well as righteousness and how to become a good person in Matt 5:17–7:23 with an emphasis upon personal and interpersonal aspects.

transformational theory to Steven Brookfield's theory of critical thinking.<sup>64</sup> Brookfield's theory of transformational thinking has five progressive elements. It begins with a trigger event, which causes one to stop and appraise his or her situation. This leads one to begin to explore solutions, developing responses which are integrated into his or her life and habits. Similarly, James Loder's psychology of transformation in *The Transforming Moment* also has five steps and which seem similar to those of Brookfield. It begins with an initial conflict which causes one to begin scanning for reasons and solutions. A solution comes through a constructive act of imagination. The result of this new understanding and way forward leads one to sense of release and openness. Moving forward, an individual interprets his or her experience which becomes integrated into his or her perceptions, thoughts, and actions.<sup>65</sup> Brookfield and Loder in two distinct disciplines give form to Mezirow's theory of reinterpreting old experiences in light of a new ones. These theories are illustrated in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.<sup>66</sup>

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64. Terry Hadaway, "Perspective Transformation as a Theoretical Model for Curriculum Development and the Teaching of Adults in Sunday School" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 74; Stephen D. Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987). The theories of Loder and Brookfield can be compared to non-western theorists such as Lev Vygotsky and his theory of the Zone of Proximal Development. L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

65. James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989).

66. Perry Shaw, longtime missionary in the Middle East and seminary educator, categorizes Mezirow, Brookfield, and Loder as key voices in the field of transformational learning. Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning* (Carlisle, England: Langham Global Library, 2014), 116.

<b>Mezirow - Theory of Transformational Learning (education)</b>			
"Reinterpreting an old experience through a new set of expectations."			
	<b>Brookfield - Theory of Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Loder – Theory of Transformation (psychology)</b>	<b>Crowds with Jesus</b>
1	Trigger event	Conflict	Need (sickness, purpose)
2	Appraisal	Scanning	Heard of Jesus
3	Exploration	Constructive Act of Imagination	Came to Jesus
4	Developing	Release and Openness	Need is met
5	Integration	Interpretation	Re-evaluation of life in light of Sermon explanations

Figure 3. Jesus's Sermon and Educational, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Theories

Willard's conviction of Jesus's teaching genius finds a grounding in this unique overlap of Mezirow, Brookfield, and Loder's theories (figure 4). The above frameworks serve as illustrative examples of what is happening in Jesus's interaction with the crowds in Matthew 4:17–5:16. Individuals experience a need (trigger event/conflict). In seeking a solution, they hear of Jesus (appraisal/scanning) and come to him (exploration/constructive act of imagination). Their need is met (developing, release and openness) and they begin to reevaluate life in light of this encounter (integration/interpretation). As Loder argues in *The Logic of the Spirit*, this is not a linear but cyclical process in which one continues to deepen in understanding and character.<sup>67</sup> As one comes to Jesus and comes to learn from him, trust him, and do what he says, he or she is transformed. Awareness of such theories in light of Jesus's teachings increase the appreciation of the genius of Jesus's teaching methods and their deep alignment with the

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67. Jerome Bruner was the first to develop the Spiral Theory of Learning. Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

created nature of human learning.<sup>68</sup> Willard's views of Jesus and his Sermon fall within a larger conversation of education and transformation.

In his book *Renovation of the Heart* Willard notes the need of a psychologically robust methodology to see change, spiritual or otherwise. He develops the VIM (Vision, Intention, Means) model to describe what brings about life change. The Vision is the knowledge of the presence and powerful resources of the Kingdom that are accessible to anyone who will learn from Jesus how to align with and access them (Matt 4:17). Intention is the human choice to trust Jesus by obeying what he taught in order to experience the Kingdom. The Means are the specific things one can do to obey Jesus both in recognition of desires and habits to the contrary as well as activities to help do what Jesus says in a character and spirit that reflects God's nature and desires.<sup>69</sup> Such a model finds credence as it aligns with the learning theory systems of educational psychology: cognitive (Vision), affective (Intention), and behavioral (Means).<sup>70</sup>

### Creation of a Curriculum

Willard argues that the Sermon is curricular in nature, helping people come to understand the nature of God's Kingdom and the specific ways one's life can be adjusted to align with God's character and desires. In this final section in *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard invites his readers to begin to imagine what such a curriculum based on the

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68. Peter Mathew's dissertation provides a list of philosophies, their corresponding educational theories, and a comparison with the teaching of Jesus. Peter Mathew, "The Qualities of an Ideal Teacher with Special Reference to Jesus Christ" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kerala, 2013), 243, 72–101, <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/97545>.

69. See Figure 1, p. 10. Willard, *Renovation*, 77–91.

70. See also Estep, White, and Estep, eds., *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, 19.

Sermon might look like. To aid in this, Willard introduces a theoretical framework he developed, namely, the “Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation”, as a guide that seems to align with his VIM methodology.<sup>71</sup>

One comes to see God and his nature through the moving of the Spirit in creation as well as the person of Jesus. Willard starts at the apex of the triangle with the action of the Holy Spirit.<sup>72</sup> The Spirit both moves within souls to stir awareness of wrong and possibility for change and is the power by which such change can occur (1 Cor 12:3; Matt 4:1–11). In the Gospels the Spirit led people to Jesus, and they experienced the Kingdom as they heard a practical message on how to begin to align with the Kingdom (cf. Phil 2:12–15). Jesus is the incarnated one and the bridge between the immaterial Spirit and the material world of creation and embodied life (Rom 13:14) and thus the “Mind of Christ” forms the center of the triangle. His life, thinking, and responding to the Father and Spirit demonstrates human living that moves beyond simple prescriptive behaviors. These two parts of the Golden Triangle aid in fulfilling Willard’s first curricular objective of enthralling the mind with God. This seems to align with Willard’s “Vision” component of VIM.

The two lower points of the triangle fulfill Willard’s second curricular objective emphasizing bodily response to the power of the Holy Spirit and the example and guidance of Jesus.<sup>73</sup> The second point of the triangle deals with the “Intention” component of VIM and looks at the human environment: the ordinary, daily events and

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71. See p. 15, see also Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 347–57.

72. See figure 1, p12.

73. The second curricular objective is to remove old habits of thought and action grounded in non-Kingdom understandings of the world and of life.

temptations where one must make assessments and then act. Jesus did not speak to the crowds of another world, but rather of an otherworldly life in this one through the Kingdom. Willard says, “First we must accept the circumstances we constantly find ourselves in as the place of God’s [K]ingdom and blessing.”<sup>74</sup> This counteracts our tendency toward escapism, while recognizing both the beauty of the life God has given and his power and ability to work and sustain one in it (Jas 1:2–4; Rom 5:1–5).<sup>75</sup> The third point, a planned discipline to put on a new heart, emphasizes the essential human part in responding to the action of the Holy Spirit, in the midst of our environment and life circumstances, i.e., the “Means” of VIM. Merely hearing Jesus’s message did not change the crowds. It would only be as they intentionally “put them into practice” (Matt 7:24) that they would access the benefits of the Kingdom that Jesus had already made available to them as they came to him.<sup>76</sup> The embodied practices of spiritual mentors, living and dead but always centered in Jesus, give a practical shape to spiritual growth (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 4:9).<sup>77</sup>

In accordance with the basic educational model of creating lesson plans, Willard suggests five steps to practically guide people through the teachings of Jesus from the Sermon: explanation, understanding, specific cases, assignments (action and reflection), and accountability reviews.<sup>78</sup>

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74. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 348.

75. *Ibid.*, 350.

76. Willard notes, “We are not told in any systematic way how to do our part in the process... not in [terms] of formulas. This is because the process is to be a walk with a person.” *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*, 351–2.

78. *Ibid.*, 366. See Gini Cunningham, “Lesson Plans and Unit Plans: The Basis for Instruction,” in *The New Teachers Companion: Practical Wisdom for Succeeding in the Classroom* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2009), accessed March 25, 2022. <https://www.ascd.org/books/the-new-teachers-companion>.

Remarkably, for a book that was as popular as *The Divine Conspiracy*, the researcher could only find two resources that attempted to take up Willard's challenge to shape such a curriculum for a current audience. The first is a small book called *Dallas Willard's Study Guide to The Divine Conspiracy*.<sup>79</sup> It is more of a book study guide than a curriculum through the Sermon, but it does employ many of Willard's five steps mentioned above. While not explicitly a curriculum for Christlikeness, this is a good and helpful first step for imagining what such a curriculum might look like and how it might be formatted.

The second person to respond to Willard's challenge to develop a curriculum of Christlikeness was James Bryan Smith in his trilogy book series, *The Apprentice Series*. Book one, *The Good and Beautiful God*, is completely focused on Willard's primary curricular objective of enthralling the mind with God.<sup>80</sup> Book two, *The Good and Beautiful Life*, goes through the Sermon on the Mount for the purpose of personal character formation.<sup>81</sup> Book three, *The Good and Beautiful Community*, focuses on the communal-social implications of Kingdom life.<sup>82</sup> These books are written in a more lay-friendly format than *The Divine Conspiracy* and put its principles into practical action.

Smith, who was a student and friend of Willard, has taken the next step from the first study guide into a more developed curriculum, and Willard highly praised this series

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79. Jan Johnson, Keith Matthews, and Dallas Willard, *Dallas Willard's Study Guide to The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001).

80. James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows*, illustrated ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), Kindle.

81. James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Life: Putting on the Character of Christ*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), Kindle.

82. James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Community: Following the Spirit, Extending Grace, Demonstrating Love* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), Kindle.



before his death. This series is more than a book study. It helps guide people in the content of Jesus's teachings and its larger implications, reflection, and practice. Each chapter of each book in the series follows the consistent pattern of using stories to confront "false narratives that hinder our lives, and then replace them with the true narratives found in Jesus's teaching and the rest of the Bible," assigning spiritual disciplines which connect the material covered with actionable steps.<sup>83</sup>

Smith's curriculum is excellent. Its scope is wide, it is well thought out, it is understandable, and it offers practical action and reflection steps. However, there is more to be said on particular subjects than is included in his book. Additionally, changes of understanding, thinking, and practice might require more time and guidance than is possible in reading a chapter of a book individually or as a group. Historically, any book study or small group at Keystone reached only a small percentage of the total congregation. A book study also excludes the core, and most attended, activity of the church: corporate worship.

#### A Curriculum for the Corporate Worship Gathering

The corporate worship service is the primary, largest, and most consistently attended event for most congregations. Thus, it would be the ideal venue practically, but also theologically by which to implement the curriculum that Willard suggests. Debra Dean Murphy asserts, "It is in corporate worship that the lives of Christians are most acutely formed and shaped."<sup>84</sup> Repetition is a key component of moving from hearing to

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83. Ibid., Introduction.

84. Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 10. See also Stanley Hauerwas, "The Gesture of a Truthful Story," in

practice, inability to ability.<sup>85</sup> Brent Peterson notes that the practices of worship help to orient and embody content, and to repeat it in a way that forms people.<sup>86</sup> James K. A. Smith argues that corporate worship is educational not simply in imparting information during the preaching, but helping people shift what they worship.<sup>87</sup> As such, the Sunday worship service is a prime candidate in which to implement Willard's proposed curriculum. As a teacher will use specific techniques in all aspects of planning a class lesson, this project looked at how each aspect of a corporate worship service might also serve to accomplish curricular goals.

It is important to clarify here what "curriculum" specifically means in light of the project goals, particularly in a worship service setting. Curriculum here is a guide, created for a reason, for a specific time, location, and people, to accomplish specific outcomes and objectives. While the word "curriculum" often brings unquestioned associations to classroom learning, as well as the associated images and techniques, this project looked at church worship as a curricular venue in which the developed curriculum would be implemented. This took seriously how each aspect of the worship service outside the sermon might also serve the curricular objectives laid out by Willard and established in the curriculum.

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*Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation*, ed. Jeff Astley, Leslie J. Francis, and Colin Cowder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 97. Cited in Estep, White, and Estep, eds., *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, 65.

85. Sean H. K. Kang, "Spaced Repetition Promotes Efficient and Effective Learning: Policy Implications for Instruction," *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 1 (March 2016): 12–19.

86. Brent D. Peterson, *Created to Worship: God's Invitation to Become Fully Human* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), 25.

87. James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 77.

Worship is an entire life lived in response and engagement with God.<sup>88</sup> In what follows, the researcher will focus upon one aspect of worship, the corporate worship gathering. This will be described as “the worship service” or “corporate worship.”

Willard recognizes that the first need of a curriculum for Christlikeness is to “bring the lovely thing—in this case, God—before the disciple as fully and as forcibly as possible, putting our best efforts into it” which he describes as “enthraling the mind with God.”<sup>89</sup> Corporate worship centers on the human need, transcending cultures, to be encountered by God.<sup>90</sup> The gathered worship service, not unlike the crowds to whom Jesus ministered, might then be viewed as the ideal vehicle for pursuing Willard’s first curricular objective: enthraling the mind with God.

How might a worship service be approached and planned to achieve this end? First, the worship service provides a place to demonstrate and practice interaction with God. Scripture illustrates how worship is theological, grounded on the character of God revealed in his actions, which invite reflection and response by the congregation (Gen 1–2; Exod 15:1–21; Deut 32:1–43; Pss 19; 136; Luke 1:46–55; Col 1:15–21; Rev 4:8; 5:9–14). Constance Cherry sees this pattern of God’s revelation/action then human response repeated throughout Scripture.<sup>91</sup> From this she suggests a four-fold pattern of worship: gathering and word, which highlight God’s coming and God’s word to his people through Scripture; then table and sending, which highlight human response in eucharist and

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88. Exod 15:1–18; Deut 6:20–25; Josh 24:1–28; Neh 9; Ps 78; Dan 2:44–45; Isa 8:14; Acts 4:1–12, 7:1–53, 17:16–34; 1 Cor 15; Eph 1:3–23; Phil 2:1–18; Col 1:15–23; 1 Pet 2; Rev 4–5; 22:12–20.

89. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 323.

90. Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 27. See also Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 61.

91. Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 187. See also Peterson, *Created to Worship*, 41–45.

returning to life in obedience.<sup>92</sup> Cherry's flow is as helpful as it is scriptural. The gathering provides opportunity to meet the first curricular objective of enthraling the mind with God, which Jesus did in healing and calling individuals. In the word people hear the good news of God and his instructions, just as Jesus then spoke to the people in the Sermon. At the table people have opportunity to respond to what they have heard just as Jesus's teachings were based upon actions of thought or behavior. Finally, the people are sent in God's presence to practice what they have been taught, as Jesus ended his Sermon telling the people to put what he has said into practice.

Second, the worship service provides a venue to practice aspects of this relationship with God in creative ways. Welton Gaddy and Brent Peterson, among other worship theorists and practitioners, highlight how worship planners and leaders, in working with the Spirit, need to understand the various elements and activities that can be included in the service and the functions that they serve for the ultimate goal of enthraling the mind of God in a way that invites people to trust God enough to put the words of Jesus into practice.<sup>93</sup> Willard speaks at length over the essential role of spiritual disciplines as tools to practice and develop one's response to God and the habits that align with right response. Intentional recognition of how spiritual disciplines are a part of the worship service—such as confession, prayer, silence—and creative application of how they can be expanded upon and strategically applied can help develop the worship

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92. Cherry also notes how each of the four elements of worship have a revelation/response nature: God invites his people to gather and they respond to come, God invites his people to hear his Word and they respond by listening, God invites his people to confess and enact through the eucharist and they do, finally God sends people into His world and they go.

93. For helpful approaches to and elements of a worship service, including elements of worship, the sacraments, approaching music, the use of the church calendar, and participation in worship see C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992).

service as a curricular venue which highlights interaction and action, not simply coming to hear the Word of God but to practice and do it.

Finally, the worship service provides opportunities for various types of people and cultures to explain and enact aspects of the curriculum in ways that edify the whole body and honor their uniqueness. Sunday worship becomes a place to recognize and honor the various languages, cultures, and sub-cultures of the body of Christ that make us aware of God's Church around the world. Sandra Maria Van Opstal writes that "we must recognize that worship is both contextual and cross cultural."<sup>94</sup> Effective gathered worship seeks to meet people in the midst of the context of their lives both in time and place as well as in culture and background. Such efforts also show the universal validity of Jesus's message and the multitude of ways in which one practices obedience.

As various members of a congregation are involved in the creative investment in planning and executing worship services, these gatherings grow in impact upon the various groups who gather together to worship. W. Jay Moon talks of how locally developed or adapted rituals help engage, contextualize, and increase transformational potential.<sup>95</sup> Corporate worship provides an opportunity to not simply talk about something but, through various rituals and activities, to personalize the message in a way that, in the words of Jim and Carla Bowman, "it enters the collective memory of an entire community."<sup>96</sup> Thus, the worship service can become a missiological event where the worldview of the Kingdom of the Heavens and its implications, as illustrated throughout

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94. Sandra Maria Van Opstal and Mark Labberton, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 30, Kindle.

95. W. Jay Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission): Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 131, 148–9.

96. *Ibid.*, 148.

the Sermon on the Mount, are presented in various individual and cultural types of ritual, story, and proverb. In this way worship reshapes people by challenging worldviews rooted in something other than God that undergird human beliefs, culture, habits, and action.<sup>97</sup>

### Instructional Design Methodologies

The formal development of such a curriculum was guided by the ADDIE model of instructional design. The ADDIE model (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) has been an effective tool to design and improve curricula. Developed by the U.S. Air Force in the 1950s, it names the various aspects of curriculum design.<sup>98</sup> The analysis stage looks at the goals of the curriculum in light of participants' knowledge and capacity. Willard's assessment in *The Divine Conspiracy* of the problem of followers of Jesus who do not obey fulfills a large part of this step.<sup>99</sup> In the design stage the learning objectives, evaluation methods, criteria, and lesson planning are developed. Willard gives some guidance towards this stage, particularly his five-step lesson plan suggestion, but he largely leaves this step to his readers to develop in their specific context. In the development stage the designer takes data from the previous stages to ensure and hone the content, instructional plan, and evaluation to best align with the course outcomes. This moves beyond Willard's specific instructions but relies upon his suggested

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97. Ibid., 153. Moon goes on to say, "Discipleship must recognize and transform the worldview if the discipleship process is to result in transformed lives." Paul Hiebert notes three ways we can change worldviews: 1) examine worldviews, 2) be exposed to other worldviews, and 3) create living rituals. *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 319–24, Kindle.

98. Serhat Kurt, "ADDIE Model: Instructional Design," *Educational Technology*, August 29, 2017, accessed October 23, 2020, <https://educationaltechnology.net/the-addie-model-instructional-design/>.

99. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, chaps. 1–2.

curricular outcomes and objectives. Next is the formal curriculum implementation. The final evaluation stage measures student outcomes based against the course outcomes, which seeks to evaluate knowledge of what Jesus said in the Sermon, consistency of obedience to the instruction, and overall change of character.

Additionally, the researcher utilized the backward design method of Wiggins and McTighe. Backwards design has become a standard in curricular design which emphasizes student learning which can easily be missed when the focus is upon the teacher's planning and teaching. The method begins with the designer identifying desired results for students. Next the designer seeks to define determining acceptable evidence that the student has met those desired results.<sup>100</sup> Finally, built on this foundation, the designer or teacher develops learning experiences and instruction. This methodology fits well with Willard's: the outcomes of practicing the material driving the development of the presentation, as opposed to the presentation being developed and hoping that the desired outcomes are met.

### Summary

Dallas Willard wrote extensively about the gap between a Christian's profession of belief in Jesus and his or her habitual misalignment with his teachings and character. Willard explains in *The Divine Conspiracy* how in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Jesus teaches the nature, content, and process of being formed by God's Kingdom and for his purposes. Such Kingdom life gives hope, direction, and resources for decisions and

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100. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2005).

actions now, and is the very life of God, revealed in Christ, which death itself cannot stop.

Both Willard and Wesley see Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew as practical and optimistic instruction for life that is both possible and available. Both view the Sermon as a unified message with a logical flow and overarching purpose. Willard and Wesley agree that the kind of life described in the Sermon is presently possible and available, answering humanity's fundamental questions. Lastly, Willard and Wesley agree that the Sermon is not for a select few, but rather for everyone who will simply hear it and be willing to put it into practice (Matt 5:1–2). Thus Willard, drawing from Ebersheim's commentary, sees the Beatitudes not as prescriptions but rather as illustrations of how God brings good in the midst of any difficult situation (Matt 5:3–12). This goodness is not simply an experience, but an entire way of life closely guided by God's character of love and made possible by his power that makes one good and right(eous) (Matt 5:13–20). In commenting on Matthew 5:21–48, Willard uniquely emphasizes that Jesus is not making impossible commands but illustrations which can be experimentally tested, hopefully shifting the perspective from rigid demand to upbeat invitation. Willard notes that in response to God's loving presence in the Beatitudes, Jesus guides people first in heart responses in Matthew 5 which he then expands to bodily and social responses in Matthew 6:1–7:12—points also noted by Wesley and Chrysostom. Again, Willard and Wesley comment on how Jesus's closing instruction to put these words into practice (Matt 7:13–27) highlight that Jesus is not simply being abstract but practical. These words are not simply to be pondered but a curriculum of apprenticeship to and with Jesus to put into action.



Willard views the content of the Sermon as curricular in nature, and a guide of apprenticeship to Jesus, learning to apply the ways of the Kingdom. Jesus's teaching in the Sermon is supported by numerous theories of human growth and transformation, such as Jack Mezirow's theory of transformational learning, Steven Brookfield's theory of critical thinking, and James Loder's psychology of transformation. Willard's "Vision, Intention, Means" model of spiritual formation aligns with the learning theory systems of educational psychology as articulated by Yount.

While Willard's view of the Sermon is curricular, it is not a fully developed curriculum. He does give instructions and encouragement for his readers to develop such a curriculum. The goal of such a curriculum would be to lead people to a point where they habitually or routinely do what Jesus says is good and right (cf. Matt 7:13–14, 24–27) through enthraling the mind with God (cf. Matt 4:17–5:16) and removing habits of thought and action built on non-Kingdom understandings of God, the world, and life (cf. Matt 4:17–7:12).

Willard proposes the "Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation" as a theoretical framework for approaching and executing the curriculum. He suggests five steps in lesson planning to practically guide people through the teachings of Jesus from the Sermon: explanation of Jesus's words, ensuring understanding, citing specific cases, giving assignments (action and reflection), and ensuring accountability reviews.

The researcher is aware of only two published works which seek to take Willard at his challenge of developing a curriculum for Christlikeness based on the Sermon:

*Dallas Willard's Study Guide to the Divine Conspiracy* and James Bryan Smith's *The*

*Apprentice Series* trilogy. These works are developed primarily as book studies in small groups.

In the church, curricula are typically associated with Bible studies or classes outside of the corporate worship service. However, Brent Peterson, Debra Dean Murphy, and James K. A. Smith argue that corporate worship is not only educational but fundamentally formational. W. Jay Moon and Sandra van Opstal discuss how when congregational participants are included in the creative planning of the worship service, the service can reflect various perspectives and cultures in a way that more deeply engages the entire body. As the largest and most consistent gathering of a congregation, the Sunday worship service is a logical venue to reach the widest part of a congregation which provides many unique opportunities for creatively engaging and fulfilling the purposes of the curriculum Willard proposes based on the Sermon.

In the next chapter the researcher will synthesize the material to this point in order to present a curricular design based on Willard's approach to the Sermon on the Mount. The chapter will lay out a design which seeks to see human transformation revealed in attitude and behavior changes. It will also discuss how such a curriculum could be anchored in the corporate worship service of the church.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In order to address the problem of followers of Jesus who do not consistently obey his instructions or reflect his character, the researcher developed a “Curriculum for Christlikeness” that provided a biblical framework for character development based on Dallas Willard’s view of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1–7:29. This curriculum was intended to help Keystone Nazarene Church, an international congregation of primarily American, Filipino, and Japanese people in Okinawa, Japan, to grow in trusting obedience to Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon which in turn would result in Christlike character formation.

This project was built upon a Willardian understanding of spiritual formation which frames relationship with God as apprenticeship, a dynamic in which one learns consistently to do what Jesus taught, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, by imitating the way he himself lived out that teaching. Willard’s “Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation” provided a theoretical framework for a holistic approach to understanding the content of the Sermon and achieving his two curricular objectives. It utilized the Participatory Action Research methodology, and more specifically the action research approach of Karl Lewin, to guide congregants into an exploration of what Jesus says and experimentation of putting his teachings into practice. Through the curriculum,

participants were engaged in implementation, observation, and experimentation of Jesus' teachings in their own lives, and with one another.<sup>1</sup>

This curriculum differed from previously developed curricula in two ways. First, by using the corporate worship service as the primary curricular venue. Secondly, it provided a more specific guide to implementing Jesus's teachings than in previously available curricula.

## **Methods and Sources of Research**

### Research Plan

In developing this curriculum, the researcher employed Willard's "Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation" in concert with an action research methodology using the ADDIE and backwards design methods of curriculum design. The curriculum was broad, drawing on the research gathered in chapter 2—such as Whitehead's theory that an effective curriculum must deal with "life and all of its manifestations."<sup>2</sup> The curriculum also applied prescriptive and experiential curricular methodologies and Loder's cyclical model of transformation.<sup>3</sup> The researcher's goal in implementing the curriculum through the corporate worship service was to track the transformation of character across four categories: familiarity with, understanding of, self-reflection on, and obedient practice of

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1. Because of the heuristic nature of the study, the implementation could be improved or revised as it unfolded. This was subject to the approval of the APNTS Committee and the Ministry Participation Committee within the local church context.

2. Whitehead, *The Aims of Education & Other Essays*, 18.

3. See Arthur Ellis' description of curriculum as prescription versus experience in Arthur K. Ellis, *Exemplars of Curriculum Theory* (Larchmont, NY: Routledge, 2003), 4–13, and James Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), chap. 2, Kindle.

Jesus's teachings in the Sermon.<sup>4</sup> The curriculum's effectiveness was measured through a voluntary purposive sampling of congregants consisting of a Likert survey that included space for written comments and responses. The participants answered questions concerning their change of perspective and habitual action.<sup>5</sup> The researcher quantitatively evaluated the Likert part of the survey, while the comments gave qualitative and contextual feedback.

### Research Design

The "Curriculum for Christlikeness" consisted of a twenty-four-week sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount combined with a daily guided reflection journal and opportunities to meet in small groups for deeper discussion that promoted better understanding of and accountability in the application of Jesus's teachings. The Curriculum for Christlikeness including backward design plans, worship outlines, sermons, message outlines, reflection journals, discipleship group guides, and children's chats are available at <https://bit.ly/382NaOh>. Three objectives guided the overarching rhythm of the curriculum which parallel three learning theory systems of educational psychology articulated by several authors: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.<sup>6</sup> The first (cognitive), was to increase knowledge of the topics Jesus discusses in the Sermon,

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4. This approach, along with the knowledge, reflection, and application framework suggested below, follows Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl, eds., *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, abridged ed. (New York: Pearson, 2000).

5. Willard argues that the things we do most deeply reflect our characters. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 311.

6. See William Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Books, 2010), 47, Kindle; Estep, White, and Estep, eds., *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, 187.

demonstrated by both the ability to recognize and recall those topics and a degree of understanding that increases the desire to obey and apply them. The second (affective), was to increase recognition, through which individuals would begin to acknowledge how and why they are or are not responding in the ways Jesus describes.<sup>7</sup> The third (behavioral), was to increase application of Jesus's teachings, aided by the regular practice of spiritual disciplines, such that his teachings become habitual responses that produce Christlike character.

Through participation in the curriculum, congregants would engage in participatory action research, seeking to understand the teachings of Jesus. Next, they would be given activities to help them recognize where the topics Jesus addressed were manifested in their lives or around them in attitude and action. This would be followed by recommendations of exercises by which to address entrenched habits of thought and action in order to put Jesus's teachings into practice. While the curriculum would provide guidance, each individual would uniquely experiment with application and make observations as to the outcomes of their actions. Discipleship groups would be a venue where they could meet to discuss their experience in practice, questions, and observation with one another to mutually learn and support one another. This would begin a cyclical process of continual engagement through the topics of the Sermon on the Mount (figure 4).

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7. These categorization of cognitive, reflective, and behavioral are not strictly divided but rather flow into one another and also flowed across the weeks. While recognition is strictly speaking a cognitive function, it is listed here as affective as it is a means of not simply recognizing the what but also the why of personal behaviors and the invitation to value what Jesus says, which falls deeply within the affective domain.

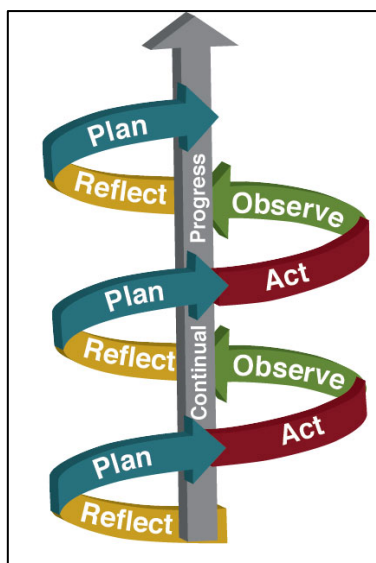


Figure 4: PAR Research Diagram

The Sermon on the Mount was divided into eleven two-week units each covering a specific topic addressed by Jesus in the Sermon. They were bookended by a one-week introduction and conclusion, the final week of which provided congregants the opportunity to reflect on and share the impact of the curriculum in their lives (table 1). The scope of the curriculum for this project only includes the central twenty-two weeks, excluding the introduction and conclusion weeks for evaluation. However, the content of the opening and closing weeks are included in a curriculum link mentioned on the previous page.

Table 1. Curriculum of Christlikeness Schedule

Intro	Aug 29	(survey 1)
Section 1: The Kingdom		
Unit 1: God's Good and Present Kingdom	Sep 5–12	
Section 2: Forming a Character of Kingdom Love		
Unit 2: Anger	Sep 19–26	(9/19 survey 2)
Unit 3: Desire	Oct 3–10	
Unit 4: Manipulation	Oct 17–24	(10/17 survey 3)
Unit 5: Retaliation and Enemies	Oct 31 – Nov 7	

Section 3: Living for an Audience of One		
Unit 6: What others think	Nov 14–21	<i>(11/14 survey 4)</i>
Unit 7: Treasuring	Nov 28 – Dec 5	
<i>Advent/Christmas</i>	Dec 12 – Jan 2	<i>(12/12 survey 5)</i>
Unit 8: Worry	Jan 9–16	
Section 4: Living with Others		
Unit 9: Judging	Jan 23–30	
Unit 10: Asking	Feb 6–13	<i>(2/6 survey 6)</i>
Section 5: Putting the Sermon into Practice		
Unit 11: Doing what Jesus says	Feb 20–27	<i>(2/20 survey 7)</i>
Closing/Testimony	Mar 6	<i>(3/6 survey 8)</i>

### Recurring Cycles of Knowledge, Recognition, Application

Each two-week unit followed the knowledge–recognition–application rhythm discussed earlier (see figure 5), which served as a unifying and reinforcing framework for the curriculum. The researcher synthesized exegesis of the Sermon and other applicable Scriptures alongside psychological, social, and behavioral considerations. This enabled the congregation to gain a holistic picture of how God created human beings and how Jesus’s instruction on the particular topic plays into God’s desires and purposes for his creations in the Kingdom. Next, the researcher focused on recognition, helping the congregation begin to reflect and assess where the topic manifests in their lives, how they respond, and why. Finally, the researcher focused on application, using a pattern he developed called the “Six-Steps Model of Transformation,” which outlines actionable steps for habit and behavioral change. This application step largely took place outside the worship service and in the individual reflection journals and the small group discussions.



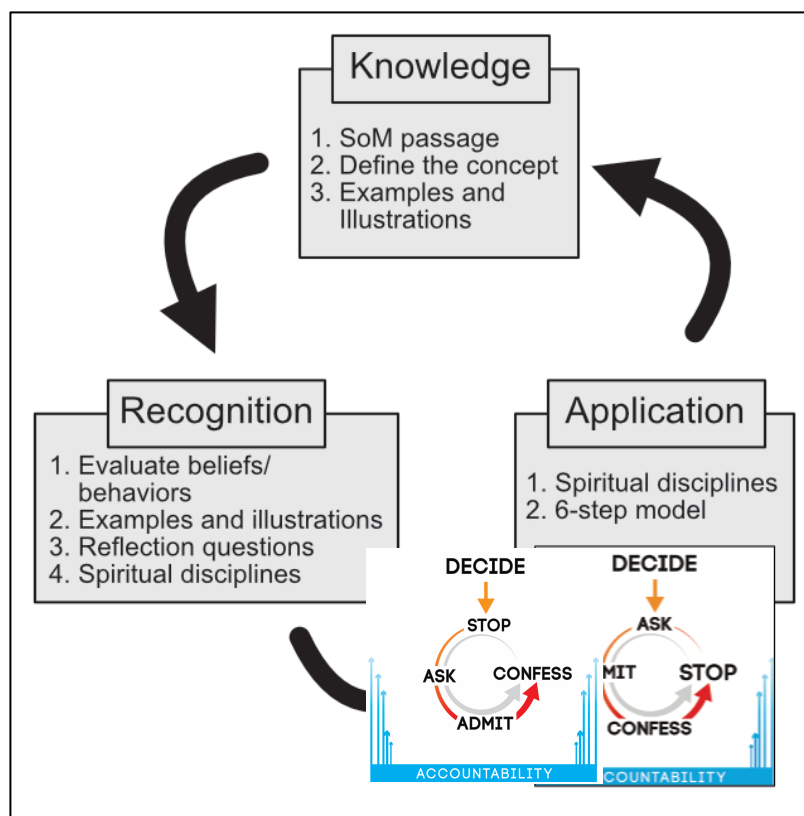


Figure 5. Knowledge, Recognition, Application Cycle with the “Six-Steps Model for Transformation”

The researcher designed the “Six-Steps Model of Transformation” to help people in moments of temptation or conflict to reach for habits consistent with God’s desires, in this case as specifically articulated in the Sermon. In the first step, a person must *decide* they want to trust Jesus and put into practice what he says. This is best done as a commitment to God that they share with others. In this way the final accountability step is one that creates a context for the entire six-step process. This prepares a person for the next moment the issue comes up, equipping them to *stop*, in order to disrupt the old habits and patterns. Next, he or she must *ask* for God’s help in changing their perspectives, habits, and behaviors. Then, each time they are alerted to an attitude or action contradictory to the Kingdom as presented by Jesus, he or she must immediately and honestly *admit* to God what they are thinking, feeling, or doing and *confess* why it is

not appropriate and what is true based on Scripture, followed by any necessary behavioral adjustments, such as apologizing for a hurtful action. This step leads them to repeat the cycle again, resulting in progressive transformation of heart and action. The final step in the model is seeking to share this journey with others who will be empathetic but also provide accountability. As mentioned above, it is appropriate to invite and seek communal accountability in any step. The researcher developed the “Six-Steps Model of Transformation” independently, but it aligns with the principles of Loder’s cyclical model of transformation as well as Willard’s VIM and Golden Triangle models.<sup>8</sup>

### Sunday Worship Service

The Sunday morning worship service is by far the most attended event at Keystone. Those who participate in the various Sunday School classes and small groups make up only 35–40% of the average worship service attendance. Because of this fact, the Sunday worship service was the primary venue for implementing this curriculum. Additionally, as discussed in chapter 2, corporate worship has tremendous pedagogical and transformational potential if properly understood and utilized. The parts of the worship service that precede the sermon provide critical opportunities to accomplish Willard’s first curricular objective— “enthraling the mind with God”—through the use of Scripture, song, reflection, and a variety of other spiritual disciplines and creative means.<sup>9</sup> Practically, the corporate gathering, which lasts an hour and fifteen minutes, provided the best opportunity for people to experience God’s Kingdom blessing in Jesus

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8. Ch. 2, p. 48-50.

9. Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 323.

in a manner similar to the crowds whose needs had just been met by the Kingdom and who listened to Jesus teach (Matt 4:12–25).

The researcher created a survey in order to get congregational feedback to strategically plan, develop, and employ various elements of the worship service. The week's text from the Sermon on the Mount was highlighted throughout the service. Additionally, corresponding Old and New Testament passages and Psalms were incorporated, providing a larger biblical scope to each portion of the Sermon on the Mount throughout the entire time of worship within the service.

Other creative elements, such as object lessons, silence, and guided reflection, were also incorporated into the weekly service to increase the congregation's interest, engagement, and participation, as well as to connect with different learning styles by varying the method of presentation. The researcher sought to work with congregational members to leverage their creativity in developing particular activities within the worship service in order to engage them more deeply in the learning and transformation process.

### Guided Daily Reflections

While the worship service was the primary venue for curriculum implementation, change can more deeply occur as people read, reflect, and engage individually and in groups throughout the week and in the normal rhythms of their daily lives. To encourage this, the researcher designed a guided daily reflection journal for the congregation to use throughout the week between services. The journals followed the knowledge–recognition–application cycle of the curriculum. In the journal all weeks included quotes on the unit topic from Scripture, from key figures in church history, and any related fields

of study. It focused on increasing knowledge by guiding participants through memorization and reflection on the Sermon on the Mount text and other related Scripture passages. The journal sought to foster recognition by incorporating spiritual disciplines, reflection questions, and small group discussion opportunities to help participants identify where this topic or issue manifests in their lives, how they typically respond, and why they respond in this way. Finally, the journal sought to provide application opportunities by guiding participants through the “Six-Steps Model of Transformation,” inviting daily reflection on instances where the topic came up in the participant’s life and how they responded, tracking any change in the timing of the recognition of the issue, asking God’s help, and choosing obedient change. At the end of each unit, references to additional resources were provided for those who wanted to study more.

Journals were solely for the participant and were not intended to be gathered or reviewed by the researcher.<sup>10</sup> The journals were intended to become not only a helpful resource for participant review and reflection but also a means of tracking one’s process of transformation into increasing Christlikeness.

### Small Group Application

The researcher organized small groups to provide both a venue for discussion and a means of supportive accountability. Given the reflective nature of the questions, the age of group members was limited by the researcher to middle school and older. The researcher developed a basic set of questions that corresponded to the framework of

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10. At the end of the curriculum the researcher made an anonymous form available to congregants where they could share specific journal responses should they desire. This was used to help gather qualitative feedback.

knowledge, recognition, application that group facilitators would use through each of the eleven units of the curriculum.

### Instructional Design Model Implementation

The ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) and backwards design methods of instructional design were employed in developing the researcher's "Curriculum for Christlikeness." Further discussion of the topics and frameworks related to the analysis and design of this curriculum can be found in chapter 2.

The researcher completed the first stage of analysis in chapters 1 and 2 of this project. The development stage focused on the elements of the worship service, sermon, journal, and small group preparation, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Development of units preceded the implementation but continued to be revised and further developed after the curriculum began.

At this point the backwards design methodology and template was intended to guide the development process.<sup>11</sup> The researcher would state the desired results shown through relevant goals, built upon specific congregant understandings, guided by essential questions. Next the researcher would establish assessment evidence through specific performance tasks and other methods of evidence. Based on these, the researcher would design specific learning plans and activities. One template was created for the entire curriculum, while sub-templates were created for each of the individual units.

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11. See the curriculum. Accessible at <https://bit.ly/382NaOh>

Implementation happened in the manner and timing listed above. The researcher used the three curricular venues to implement the curriculum while constructing future units.

Evaluation occurred throughout the design and implementation process but was specifically done as the researcher analyzed the survey portion of the field work. Based on the surveys, along with feedback from a committee, the researcher adjusted subsequent sections of the curriculum as necessary.

### **Location of Study, Significance to Ministry, and Participants**

The researcher implemented the “Curriculum for Christlikeness” at Keystone Nazarene Church in Okinawa, Japan. The Sunday morning worship service was the primary venue for the presentation of the curricular material. This project was significant for the ministry of Keystone because it addressed a critical obstacle to fulfilling its mission of “making Christlike disciples in Okinawa,” that obstacle being disciples who do not consistently obey Jesus or reflect his character. It accomplished this by helping people learn to do what Jesus said to do routinely because they are growing in his character. The researcher did not place restrictions on participation in this project as this most honestly reflects the reality of church life that people vary in consistency of attendance and depth of engagement. All ages participated in the worship service, except on those Sundays when there is a separate children’s church during the preaching time; therefore, the curriculum was designed for all ages excepting the delineation made in the

footnote below.<sup>12</sup> It was also be designed to be meaningful for all congregational ethnicities and levels of spiritual maturity. The researcher encouraged congregants to use the guided reflection journal and to join a small group in order to take advantage of additional opportunities for reflection, accountability, and engagement.

### **Instruments of Data Gathering**

The researcher primarily gathered data through mixed-design surveys consisting of multiple-choice questions, Likert scale questions, and a comments section (appendices 1–8). The surveys began with multiple-choice demographic questions about age, ethnicity, and years attending Keystone in order to analyze differences in Keystone’s congregational makeup. These were followed by multiple choice questions designed to assess frequency of participation in the three parts of the curriculum: the worship service, the reflection journal, and small groups. This information was intended to reveal the degree of involvement with the curriculum and was intended to provide context when analyzing the content questions. The next section of the survey consisted of content questions, measured on an eight-point Likert scale, that covered the recurring unit cycle of knowledge (broken into two sections of familiarity and understanding), recognition, and application (stated as “behavior”). Here the participants evaluated themselves in each category of the unit cycle for the topics covered compared to their perception of themselves in the same categories prior to participating in that unit of the curriculum. The final section provided space for participants to comment in more detail about their self-

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12. While children participated in the curriculum in their joining in the worship service, they did not participate fully as this iteration of the curriculum does not include age-appropriate daily reflections or smaller group discussions. Analysis of the effectiveness of the curriculum through surveys was limited to middle-school age and above. This will be discussed further below.

evaluation of character change as they progressed through the curriculum or to offer other feedback. This was intended to provide the researcher with qualitative data to help give context to the quantitative response data.

Over the course of the curriculum's twenty-four weeks, a survey was given eight times: at the first worship service, at weeks four, eight, twelve, sixteen, twenty, twenty-two, and twenty-four. The irregular surveying frequency was designed to place the survey at the end of a unit. The initial survey (survey 1) served as a pre-assessment, providing a benchmark of participant perceptions about familiarity, reflection, and application of the Sermon, while the following six served as formative assessments, providing comparison and helping to identify trends in general growth as well as differences of understanding and application of the various sections of the Sermon on the Mount itself. The final assessment (survey 8) functioned as a summative assessment by which to draw final conclusions.

Data were also be gathered by feedback from small group leaders. The goal of this feedback was to get a sense of participant engagement, understanding, and application of the material. This feedback could also serve to help the researcher determine if changes were needed in the development of future units.

### **Data Gathering**

On the given survey weeks, participants completed a survey either at the corporate worship or online.<sup>13</sup> An email was sent to the entire congregation with a link to the online survey. Online surveys remained open for one week. In the corporate worship

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13. The electronic survey instructed participants not to complete it if that individual has already submitted a paper survey.



service, the surveys were available for congregants to fill out before or after the service. Completed surveys were turned in at a specified location, collected, and collated by the researcher or his assistant.

The researcher or other worship leaders encouraged middle school and older congregants to complete a survey; however, participation was voluntary.<sup>14</sup> He or she also clarified that the survey was being used for a doctoral research project, that submitting the survey was voluntary but encouraged, and that the survey was anonymous so that participants would feel free to be completely honest.<sup>15</sup> The surveys did not track individual participants, but their responses were aggregated in total for analysis.

All of the surveys were reviewed and revised by faculty experts as they were developed and implemented. This process precluded the need for a pilot test of the surveys. However, the researcher's Ministry Participation Committee within the local context also did review and made suggestions for the design of the surveys.

### **Data Treatment**

Answers to the Likert scale questions in the first survey served as a baseline for the four categories of familiarity, understanding, reflection, and behavior. The researcher evaluated these questions against the same questions given in the eighth and final survey, noting changes between the two sets. The researcher expected the comparison of these

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14. Elementary school children were excluded from the survey, not because they are unable to participate meaningfully in the curriculum, but because of the uncertainty of this age group's ability to reflect meaningfully upon and answer the survey as it is written, which was necessary for reliable data analysis.

15. The beginning of the survey included this note: "This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral dissertation research." The end of the survey included this consent clause: "Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry Research Project."

two surveys to give an overall picture of perceived growth in the four categories. From this, the researcher assessed if the curriculum fulfilled its purpose of helping people to understand and apply consistently what Jesus said in such a way that they are transformed into a greater Christlikeness of character. Perceived growth of 10% or greater on this scale was considered as significant.

The second through seventh surveys tracked improvement in each category specific to the units in the Sermon on the Mount covered in the weeks relevant to the survey period. Each category asked a pre—an assessment of oneself before going through the curriculum—and a post—an assessment of oneself after having gone through the curriculum—evaluation question for the specific Sermon units included.<sup>16</sup> The researcher compared these two answers to note the perceived growth that occurred in each category over the preceding four weeks. These evaluations aided the researcher in tracking congregational perceptions of change and growth and could have been used to identify any adjustments to curricular implementation that might be needed in order to improve congregational engagement with the curriculum.

The researcher evaluated the Likert-scale questions against the questions about worship service attendance, journal usage, and small group participation. The embedded hypothesis was that as one participates in more parts of the curriculum—worship service, journal usage, small group participation—and increased in the frequency of engagement or participation in those parts, the greater would be the perceived growth. However, the researcher realized that this is only true when participants also demonstrate an active, qualitative engagement with God in the topics Jesus addresses in the Sermon. At this

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<sup>16</sup> The survey wording was, “Prior to the sermon series did you...” and “After this series, do you ....” See appendix 2-8 for the full wording.

point, responses in the comment section could help to add such a qualitative perspective to the quantitative data being analyzed. The researcher initially intended to further analyze this data in light of the survey demographic and participation questions.

Lastly, the researcher intended evaluate the general trends of perceived growth and engagement against the three demographic questions of age, time at Keystone, and ethnicity. Trends in the age and ethnicity category could have the potential to highlight whether the curriculum was presented in a way that was biased towards a particular age group or ethnicity. The mid-curriculum surveys would help the researcher to assess and make changes in the curricular implementation should this bias be observed. The question about time at Keystone could provide context related to three main categories of congregants: those who were new, those who were a part of Keystone but would be moving within the average three-year rotation cycle of the military, and those who were part of the Keystone congregation for a longer term.

As the curriculum took place over such a long period of time, the researcher intended to form a focus group of four to five people. Members of this group would represent the various ethnic demographics of the congregation and would meet with the researcher each time the surveys were taken and results have been aggregated. The group would review the data and give perspectives and recommendations to the researcher for possible adjustments to the curriculum to ensure maximum effectiveness moving forward.<sup>17</sup> Notes from this group could also be included in the qualitative analysis of the survey data received.

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17. This is utilizing two of Sharan Merriam's criteria to triangulate the validity of one's research, "Member Checks" and "Peer Evaluation." Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 229.

## **Feasibility and Limitations**

The development of this “Curriculum for Christlikeness” was be a large undertaking. It involved writing twenty-four sermons with specific research applicable to each of the subjects from the Sermon on the Mount, planning worship services to meet curricular objectives and support the sermon theme, writing a daily reflection journal with applicable content, and editing small group discussion question templates.

The researcher set a series of priorities to help guide the work. The first priority for each week was planning the worship service, including the development of the sermon and the flow of worship within the service. The next priority was developing the guided reflection journal, followed by any edits to the small group discussion question templates. If in the development process the researcher discovered he was unable to accomplish all of this, the higher priorities would take precedence over the lower.

The researcher sought to leverage a group of congregants to assist in some curricular development. Development of the worship service flow could be discussed with the church music leader and up to two additional congregants. He could collaborate with another group of three or four on the development of the guided daily reflection journals. Due to the level of English ability of congregants there was not plans for translation of materials into other languages at this time.

A critical element in the implementation of this curriculum would be the consistency of congregant participation. This project did not rely upon a small control group of committed participants, but an entire congregation with all the realities of inconsistent attendance that comes with that. However, this is the reality within which churches must operate. A congregation is not a carefully controlled test group, and the

robustness of the curriculum could be evaluated against how it functioned in this real-life venue.

### **Summary**

This research project sought to fulfill the Keystone Nazarene Church mission statement of “making Christlike disciples in Okinawa” by addressing the problem of congregants whose lives and actions do not consistently adhere to what Jesus taught or reflect his character. To that end, the researcher developed a “Curriculum for Christlikeness” that established a biblical framework for character development based on Dallas Willard’s view of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 4:17–7:29. The curriculum was implemented in the corporate worship service and incorporated a daily guided reflection journal and opportunities for weekly small group discussion and accountability. In planning the Sunday worship service, the researcher sought to follow Jesus’s own example before and at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (4:17–5:16) by enthraling people’s minds with God, and then reflect on the Sermon teaching of Jesus, its meaning, its relevance, and its trustworthiness. The curriculum covered Jesus’s instructions through the Sermon over the course of eleven two-week units. Each unit progressed through the framework of knowledge, reflection, and application. Habit change does not occur quickly. This two-week period would give time for changes in perspective and behavioral change and instructions for those changes, leading towards new habits and transformed character. The researcher issued surveys in the worship service eight times over the course of the curriculum to measure self-perceived changes

in a) knowledge, as demonstrated by familiarity and understanding, b) reflection upon the issues the Sermon addresses and their presence in one's life, and c) changes of behavior.

#### **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA**

The researcher observed the problem of followers of Jesus who do not consistently obey his instructions or reflect his character. This was revealed in the researcher's own life, that of his congregation, and in larger research. In Dallas Willard's book *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard highlights this issue and proposes a solution: to help people practice the teachings of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount in a hopeful and character-transforming way. While Willard described and explained the curricular nature of the Sermon on the Mount, he left it to others to develop and implement this curriculum.

The researcher developed a twenty-four-week "Curriculum for Christlikeness" that provided a biblical framework for character development manifested in one's behavior, a loving obedience to Jesus's teachings. The curriculum was based on Willard's approach to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1–7:29 and emphasized understanding what Jesus taught and putting it into practice. This study sought to engage the congregation of Keystone Nazarene Church using the Sunday worship service as the central curricular venue. It also provided a daily guided reflection journal and opportunities to meet in small groups (hereafter referred to as "discipleship groups") for deeper discussion. These venues sought to promote better understanding of and accountability in the application of Jesus's teachings.

The researcher used a Participatory Action Research approach to measure perceived congregant growth in Christlikeness through the application of Jesus's

teachings. Data was gathered through a series of eight surveys given throughout the curriculum. Surveys were open to all congregants, middle school students and above. Responses were voluntary and anonymous. Quantitative data came from multiple choice demographic questions and Likert scale survey questions. Respondents used the Likert scale questions to rate their perception of growth in each of four categories before and after participating in that curricular unit. Qualitative data came from written responses on surveys, communication from discipleship group leaders, and a survey in which congregants could voluntarily share reflection journal responses.

Congregants responded to eight surveys over the course of the curriculum, which spanned from August 29, 2021, to March 6, 2022. On Sundays when the survey was given, the researcher placed printed surveys on chairs in the sanctuary and sent an email to the congregation with a link to an online survey. The researcher closed the online surveys approximately five days after sending the congregational email. Instructions were given not to fill out more than one survey. Survey response totals varied from fourteen to forty-five with an average of twenty-five.

The researcher had an assistant collate the survey data. A second assistant reconfirmed the data accuracy, made decisions on survey anomalies, and worked with the researcher in processing and analyzing the data.

### **Presentation of the Field Work and Data Results**

The “Curriculum for Christlikeness” occurred during the COVID pandemic which impacted church attendance. During the curriculum implementation, Keystone consisted



of 74% American, 14% Japanese, 10% Filipino, and 2% other nationalities.<sup>1</sup> Congregant ages were 15% middle to high school, 44% 20-45 years old, and 41% 46 years old and above.<sup>2</sup> Given the small sample size and low respondent rate as well as the fluctuating nature of congregation participation, particularly during COVID, if the survey demographics fell within +/-10% of congregational age and nationality demographics, the researcher considered the survey as reflective of the congregational makeup.

Over the course of the curriculum, the Sunday worship attendance varied from 52 to 99 (including small children) and averaged 75.

Over the course of the curriculum, 6–8 discipleship groups met with thirty individuals on average participating in the groups.<sup>3</sup> These groups spanned the various demographics of the church. Groups met both at the church as well as in congregants' homes. Two groups were cancelled during the curriculum due to a lack of consistent participation, one at week six and another at week fifteen.

The researcher provided training with group leaders before the curriculum began. He sent a weekly email to group leaders with the next week's discipleship group material as well as tips for helping to facilitate a healthy group taken from the book *Making Small*

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1. Percentages are general as COVID and Keystone's transient demographics caused changes throughout the implementation of this half-year curriculum.

2. The age categories divided the congregation by major life cycle within the Keystone cultural context. Middle and high school are pre-adult. Ages 19-46 show the first half of a professional life. Many congregants retire from the military and switch careers in their 40's. Ages 46+ are the latter half of professional life and retirement. This is a unique group in the Keystone congregation consisting of individuals who generally have lived in Okinawa for a longer period of time. This choice of age also divides our adult population most evenly.

3. Youth group (middle and high school students), men's group, two women's groups, Japanese language group, young adult group, and a family group. These small group ages were not intentionally shaped by the survey age range, except for the middle and senior high school group.

*Groups Work* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend.<sup>4</sup> The researcher followed up with group leaders each week to track attendance and to hear discussion highlights.

Each of the eight surveys was analyzed individually in light of total congregant responses. Survey one served as a baseline survey of the entire Sermon on the Mount. Surveys two through seven were given out at the end of a unit, usually at four-week intervals and were analyzed individually.<sup>5</sup> Survey eight served as a summative evaluation. Analysis focused on general perceived congregational growth and not detailed analysis of individual respondents. The data was used to answer the research question: “How can the Sermon on the Mount be developed into a discipleship curriculum that would result in transformation in behavior and character of Keystone church congregants?” The results of the curriculum development and implementation were evaluated by three evaluation questions. These questions were: Did the congregation express perceived growth over the course of the curriculum based on survey responses? Did a more frequent degree of participation in the various curricular venues (worship service, reflection journal, and discipleship group) show a greater amount of perceived growth? Was there a correlation between demographic categories and perceived growth? The data comparing perceived growth in light of the three demographic categories was not evaluated. This was for two reasons. First, the

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4. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), Kindle.

5. Survey 2 - Unit 1: Introduction, The Kingdom (Matt 5:1–20; August 29-September 12)  
 Survey 3 - Unit 2-3: Anger/Contempt, Lust/Obsessive Desire (Matt 5:21–32; September 19-October 10)  
 Survey 4 - Unit 4-5: Verbal Manipulation, Retaliation/Enemies (Matt 5:33–48; October 17-November 7)  
 Survey 5- Unit 6-7: Praying/Giving/Fasting for God alone, Treasuring (Matt 6:1–24; November 14-December 5)  
 Survey 6 - Unit 8-9: Review, Worry, Judging (Matt 6:25–7:6; January 9-31)  
 Survey 7 - Unit 10: Asking (Matt 7:7–12; February 6-13)  
 Survey 8 – Unit 11: Doing what Jesus Says, Closing (7:13–27, February 20- March 6)

limitations on this project meant prioritizing the first two research questions as most important. Second, the respondent size was too small to conduct accurate demographic analysis.<sup>6</sup>

The first evaluation question regarded congregational perception of growth in each of the categories of familiarity, understanding, recognition, and behavior. On surveys two through eight, respondents answered pre- and post-questions (hereafter referred to as prior and after) regarding the specific Sermon curriculum units just completed, and in survey eight on the Sermon on the Mount as a whole. The researcher analyzed this data by using overlapping bell graphs (titled “perceived growth chart”) to compare the prior and after responses in each category.

For all four categories (familiarity, understanding, recognition, and behavior) across all eight surveys, there was a highly significant relationship between participation in the curriculum and survey responses indicating perceived growth. The t-value was 19.645386.<sup>7</sup> The probability value (p) that the data was random is less than 1% (< 0.00001).

In the familiarity category, there was a highly significant relationship between participation in the curriculum and survey responses indicating perceived familiarity with Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. The value of t was 8.831761. The probability value (p) that the data was random is less than 1% (<0.00001).

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6. A sample size of at least fifty-participants are required to show correlations. Jack R. Fraenkel, Norman E. Wallen, and Helen H. Hyun, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2012), 103.

7. The t-value shows a ratio of the difference between the two tested data sets. A larger value, such as this one, denotes a larger difference between the two data sets.

In the understanding category, there was a highly significant relationship between participation in the curriculum and survey responses indicating perceived understanding of Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. The value of  $t$  was 10.459729. The probability value ( $p$ ) that the data was random is less than 1% ( $<0.00001$ ).

In the behavior category, there was a highly significant relationship between participation in the curriculum and survey responses indicating perceived recognition in and around one's life of the topics addressed by Jesus in Sermon on the Mount. The value of  $t$  was 11.395142. The probability value ( $p$ ) that the data was random is less than 1% ( $<0.00001$ ).

The data shows a highly significant relationship between participation in the curriculum and survey responses indicating perceived behavior that aligns with Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. The value of  $t$  is 9.48513. The probability value ( $p$ ) that the data was random is less than 1% ( $<0.00001$ ).

The second evaluation question compared the correlation of curriculum participation to perceived growth. Were the Likert self-perception scores of respondents who were more involved in the curricular venues higher than those who were less involved? To determine this, the researcher assigned a score to each answer of the three participation questions and totaled each respondent's score for an overall participation score (table 2).<sup>8</sup> The minimum possible score was one (1+0+0) while the maximum was seven (3+2+2). The researcher analyzed this data by using trendlines from a scatterplot chart which showed the perceived growth amount compared to the participation score.

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8. Participation in each category was not analyzed against one another, but only by the total score across all three areas.

Each category of surveys 2–7, where participation data was tracked, was then compared as a whole.

Table 2: Participation Score

Score Category	0	1	2	3
Worship attendance		Once a month or less	2-3 times a month	4-5 times a month
Reflection Journal usage	Not using	1-3 times a week	4+ times a week	
Discipleship Group participation	Not participating	1-2 times a month	3+ times a month	

### Survey 1

Survey one was a baseline survey given the first week of the curriculum. It measured respondents' self-perceptions of the four categories concerning the Sermon on the Mount as a whole. Forty-five congregants filled out the survey.

Age and nationality responses reflected the congregational makeup, though there were no Filipino respondents (figure 6).<sup>9</sup>

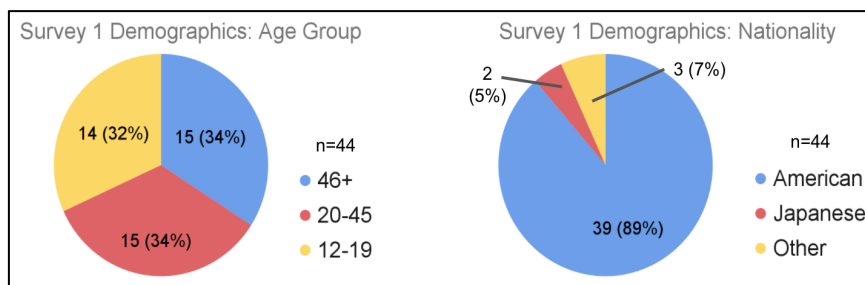


Figure 6. Survey 1 Age and Nationality Data

9. There were health and cultural reasons related to COVID throughout the curriculum that kept Filipinos from attending the worship service and likely participating in the surveys. The largest segment of our Filipinos consists of an extended family who attend or do not attend together. Two members of this family had significant health issues which kept the rest of the family home during much of COVID. Their attendance has had a direct impact on the attendance of other Filipinos in the congregation.

The perceived growth baselines based on the Likert scale for the entire Sermon on the Mount were familiarity, 4.023 (figure 7); understanding, 4.568 (figure 8); recognition, 4.6 (figure 9); and behavior, 4.5 (figure 10).

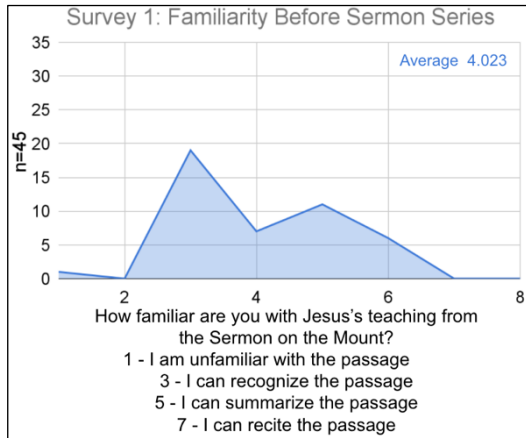


Figure 7. Survey 1 Baseline – Familiarity

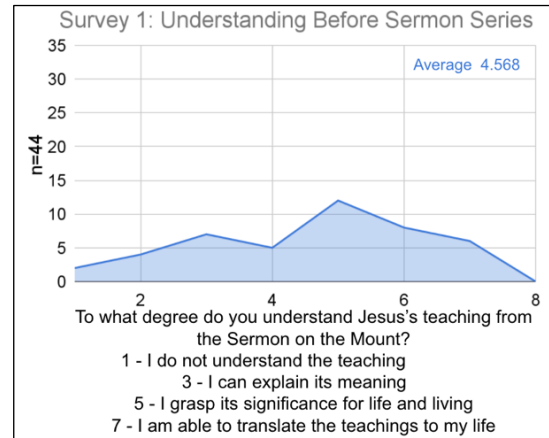


Figure 8. Survey 1 Baseline – Understanding

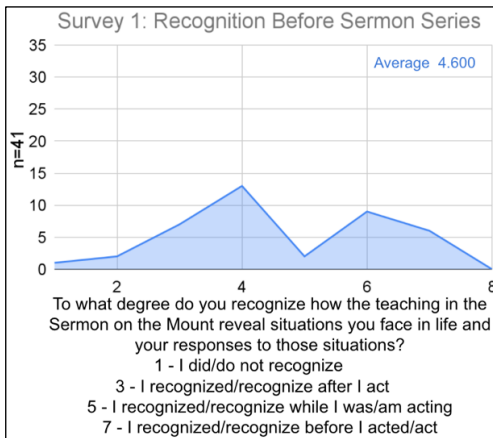


Figure 9. Survey 1 Baseline – Recognition

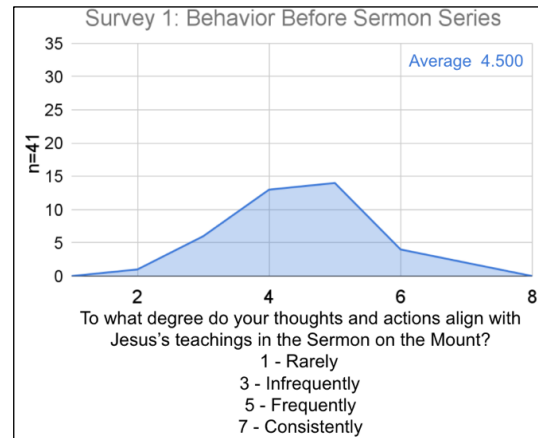


Figure 10. Survey 1 Baseline – Behavior

## Survey 2

Survey two was given on week four of the curriculum. It measured respondents' self-perceptions of the four categories concerning Jesus's teachings in Matthew 5:1–20

(the availability of the Kingdom of the Heavens as illustrated in the beatitudes and in his comments on salt and light). Fourteen congregants filled out the survey.

Age responses reflected the congregational makeup, though the “other” nationality was 12% above baseline. This was due to the low response rate for the survey (figure 11).

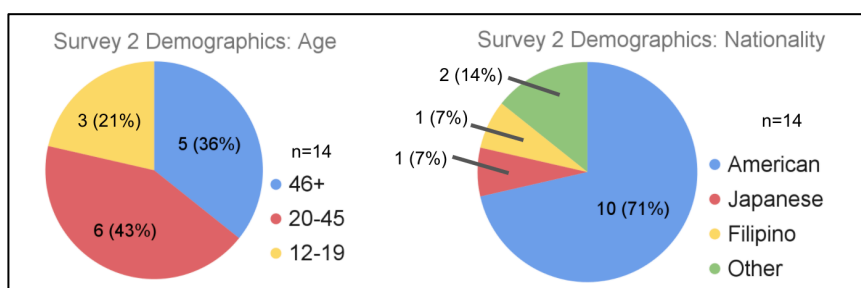


Figure 11. Survey 2 Age and Nationality Data

Survey two provided the first opportunity to analyze perceived growth. The y-axis of the perceived growth chart shows the total number of respondents (n). The height of the y-axis is based on the highest number of responses across all four category questions on that survey, giving a similar size for comparison between the four perceived growth charts, one for each category of familiarity, understanding, recognition, and behavior. The x-axis shows the number of Likert scale responses (1–8). Pre, or “prior” responses are shown in light blue, while the post, or “after” responses are shown in dark blue. Dark blue peaks to the right of light blue peaks visually represent perceived growth. The increase in the average response between prior and after is numerically expressed as

“perceived growth amount” based on the 8-point Likert scale. This perceived growth is also reflected as a percentage.<sup>10</sup>

Survey two showed perceived growth based on Likert scale responses in all categories. The familiarity question showed perceived growth from an average 3.714 response to 4.5, a Likert growth amount of 0.786 or 11% (figure 12).<sup>11</sup> The understanding question response average rose from 3.429 to 4.357, a Likert growth amount of 0.928 or 13% (figure 13). The recognition question average grew from 3.5 to 4.786, a Likert growth amount of 1.286 or 18% (figure 14). And the behavior question response grew from 4.071 to 4.786, a Likert growth amount of 0.715 or 10% (figure 15).

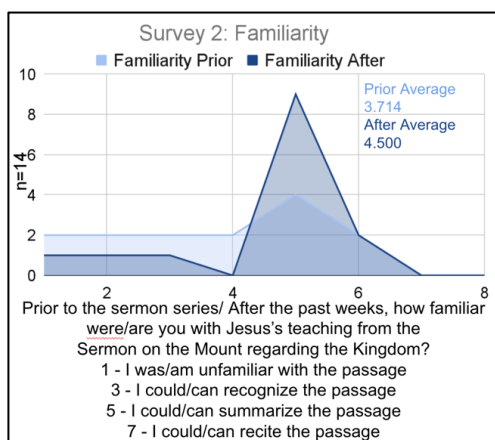


Figure 12. Survey 2 Perceived Growth Chart – Familiarity

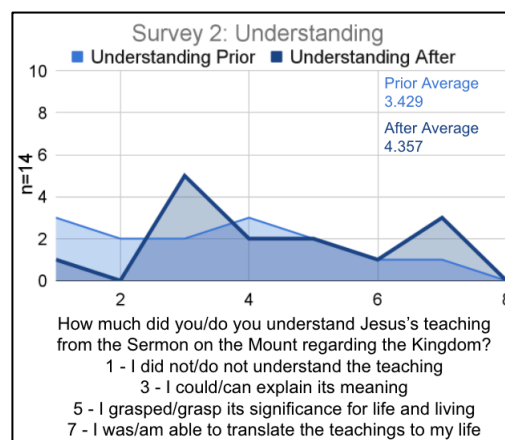


Figure 13. Survey 2 Perceived Growth Chart – Understanding

10. Likert responses can move 7 steps (from 1 to 8), so each step represents 14.28% of perceived growth. Perceived growth amount x 14.28 = Perceived growth percentage.

11. Prior average – post average = growth amount.



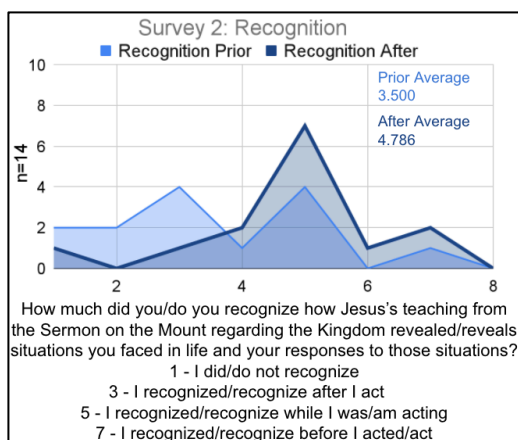


Figure 14. Survey 2 Perceived Growth Chart – Recognition

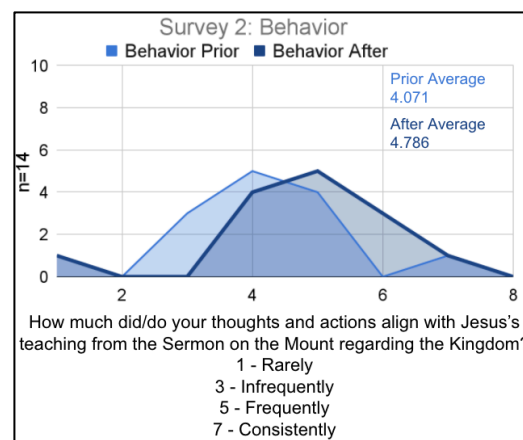


Figure 15. Survey 2 Perceived Growth Chart – Behavior

Survey two also provided the first opportunity to analyze the correlation of participation on perceived growth. The x-axis of the “Perceived Growth Amount – Change in Likert Number” graph (figure 16) shows respondents based upon participation score with the left side of the graph being the lowest participation score of one and the right side of the graph being the highest participation score of seven. The y-axis shows the growth amount on the Likert scale. The researcher first graphed individual responses in each category as a scatterplot, then created a trendline. The growth amount of a low-participation score was subtracted from the growth amount for a high-participation score for each category. A rising line denotes greater growth for greater participation. This gave the Likert growth difference which was also translated to a percentage growth difference.

A correlation existed between increased participation scores and greater perceived growth based on Likert responses across all categories (figure 16). The support for this finding is as follows: compared to low participation respondents (participation score of 1), high participation respondents (participation score of seven) saw a 2% greater perceived growth in the familiarity category (0.70 compared to 0.85), 8% in

understanding (0.55 compared to 1.10), 4% in recognition (1.10 compared to 1.40), and 9% in behavior (0.30 compared to 0.90). This growth comparison is based on a trendline from a scatterplot and does not show individuation of respondents. The purpose of the graph is to help visualize the relationship between participation and growth.

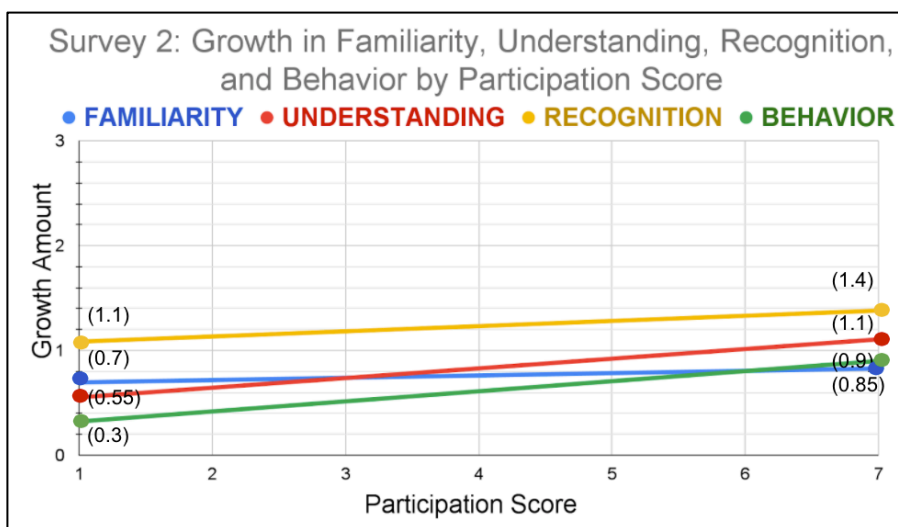


Figure 16. Survey 2 Perceived Growth Amount - Change in Likert Number

The researcher will now present qualitative data gathered during that particular unit. One congregant noted, “I came into this series emotionally exhausted. Hearing [in the reflection journal weekly memory verse] that the Lord is my shepherd and that he meets all my needs, refreshed my soul. [Another reflection journal Scripture reminded me that] ‘In Him all things hold together’ (Col 1:17b). I didn't have to keep it together which was comforting, because I just didn't have the energy.” This showed the recognition of the presence of God and his Kingdom which changed the congregant’s perceptions of the realities of his or her difficult situation, similar to Willard’s explanation of Jesus’ beatitudes to the crowd.

### Survey 3

Survey three was given on week eight of the curriculum. It measured respondents' self-perceptions of the four categories concerning Jesus's teachings in Matthew 5:21–30 (anger and obsessive desires). Twenty-six congregants filled out the survey.

Age responses reflected the congregational makeup, though there were no Filipino or "other" nationality respondents (figure 17).

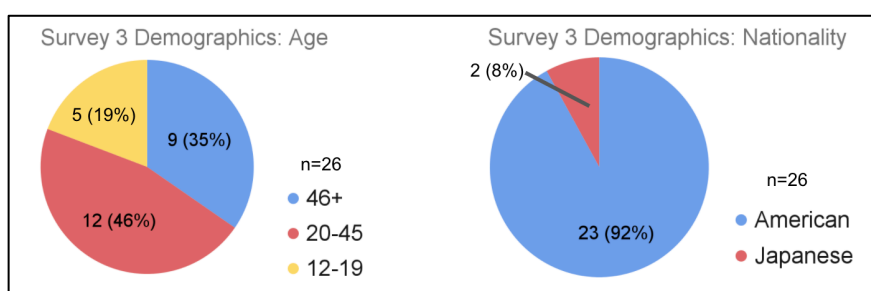


Figure 17. Survey 3 Age and Nationality Data

Survey three showed perceived growth based on Likert scale responses in all categories. The familiarity question showed growth from an average 3.654 response to 4.962, a Likert growth amount of 1.308 or 19% (figure 18). The understanding question response average rose from 3.692 to 5.577, a Likert growth amount of 1.885 or 27% (figure 19). Growth in the recognition question average went from 3.808 to 5.615, a Likert growth amount of 1.807 or 26% (figure 20). And the behavior question response increased from 3.958 to 5.167, a Likert growth amount of 1.209 or 17% (figure 21).

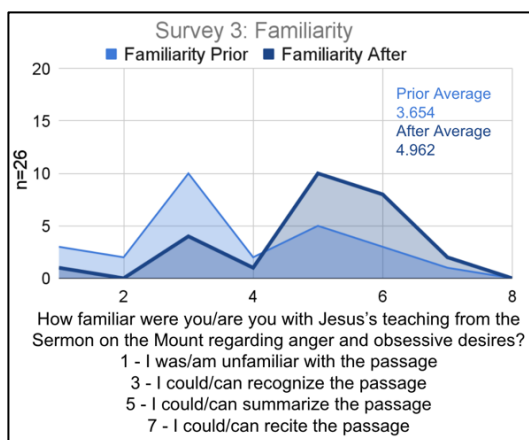


Figure 18. Survey 3 Perceived Growth Chart – Familiarity

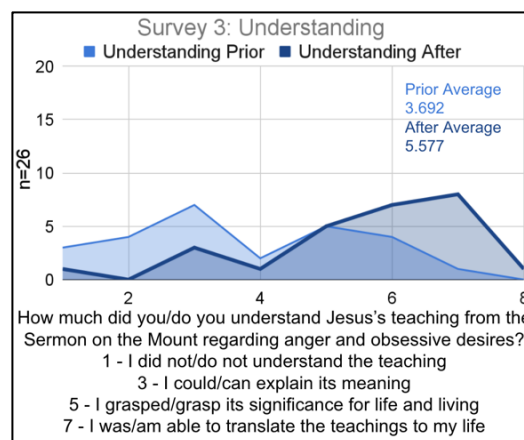


Figure 19. Survey 3 Perceived Growth Chart – Understanding

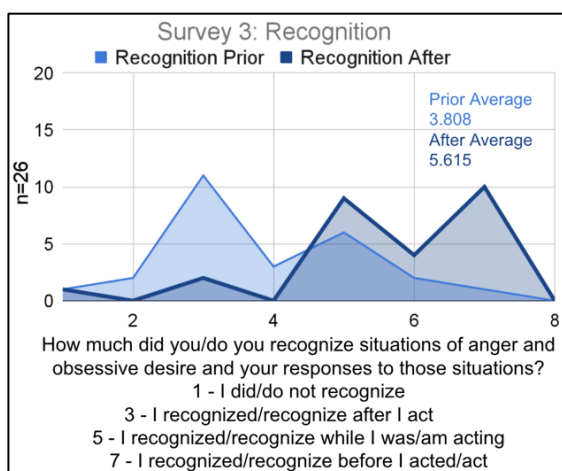


Figure 20. Survey 3 Perceived Growth Chart – Recognition

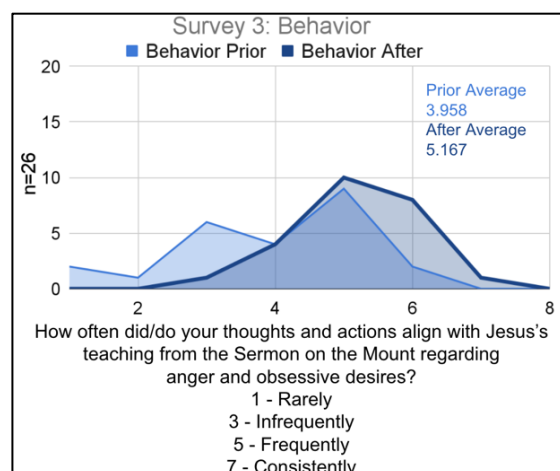


Figure 21. Survey 3 Perceived Growth Chart – Behavior

In survey 3, a correlation existed between increased participation scores and greater perceived growth based on Likert responses across all categories (figure 22). Compared to low participation respondents (participation score of 1), high participation respondents (participation score of seven) saw a 10% greater perceived growth in the familiarity category (0.90 compared to 1.60), 33% in understanding (0.50 compared to 2.8), 30% in recognition (0.55 compared to 2.65), and 7% in behavior (0.80 compared to 1.30). This growth comparison is approximate based on a trendline from a scatterplot.

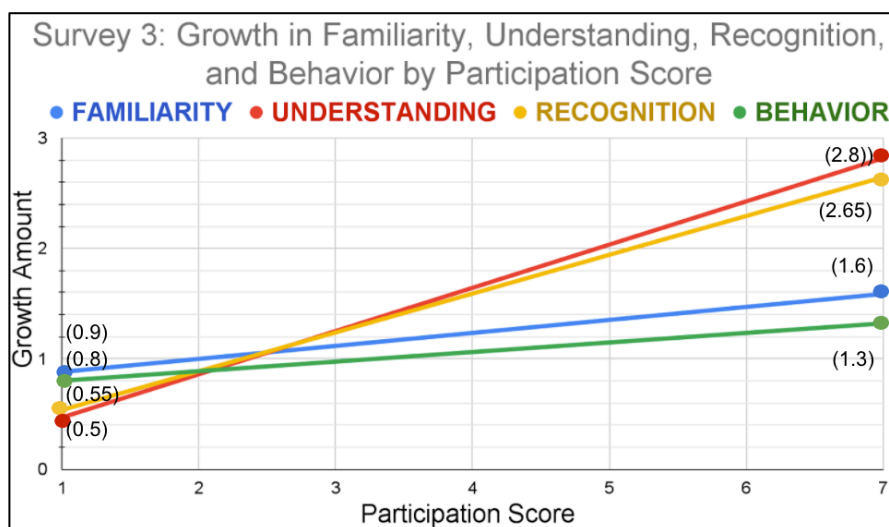


Figure 22. Survey 3 Perceived Growth Amount – Change in Likert Number

We will now look at a sampling of qualitative responses for this unit which serve to give context to the quantitative data listed above. One respondent wrote, “My anger does not help do God’s work! It is so freeing! I do not need to ‘fix’ or necessarily even address other people’s choices that ‘make’ me angry. Only I can make me angry. Praying for the person, situation, frees me of anger, and is more effective than my anger/judgment.” Another respondent reflected, “It helped me a lot when we were learning about anger as I had difficult times with family. If I hadn’t known how to deal with it, it would have been a disaster.” A discipleship group participant shared, “When I first came to this church in May I was always angry about something. But now I have learned how to deal with it. Over the past four to five months, I think I have changed a lot. Whenever I got frustrated, I used to think of drugs and lustful thoughts but now I am able to stop those thoughts a lot earlier.”

A congregant shared from his or her journal,

This [topic] has come in so handy because many times when [I] receive an upsetting email I want to write back in anger. But I know that is not what we should do and it is actually one of the worst things I can do is to respond or reply

in anger. This is where I will use the wheel six steps.... I have to remind myself that sometimes other people are going through things and they're just lashing out in anger but honestly, they're angry at something else and it's not really against me. In a specific instance I was able to not be angry or lash out in anger when I had a conversation with another person and it seemed like all they wanted to do was attack me. [T]here was confusion and once I opened up my ears and listened, I saw that they were more upset with what things are going on in their lives and they weren't mad at me. I was able to listen and understand and ultimately resolve a problem without any confrontation.

Concerning contempt, another congregant responded,

The sermon on contempt was a very good reminder. Especially when I was in the States the last few years, the political discourse and hate/contempt increased to unprecedented levels and I found myself contemptuous of certain groups that I thought were just straight ignorant. But like Paul said, people are not the issue but the spiritual forces of darkness at work in all of us. I'm definitely stepping back and avoiding generalizations of individuals that I have never even met.

Finally, a discipleship group leader reflected on the conversation over Jesus's comments on divorce, "We had a good time of sharing about our experiences with our parents' marriage, the good and the bad. [We] talked about how contempt is a leading killer in relationships. And we talked a lot about submission and why that's not a bad thing when done in the biblical way God intended just as in the trinity."

#### Survey 4

Survey four measured respondents' self-perceptions of the four categories concerning Jesus's teachings in Matthew 5:33–48 (verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies). Twenty-seven congregants filled out the survey. Due to administrative errors this survey data cannot be compared to others but will stand alone.<sup>12</sup>

Age responses reflected the congregational makeup (figure 23).

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12. Due to administrative oversight, the survey was given on week 15 instead of week 12. While this delay in survey timing may impact responses, the researcher feels it does not invalidate the data completely. This survey shows respondents' reflection on their perceived growth on material that they covered, though measured at a different interval than other surveys.

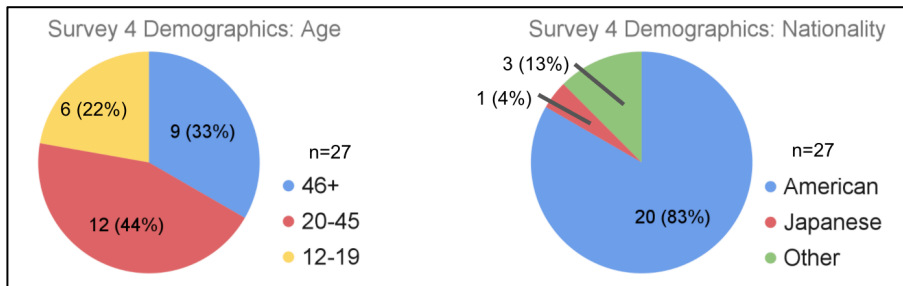


Figure 23. Survey 4 Age and Nationality Data

Survey four showed perceived growth based on Likert scale responses in all categories. The familiarity question showed growth from an average 3.593 response to 4.704, a Likert growth amount of 1.111 or 16% (figure 24). The understanding question response average rose from 3.481 to 5.407, a Likert growth amount of 1.926 or 28% (figure 25). Growth in the recognition question average went from 3.593 to 5.556, a Likert growth amount of 1.963 or 28% (figure 26). And the behavior question response increased from 4.074 to 5.111, a Likert growth amount of 1.037 or 15% (figure 27).

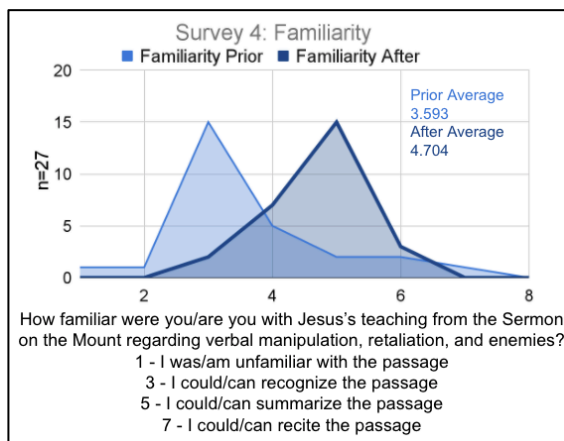


Figure 24. Survey 4 Perceived Growth Chart – Familiarity

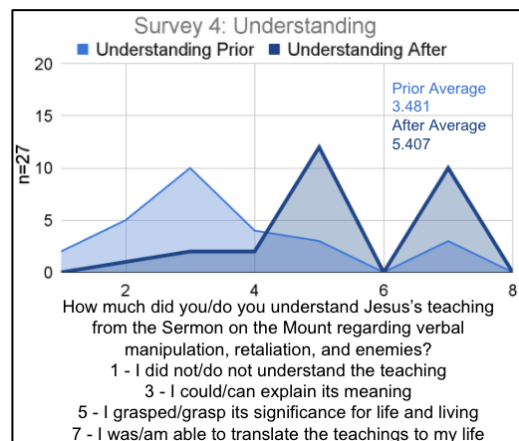


Figure 25. Survey 4 Perceived Growth Chart – Understanding

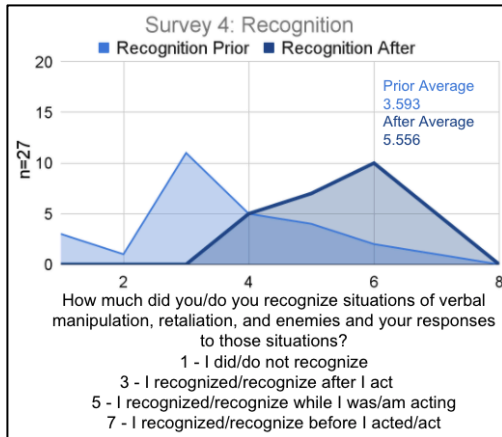


Figure 26. Survey 4 Perceived Growth Chart – Recognition

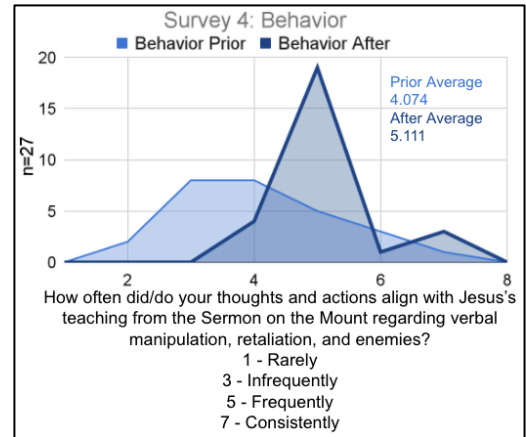


Figure 27. Survey 4 Perceived Growth Chart – Behavior

In survey four, a correlation existed between increased participation scores and greater perceived growth based on Likert responses across all categories (figure 28). Support for this claim is as follows: compared to low participation respondents (participation score of 1), high participation respondents (participation score of seven) saw a 15% greater perceived growth in the familiarity category (0.50 compared to 1.55), 4% in understanding (1.75 compared to 2.05), 6% in recognition (1.70 compared to 2.10), and 4% in behavior (0.85 compared to 1.15). This growth comparison is based on a trendline from a scatterplot.



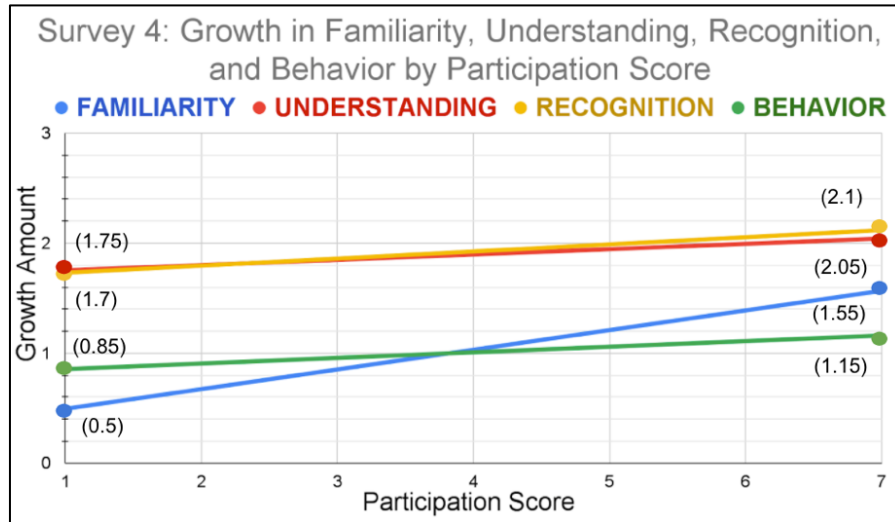


Figure 28. Survey 4 Perceived Growth Amount – Change in Likert Number

We will now look at a sampling of qualitative responses for this unit which serve to give context to the quantitative data listed above. In the topics covered in survey four, one of the discipleship group leaders commented, “[Our group had] good discussion on how much verbal and thought manipulation occurs in our society through various cultural and media channels, and why Jesus emphasizes speaking with sincerity, truthful intentions. [We] also talked about the power of our tongue and how our words can impact our respective kingdoms for good or bad.” The impact of the earlier topics of anger to verbal manipulation were captured by one participant who said, “God has been working on the anger stuff in me for a while, and it's getting better, but I think this verbal manipulation is the next step.” A survey respondent recognized, “When I use words to overwhelm or manipulate my spouse, it never brings good. God, help me to slow down and not react in anger and hurt. Help me find my value in you.” A parent shared from his or her journal,

As I reflected about the teachings [on verbal manipulation], I realized more and more how I needed to learn for my “no” to be “no.” Too many times I was retaliating against my kids because if I gave them a choice to do something and

they didn't pick the right choice I would get upset. If I wanted them to do something I should simply ask them to [do it].... My kids recognize that and we've talked several times about it. They want [me to say what I] mean; not to threaten them but let them know what I want from them.... I was happy to hear that they had confidence enough to tell me that so then we could work together as a family.

### Survey 5

Survey five was given on week sixteen of the curriculum. It measured respondents' self-perceptions of the categories concerning Jesus's teachings in Matthew 6:1–24 (giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and treasuring possessions on earth above God). Twenty-seven congregants filled out the survey.

Age responses generally reflected the congregational makeup, however there were slightly fewer Japanese and "other" nationality, and no Filipino respondents (figure 29).

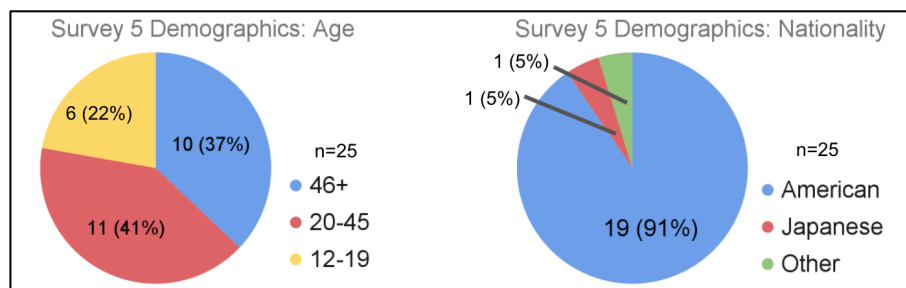


Figure 29. Survey 5 Age and Nationality Data

Survey five showed perceived growth based on Likert scale responses in all categories. The familiarity question showed growth from an average 3.792 response to 5.000, a Likert growth amount of 1.208 or 17% (figure 30). The understanding question response average rose from 4.042 to 5.875, a Likert growth amount of 1.833 or 26% (figure 31). Growth in the recognition question average went from 4.292 to 5.833, a

Likert growth amount of 1.541 or 22% (figure 32). And the behavior question response increased from 3.739 to 5.000, a Likert growth amount of 1.261 or 18% (figure 33).

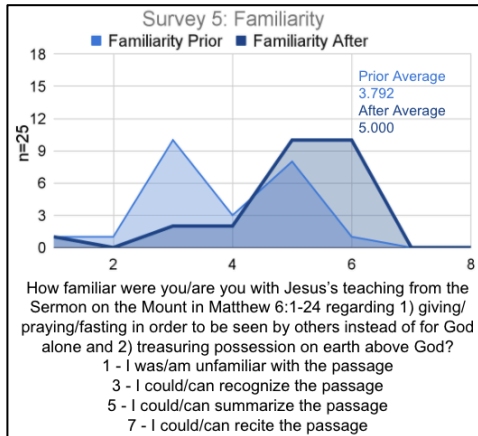


Figure 30. Survey 5 Perceived Growth Chart – Familiarity

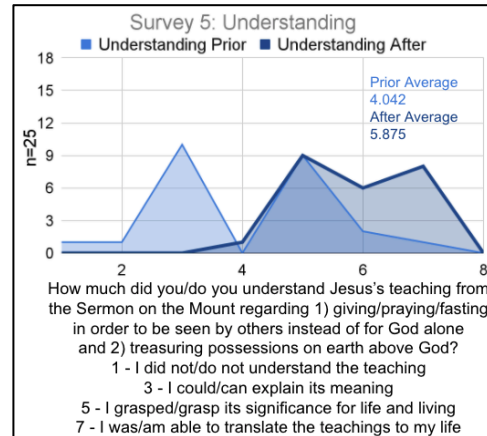


Figure 31. Survey 5 Perceived Growth Chart – Understanding

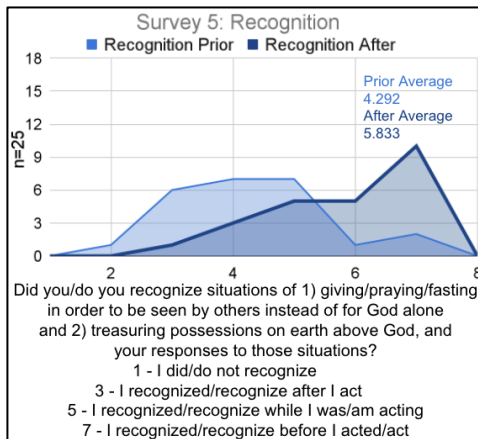


Figure 32. Survey 5 Perceived Growth Chart – Recognition

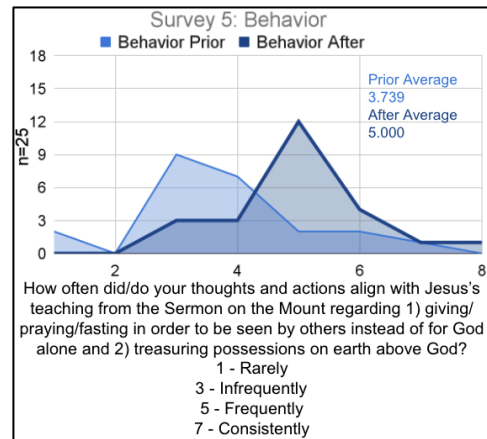


Figure 33. Survey 5 Perceived Growth Chart – Behavior

In survey five, a correlation existed between increased participation scores and greater perceived growth based on Likert responses across all categories (figure 34). Support for this finding is as follows: compared to low participation respondents (participation score of 1), high participation respondents (participation score of seven) saw a 14% greater perceived growth in the familiarity category (0.60 to 1.60), 19% in

understanding (1.10 to 2.40), 13% in recognition (1 to 1.90), and 5% in behavior (1 to 1.35). This growth comparison is based on a trendline from a scatterplot.

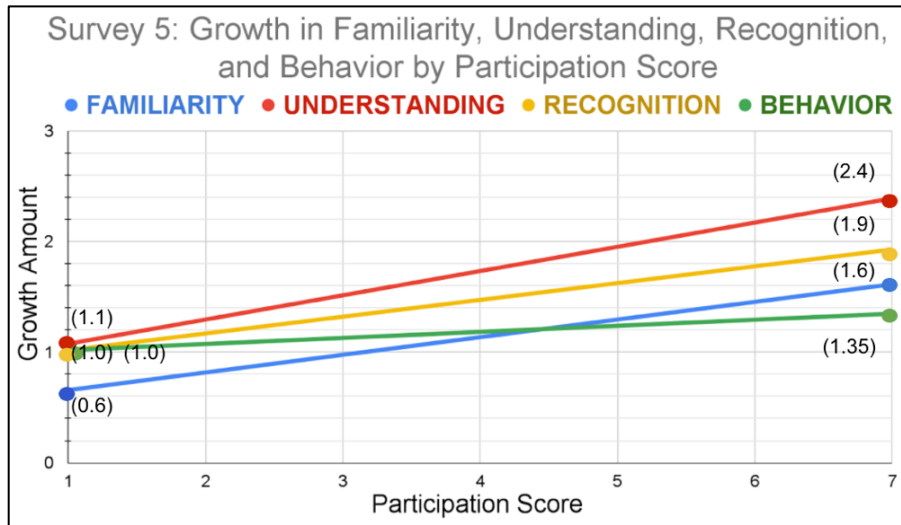


Figure 34. Survey 5 Perceived Growth Amount – Change in Likert Number

We will now look at a sampling of qualitative responses for this unit which serve to give context to the quantitative data listed above. One discipleship group participant reflected a new understanding of the topic of giving not to be seen by others by saying, “It’s really about those core human desires: security, control, and acceptance. When we find those things in God, we don’t have to look for them in other places.” One of the survey respondents noted, “I have especially enjoyed the weekly journals to reflect more deeply after the [sermon]!” This highlights the shift from hearing about a topic to recognizing opportunities for practice, highlighted in another survey respondent’s comment, “Though I’m familiar with the passage, applying it in daily living is the most important thing.”

Congregants reflected on the practice of fasting and prayer. One survey respondent reflected, “I fasted from processed sugary snacks. The fast lasted until I

finished [reading] the book of Proverbs. The Lord showed me how to really listen. That praying and fasting are not just talking to God, but actively listening for His voice.”

Another said,

I found that simply skipping a meal didn't change much. The first time, I just filled it with more tasks. I realized that the purpose is to draw closer to God, so I need to be intentional with that time. The same day, I fasted from any noise (music, podcasts, etc.) on my commute home. The day had been filled with noise, and I needed silence with God to listen and pray. The next time I fasted a meal, I spent the time reading Scripture and praying.

One congregant reflected,

Thinking about the sermon about praying was very relatable to me. Many times, when we pray at the dinner table or when we pray with our family I feel almost as if I have to speak eloquently or use long words to make them seem more valuable. But honestly, I need to just speak to God as my father and be honest and open. I don't have to drag on but I can get straight to the point because he already knows before I even ask him. We've talked about that with our family to let them know that he knows what we need and the fact that we are praying to him is letting him know that we need him, it also lets us know that he is there for us and will always take care of us. This [is] more valuable than the words we say. I think my kids and family have [to] realize that because they sometimes get intimidated when I ask them to say prayer and they're not sure what to say. So, I simply say what's in your heart what are you feeling.

Another congregant reflected on the topic of treasuring, “We worry about [what] we treasure, so [what we worry about is] a good guide to know what we truly treasure in life.”

### Survey 6

Survey six was given on week twenty of the curriculum. It measured respondents' self-perceptions of the categories concerning Jesus's teachings in Matthew 6:25–7:6 (worry and judging). Fourteen congregants filled out the survey.

There were more non-American respondents on survey 6 compared to baseline, and there were no middle or high school respondents (figure 35).

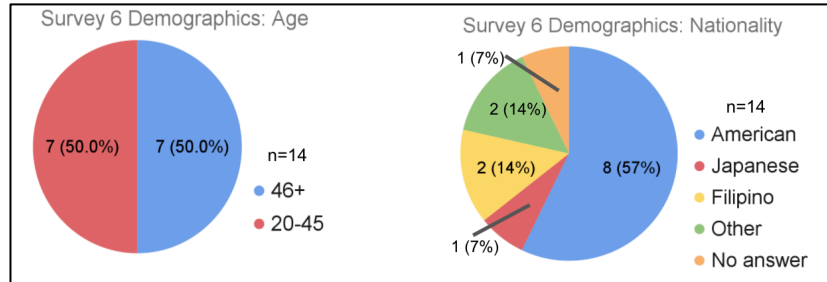


Figure 35. Survey 6 Age and Nationality Data

Survey six showed perceived growth based on Likert scale responses in all categories. The familiarity question showed growth from an average 4.643 response to 5.786, a Likert growth amount of 1.143 or 16% (figure 36). The understanding question response average rose from 4.786 to 6.143, a Likert growth amount of 1.357 or 19% (figure 37). Growth in the recognition question average went from 5.357 to 4.285, a Likert growth amount of 1.072 or 15% (figure 38). And the behavior question response increased from 4.429 to 5.143, a Likert growth amount of 0.714 or 10% (figure 39).

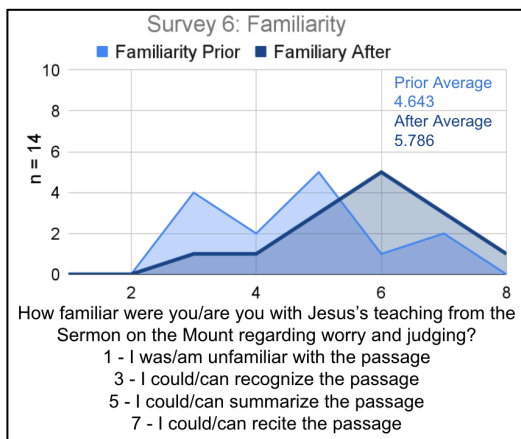


Figure 36. Survey 6 Perceived Growth Chart – Familiarity

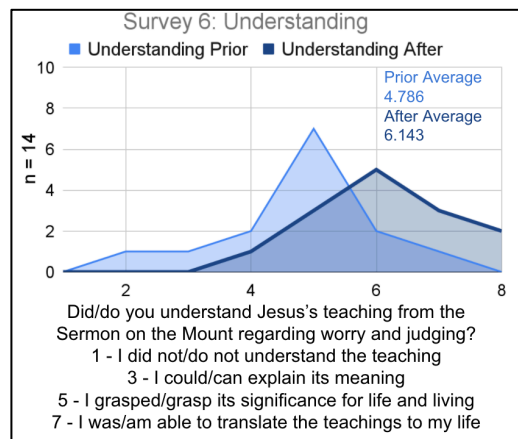


Figure 37. Survey 6 Perceived Growth Chart – Understanding

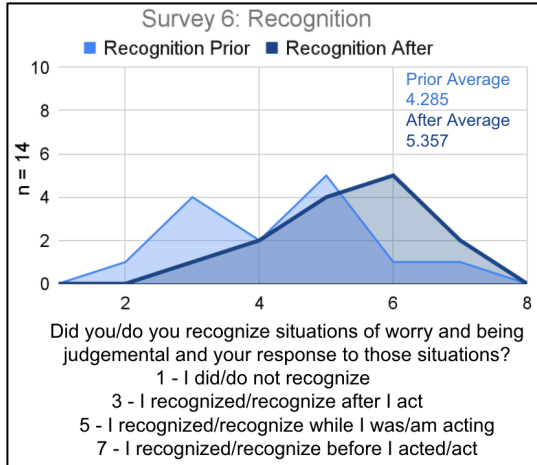


Figure 38. Survey 6 Perceived Growth Chart – Recognition

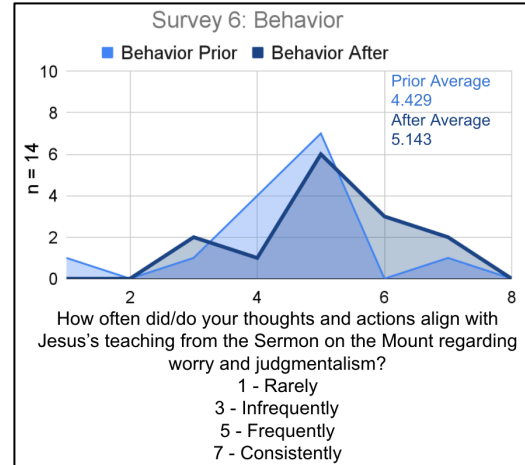


Figure 39. Survey 6 Perceived Growth Chart – Behavior

In survey six, a correlation existed between increased participation scores and greater perceived growth based on Likert responses across all categories (figure 40). Support for this finding was that compared to low participation respondents (participation score of 1), high participation respondents (participation score of seven) saw a 21% greater perceived growth in the familiarity category (0.25 to 1.70), 31% in understanding (0.0 to 2.20), 31% in recognition (0.0 to 2.20), and 16% in behavior (0.30 to 1.40). This growth comparison is based on a trendline from a scatterplot.

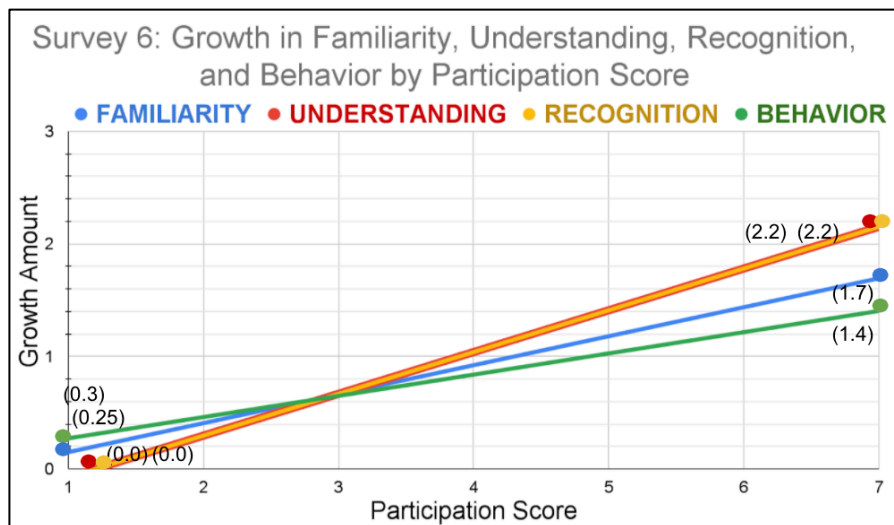


Figure 40. Survey 6 Perceived Growth Amount – Change in Likert Number

We will now look at a sampling of qualitative responses for this unit which serve to give context to the quantitative data listed above. After the sermon on judgmentalism and Jesus's illustration of the log in the eye, a respondent reflected, "I have found myself being judgmental with others and the way they react [in regards to] COVID (following rules, guidelines). I would become angry and want to say something. Now instead of [responding in] anger I stop and try to think about myself. Am I following the rules? Do I pick and choose which ones to follow? I am trying hard to look at myself before I judge another." Another survey respondent wrote after the week on judging, "This week at my drama practice this girl was frustrating me so I snapped at her. I was out of bounds. I soon after apologized."

Regarding worry, a survey respondent wrote, "I have tried very hard to put difficult [and] sad situations in God's hands this week. It's difficult as a mom to not worry, but God has things in his hands!" Another said, "Being task oriented, I typically manage stressful situations with anxious striving. I am learning to trust the Lord with the details and have learned to respond versus react."

A discipleship group leader shared how his or her group reflected on how fears reveal what one values and treasures and how gratitude and generosity is a positive practice to combat worry and fear.

A congregant shared from his or her journal about how COVID has caused anxiety and how they are responding:

God is always with us. God always provides even when/if we get sick. I can rely on God's strength even when things are changing every day. I choose to trust. Worry about children: God, you gave us our children and you love them more than we do. Help me not [to] worry about their friendships, choices, or futures. Continue to draw them to you. I trust you with them. Worry about my job and



roles: God, help me not [to] worry about what I'm not doing. Help me trust and follow you each day. I trust that you are working and guiding and will show us what we need to do. Help me find my identity in you, not what I do or accomplish.

On week seventeen of the curriculum, during the sermon, the researcher suggested the “One Minute Pause” app by John Eldredge to help congregants practice reorienting on God’s presence in times of anxiety.<sup>13</sup> One congregant wrote about this way of practicing laying down worry:

I love this app. It lets you choose [between] a one, three, five, or ten minute session. In the app it reminds you not to worry to give all things to God for he is in control. No amount of worrying I can do will solve the problem but praying to my father and giving it to him knowing I can trust in him and that he is there for me his help so much. Every morning on my way to work I do a five or ten minute pause and then on my way home when things get complicated I reach out to him and just reconnect my love for him.

Throughout the curriculum the six-steps tool was offered to the congregation to help them put Jesus’s teachings into practice in specific moments. The researcher noticed one congregant in his prayer thanking God for helping them recognize when he was tempted to be condemning and to stop (one of the six-steps) and ask God’s help.

### Survey 7

Survey seven was given on week twenty-two of the curriculum. It measured respondents’ self-perceptions of the categories concerning Jesus’s teachings in Matthew 7:7–12 (asking). Twenty-seven congregants filled out the survey.

Age responses reflected the congregational makeup. While more non-American congregants participated in this survey compared to baseline, five respondents left the nationality field blank (figure 41).

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13. Ransomed Heart Ministries, “One Minute Pause App,” 2019, accessed March 4, 2022, <https://www.pauseapp.com/>.

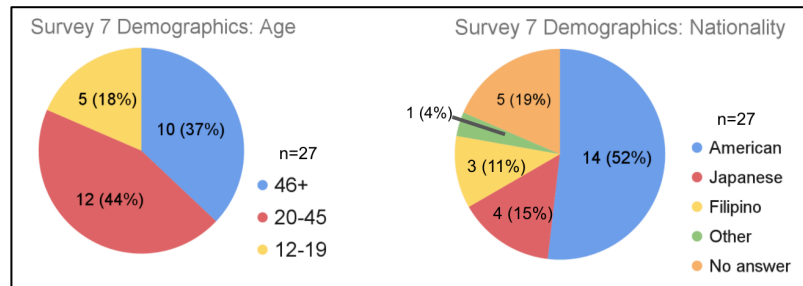


Figure 41. Survey 7 Age and Nationality Data

Survey seven showed perceived growth based on Likert scale responses in all categories. The familiarity question showed growth from an average 3.852 response to 5.333, a Likert growth amount of 1.481 or 21% (figure 42). The understanding question response average rose from 3.629 to 5.407, a Likert growth amount of 1.778 or 25% (figure 43). Growth in the recognition question average went from 3.769 to 5.231, a Likert growth amount of 1.462 or 21% (figure 44). And the behavior question response increased from 3.667 to 4.889, a Likert growth amount of 1.222 or 17% (figure 45).

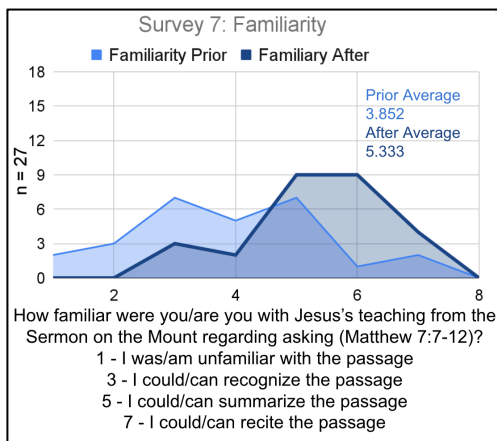


Figure 42. Survey 7 Perceived Growth Chart – Familiarity

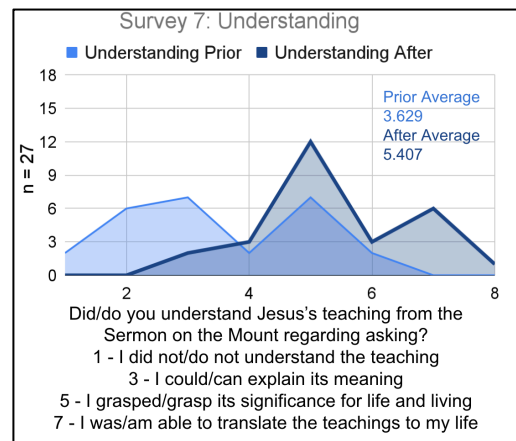


Figure 43. Survey 7 Perceived Growth Chart – Understanding

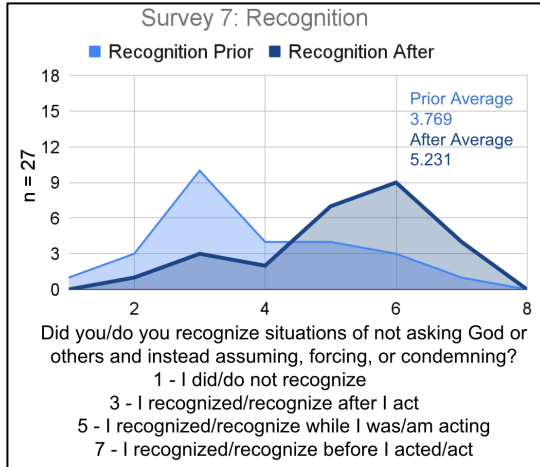


Figure 44. Survey 7 Perceived Growth Chart – Recognition

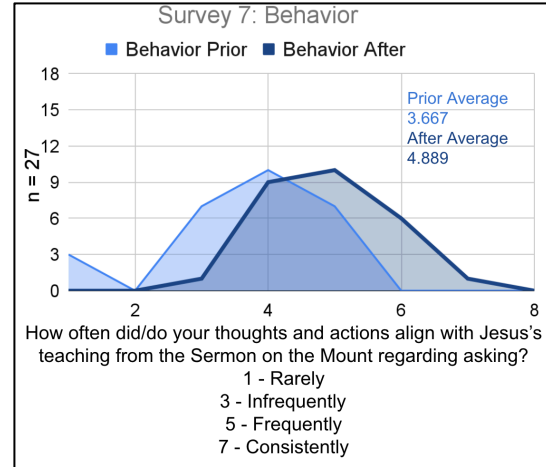


Figure 45. Survey 7 Perceived Growth Chart – Behavior

In survey seven, a correlation existed between increased participation scores and greater perceived growth based on Likert responses across understanding and recognition but not familiarity and behavior (figure 46). Findings reflected that compared to low participation respondents (participation score of 1), high participation respondents (participation score of seven) saw a 0% greater perceived growth in the familiarity category (1.6 to 1.6), 14% in understanding (1.2 to 2.2), 29% in recognition (0.2 to 2.2), and 0% in behavior (1.2 to 1.2). This growth comparison is based on a trendline from a scatterplot.

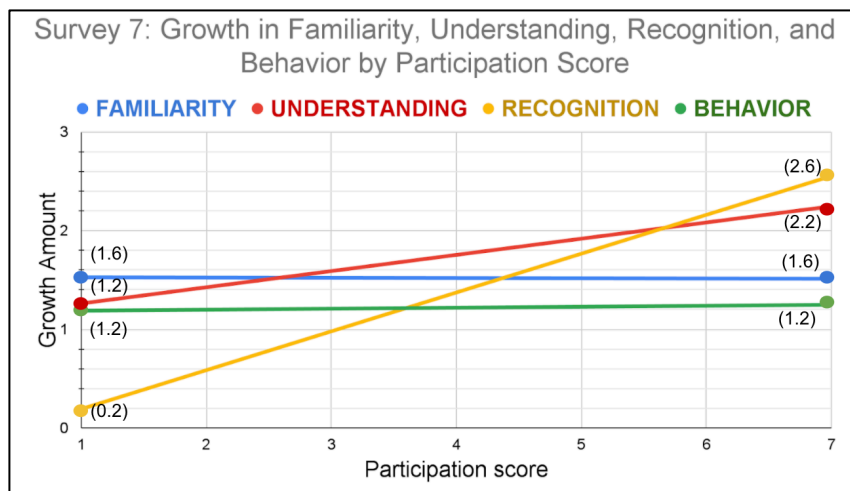


Figure 46. Survey 7 Perceived Growth Amount – Change in Likert Number

We will now look at a sampling of qualitative responses for this unit which serve to give context to the quantitative data listed above. Reflecting on practicing Jesus's teaching to ask questions, one individual said, "God has opened the door for me to ask lots of questions with students. I am now noticing what I ask and what is the purpose. Are my questions accusatory? Do they simply get a student to admit they did wrong, say sorry, and get back to class? I am recognizing a questioning routine and how I ask questions." Another reflected, "One take-away of asking questions [was] instead of being 'questioning', [to ask questions] out of genuine concern and interest, without pre-formulated conclusions."

At this point in the curriculum, the congregation practiced using the Lord's Prayer as a guide of how to learn to ask questions of God. One discipleship group leader said, "[The discipleship group guide activity to gather] around people and praying [during the 'give us this day our daily bread' section] was fully embraced yesterday; we had a great time of prayer for each other for the last 30 minutes of our meeting." Another congregant reflected on the Lord's prayer, "When I'm in prayer for others, I don't react as quickly in anger, fear, desire for revenge or manipulation. I need to practice praying consistently and releasing other people and situations to God." A discipleship group leader wrote, "From what people said during the small group, the Sermon on the Mount series really did impact their lives for the better, helping them understand the Lord's Prayer better and implement that into their prayer lives, and recognizing contempt and battling it too."

## Survey 8

Survey eight was given on week twenty-four of the curriculum. It served as a summative assessment regarding respondents' familiarity with, understanding of, recognition of, and behavior in relation to the Sermon on the Mount. Thirty-two congregants filled out the survey.

Age and nationality responses reflected the congregational makeup (figure 47).

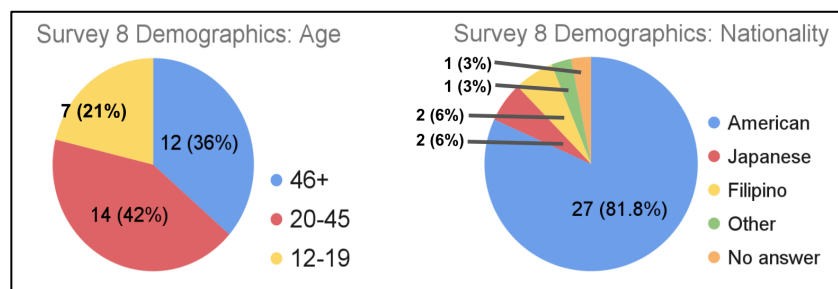


Figure 47. Survey 8 Age and Nationality Data

Survey eight showed perceived growth based on Likert scale responses in all categories. The familiarity question showed growth from an average 3.968 response to 5.419, a Likert growth amount of 1.451 or 21% (figure 48). The understanding question response average rose from 3.968 to 5.936, a Likert growth amount of 1.968 or 28% (figure 49). Growth in the recognition question average went from 3.806 to 5.452, a Likert growth amount of 1.646 or 25% (figure 50). And the behavior question response increased from 3.875 to 5.156, a Likert growth amount of 1.281 or 18% (figure 51).

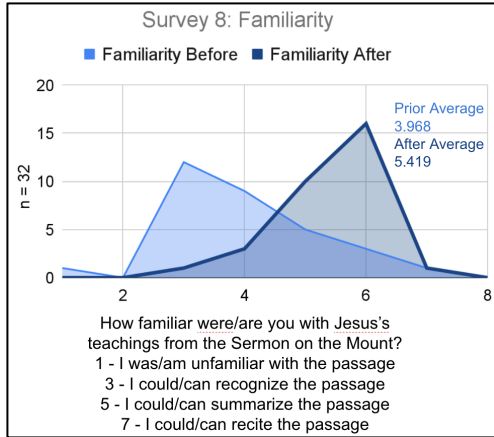


Figure 48. Survey 8 Perceived Growth Chart – Familiarity

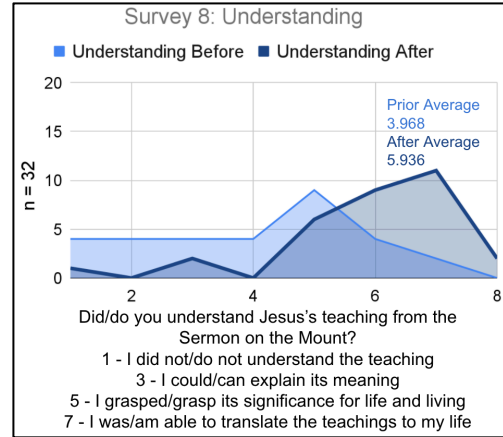


Figure 49. Survey 8 Perceived Growth Chart – Understanding

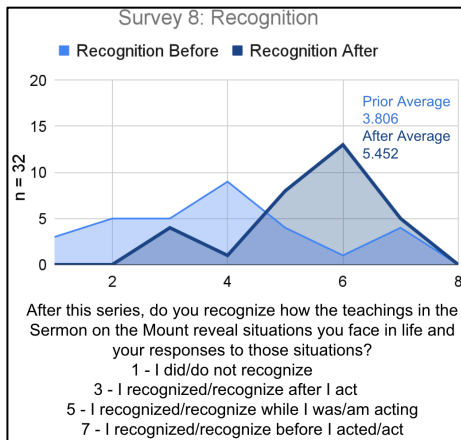


Figure 50. Survey 8 Perceived Growth Chart – Recognition

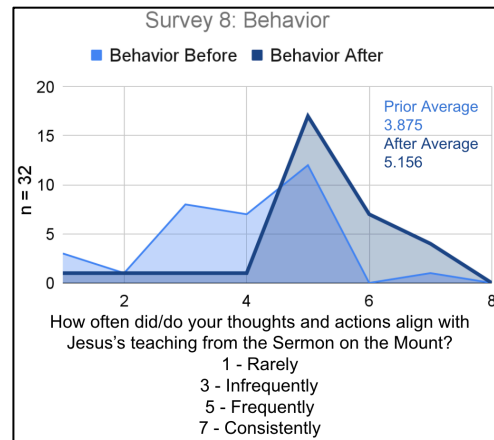


Figure 51. Survey 8 Perceived Growth Chart – Behavior

In survey eight, a correlation existed between increased participation scores and greater perceived growth based on Likert responses across all categories except behavior (figure 52). Support for this finding was that compared to low participation respondents (participation score of 1), high participation respondents (participation score of seven) saw a 11% greater perceived growth in the familiarity category (1.0 to 1.8), 1% in understanding (1.9 to 2.0), and 11% in recognition (1.4 to 2.15). However perceived growth was -6% in behavior (1.6 to 1.15) indicating that low participation respondents

cited greater perceived growth than high participation respondents. This growth comparison is approximate based on a trendline from a scatterplot.

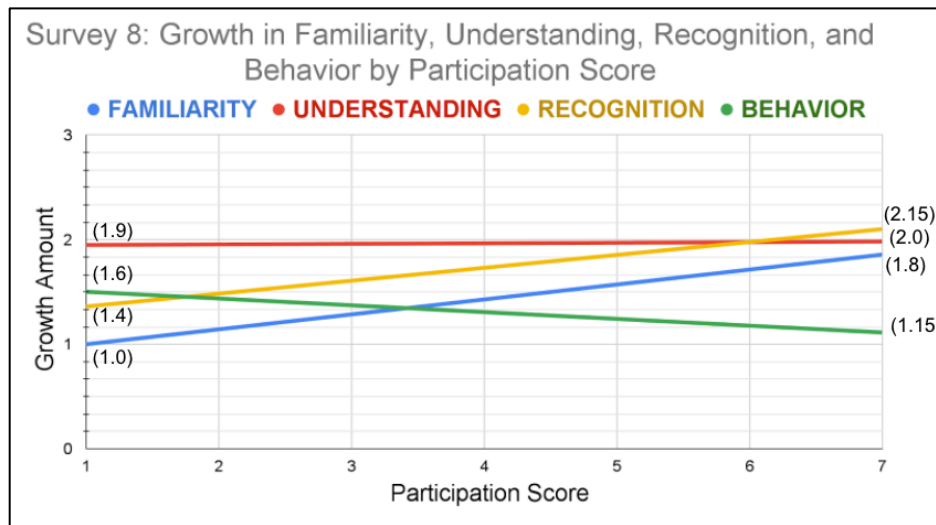


Figure 52. Survey 8 Perceived Growth Amount – Change in Likert Number

We will now look at a sampling of qualitative responses for this unit which serve to give context to the quantitative data listed above. On survey eight, the researcher added qualitative questions regarding the whole experience through the Curriculum for Christlikeness. On week twenty-four of the curriculum, the sermon was replaced by a four-person panel who shared their experiences, answering the qualitative survey questions. The researcher was not present in the service that week and the panel was led by a congregant.<sup>14</sup> After the panel discussion, time was given in the service for congregants to fill out the survey, replying to the same qualitative questions in addition to the normal Likert questions. Four of the questions corresponded to the categories of familiarity, understanding, recognition, and behavior. One question asked about

14. This panel was not part of the original design but served as an independently administered congregational exit interview which was conducted by the Ministry Participation Chairman for this Ministry Research Project in order to gather stronger qualitative data to support the causality of this curriculum to the increase in the four sub-problem areas listed in chapter 1 above.

challenges congregants faced during the curriculum. And three questions asked congregants if perceived growth was related to the curriculum. The researcher did a thematic inductive coding of survey responses. Some responses were coded in multiple categories.<sup>15</sup> The number of respondents is listed in parentheses when a theme is presented.

The first question—addressing familiarity and understanding—was, “After this series how do you see or understand the Sermon on the Mount differently?” The researcher identified six themes: Applicability to life (8), Instructions (6), Character formation (6), Unity (5), Scope and depth (4), Example or guide (4). Table 3 gives a sampling of responses in each theme.

Table 3. Survey 8 Qualitative Question 1 with Coding

Theme	Quote
Applicability to life	“It is a living guideline that is extremely applicable to us today as well.”
Instructions	“I see it more as instructions for the heart not just actions.”
Character formation	“It wasn’t just a teaching aimed at Pharisees, emphasizing that outward actions alone are not enough. It is a living guideline that is extremely applicable to us today as well. It directly reflects Jesus’s character and desires, which in turn reflects who he made us to be as well.”
Unity	“[I now see] the flow from one section to the other.”
Scope and depth	“I never realized before [how the sections] in the Sermon on the Mount all have such purposeful meaning, why they're next to each other, and [how] they interact with each other. It's just so intricate and beautiful.”
Example or guide	“Jesus calls us into His love relationship to transform us in his likeness and demonstrate that to others.”

The second question—addressing understanding and recognition—was, “What is one thing you are learning (or recognizing) about yourself? The researcher identified six

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15. Transcripts of survey responses, the panel discussion, and the coding spreadsheet are not included in this document but can be provided upon request.



themes: Recognition of a specific character issue(s) (19), Recognition of God’s way in an issue (10), General need for growth (6), Recognition of the results of behavior (4), Ability to change (4), Need for reminders (1). Table 4 gives a sampling of responses in each theme.

Table 4: Survey 8 Qualitative Question 2 with Coding

Theme	Quote
Recognition of a specific character issue(s)	<p>“I need to be more self-aware of my anger and judgment toward others. [I am] especially coming to realize I gossip and deceive myself into believing it is ‘office talk.’”</p> <p>“[I am recognizing] how quickly I do to not stop and ask for God’s help, and how I can judge and get so angry.”</p> <p>“I am very judgmental and am bad at recognizing [when I am] taking offense, or knowing when I’ve offended someone.”</p>
Recognition of God’s way in an issue	<p>“I want to pray with big words or fancy words so they sound important, but now I simply love to just talk with Him plainly.”</p> <p>“God stresses love, not judgment.”</p>
General need for growth	<p>“I was using Band-Aids for sins and not focusing enough on heart change.”</p>
Recognition of the results of behavior	<p>“When things don’t go the way I want [or] expect, or when people don’t treat me with respect, I get angry. I learned that it is one of my weaknesses and it does not produce anything good or reflect God’s love and teaching.”</p>
Ability to change	<p>“Recently I learn how to control my anger (not like before), and now I recognize that I am more calm!”</p>
Need for reminders	<p>“Even though I’m aware of these issues in my life, I need reminders to constantly be bringing my attitudes and actions before God and asking his help.”</p>

The third question—addressing behavior—asked, “What is one way you have been practicing what Jesus taught?” The researcher identified five themes: Recognizing an issue (19), Choice of trust (13), Releasing an issue (11), Doing good (9), Believing an affirmation of Scripture (7). Table 5 gives a sampling of responses in each theme.

Table 5: Survey 8 Qualitative Question 3 with Coding

Theme	Quote
Recognizing an issue	<p>“[I am] looking for and recognizing those shadows [of character issues].”</p> <p>“Recognizing when my flesh is fighting for control of decisions.”</p> <p>“Thinking first if what I have to say meets what God says is right and appropriate according to his word.”</p>
Theme	Quote
Choice of trust	<p>“To choose to trust and live as Jesus prescribed, releasing the outcomes to God.”</p> <p>“Trying to show mercy to people even when I am angry at them. Praying for patience to stop cycles of behavior that are unhealthy.”</p>
Releasing an issue	<p>“By recognizing when instinctive reactions arise, I can control how I react [and] respond; by first giving the feelings to God and surrendering to him to intervene through his Spirit (to make me more Christlike).”</p> <p>“Trying to step aside [from] a situation where I lose my sense of peace. I try to stop, breathe and calm down before [being] quick to judgment and quick to anger.”</p>
Doing good	<p>“Be[ing] generous.”</p> <p>“Ask[ing] questions.”</p>
Believing an affirmation of Scripture	<p>“To be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.”</p>

The fourth question—also addressing behavior—was, “What is one way you have gotten better at doing what Jesus taught?” The researcher identified two sets of themes. The first theme set was divided between congregants Recognizing an issue (20) and Acting rightly (17). The second theme set were the Sermon issues being improved upon: Anger/contempt (7), Judgmental (4), Praying (3), Asking (3), Manipulative words (2), Worry (1). Table 6 gives a sampling of responses in the first theme set, in which examples of the specific issues are also shown.

Table 6: Survey 8 Qualitative Question 4 with Coding

Theme	Quote
Recognizing an issue	“To maintain my anger. Whenever I feel anger, I stop, ask myself and remember what Jesus has taught us.”
	“Setting down anger, choosing trust and peace. Setting down judgment, choosing grace and understanding (asking questions).”
	“In forgiving others and releasing the hurt/pain/anger/resentment/etc. to Jesus. The freedom that has come from it (and even the desire to love the people who once hurt me) is truly an act of the divine and outside of my own self.”
	“Been able to pray for someone, even when I’m upset with them (seeing them through Jesus’ eyes).”
Theme	Quote
Acting rightly	“I pray more frequently.
	“There are numerous times I have redacted my thoughts before it formulated into words and makes its way out of my mouth.”
	“Being (attempting) more empathetic when talking with others.”

The fifth question asked, “What has been challenging about this journey through the Sermon on the Mount?” The researcher identified five themes: The truth about God and myself (9), Effort and practice (8), Endurance and the time to see change (4), Specific application (6), Other (3). Table 7 gives a sampling of responses in each theme.

Table 7: Survey 8 Qualitative Question 5 with Coding

Theme	Quote
The truth about God and myself	“It has challenged me every single week to admit the mistakes of my life and the sinful parts of my life and to fix those and to take off the old ways and to put on the new ones.”
	“Recognizing that I still have work to do, and overcoming feelings of inadequacy when I fail.”
Effort and practice	“[It is challenging] practicing amid the stress of life (COVID, family, work, etc.) which I suppose is the only place to practice, but it’s messy.”

Theme	Quote
Endurance and the time to see change	“I have to trust what I cannot see [and] believe things will change even though I may not immediately see it.”
Specific application	“How do I bring right thinking into our family without manipulation?”
Other	“Forgiveness, I really struggle with that. It’s a work-in-progress.”

Some topics and keywords appeared across all the five questions. Seventeen respondents mentioned anger and contempt (51% of survey eight responses), twenty mentioned judgment and condemnation (60%), thirteen mentioned asking (39%), and twelve mentioned worry (36%). The six-steps model for transformation was repeatedly presented throughout the curriculum as a tool to help congregants apply the teachings of Jesus in the moments of choice and temptation. Six unique respondents specifically mentioned their use of the six-steps model (18%). Step 2 of the six-steps—“stop”—was mentioned by thirteen unique respondents (39%), almost exclusively compared to specific mentions of the other five steps.

Survey 8 data shows how survey respondents consistently perceived growth. To the yes/no question, “In the questions above, if you responded that you experienced growth, do you feel it is a result of this curriculum?”, twenty-nine answered “yes” that the growth was a result of this curriculum while one responded “no.” This was followed by a short answer the follow-up question of why or why not. For these responses the researcher identified three themes: The emphasis on practice (10), Increased understanding of the Sermon and its organization (10), and Increased recognition of life issues in light of the Sermon (6). Table 8 gives a sampling of responses in each theme.

Table 8: Survey 8 Qualitative Question 6 with Coding

Theme	Quote
The emphasis on practice	<p>“The reflection journal and weekly accountability in discipleship groups (in addition to Sunday Worship) helped me practice and be aware of Jesus' teaching and how it impacts my life.”</p> <p>“[It] reminded me to practice [Jesus’s teachings] in my daily living.”</p>
Increased understanding of the Sermon and its organization	<p>“The Sermon on the Mount series showed me that Jesus is the good life we are all after and is worth pursuing.”</p> <p>“[It was] such an in-depth, well-thought-out plan. It was clear. Examples [were] given. [We were guided in] what to do before, during, [and] after.”</p>
Increased recognition of life issues in light of the Sermon	<p>“The theme of the Kingdom love and kingdom living, the centrality of the attitude of the heart has impacted my reflections on my own life and attitudes.”</p>

When asked if they researched topics further in addition to what was done in the curricular venues, eleven selected no, five selected yes for one topic, eleven selected yes for some topics, one selected yes for most topics, and one selected yes for all topics. Four respondents mentioned how the curriculum was a part of a larger work God had been doing in their lives. One wrote, “Indirectly, this sermon series played in the larger work that God was already accomplishing in my life during my time in Okinawa. It came at exactly the right time for me.”

### **Analysis and Interpretation of the Data**

Before comparing the data between and across surveys, a note should be made. While the four categories each had a Likert scale of 1–8, each category had unique answers for the Likert scale numbers. Because of this, the numerical scores cannot be compared between the four categories on a survey but can only be compared to the same

category across surveys. For example, 10% growth in Familiarity could not be compared to 10% growth in recognition because the familiarity answers were the level to which they could recall or recite while the Sermon while familiarity answers dealt with the timing of recognizing and addressing a topic in one’s life. Table 9 shows the Likert number and answers for each category to serve as a reference. Only Likert numbers 1, 3, 5, and 7 had responses, while numbers 2, 4, 6, and 8 were left blank to give respondents room to express growth between categories.

Survey 1 was meant to serve as a baseline for respondents’ familiarity with, understanding of, recognition of, and behavior in relation to the Sermon on the Mount. However, surveys 2–7 (excluding survey 4) pre-responses—an assessment of oneself before going through the curriculum— were on average half a Likert point lower in every category than baseline except in the familiarity category (table 9). When looking across surveys it seems that participants had a more consistent measure for self-evaluation as they moved into specific Sermon topics than their self-perception at the outset. This is why survey eight included both pre- and post-questions for each category in which congregants assessed their perception of themselves after having participated in the curriculum compared to where they perceived themselves to be before participation in the curriculum.

Table 9. Likert Answers Legend by Category

	Likert 1	Likert 3	Likert 5	Likert 7
Familiarly	I was/am unfamiliar with the passage(s)	I could/can recognize the passage(s)	I could/can summarize the passage(s)	I could/can recite the passage(s)
Understanding	I did not/do not understand the teaching	I could/can explain its meaning	I grasped/grasp its significance for life and living	I was/am able to translate the teachings to my life

	Likert 1	Likert 3	Likert 5	Likert 7
Recognition	I did not/do not recognize	I recognized after I acted/act	I recognize while I was/am acting	I recognize before I acted/act
Behavior	Rarely	Infrequently	Frequently	Consistently

Table 10. Likert Answers by Survey and Category

	Survey 1 Baseline	Survey 2 Pre Post	Survey 3 Pre Post	Survey 4 Pre Post	Survey 5 Pre Post	Survey 6 Pre Post	Survey 7 Pre Post	2-7 Avg Pre Post	Survey 8 Pre Post
Familiarity	4.023	3.714 4.5	3.654 4.962	3.593 4.704	3.792 5.0	4.643 5.786	3.852 5.333	3.931 5.116	3.968 5.419
Understanding	4.568	3.429 4.357	3.692 5.577	3.481 5.407	4.042 5.875	4.786 6.143	3.629 5.407	3.916 5.472	3.968 5.936
Recognition	4.6	3.5 4.786	3.808 5.615	3.593 5.556	4.292 5.833	5.357 4.285	3.769 5.231	4.145 5.15	3.806 5.452
Behavior	4.5	4.071 4.786	3.958 5.167	4.074 5.111	3.739 5.0	4.429 5.143	3.667 4.889	3.973 5.0	3.875 5.156

The first overall evaluation question of this study was: Did the congregation grow throughout the curriculum? In every survey, congregants' perceived growth scores increased (table 10).<sup>16</sup> In the familiarity category, the congregational score average denotes they moved from being able to recognize and to some degree summarize the Sermon on the Mount (Likert average, 3.9) to being able to confidently summarize the Sermon (LA 5.1).<sup>17</sup> In the understanding category, the congregational Likert score average reflects that congregants went from being able to explain the Sermon's meaning and to some degree understand its significance for life and living (LA 3.9) to being able to strongly grasp its significance and beginning to be able to translate the teachings into

16. The survey four column is shaded as the timing of this survey was delayed compared to other surveys. These figures will not be compared to other surveys.

17. Hereafter "Likert average" will be referred to as LA. Score averages will include surveys 2-7, excluding survey 4.

their lives (LA 5.5). In the recognition category, the Likert score average denotes that congregants went from being able to recognize their response to an issue Jesus addressed in the Sermon after they acted and sometimes while acting (LA 4.1) to being able to recognize it while acting (LA 5.2). In the behavior category, the congregational Likert score average reflects that congregants went from having behavior that aligned with Jesus’s teachings semi-frequently (LA 4.0) to frequently having aligned behavior (LA 5.0).

Table 11. Growth Amount and Percentages by Survey and Category

	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6	Survey 7	Survey 8
Familiarity	0.786 11%	1.308 19%	1.111 16%	1.208 17%	1.143 16%	1.481 21%	1.451 21%
Understanding	0.928 13%	1.885 27%	1.926 28%	1.833 26%	1.357 19%	1.778 25%	1.968 28%
Recognition	1.286 18%	1.807 26%	1.963 28%	1.541 22%	1.072 15%	1.462 21%	1.646 25%
	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6	Survey 7	Survey 8
Behavior	0.715 10%	1.209 17%	1.037 15%	1.261 18%	0.714 10%	1.222 17%	1.281 18%

The percentage of perceived growth based on Likert scale answers was significant in each category of every survey, never dropping below double digits (table 11).<sup>18</sup> Within each category, there seemed to be similarities of growth amounts across the surveys, particularly in surveys 3–8 (excluding survey 4). In these surveys, familiarity averaged 19% (+/-2%), understanding averaged 25% (+/-6%), recognition averaged 22% (+/-7%),

18. For an explanation of how percentages were calculated see chapter 5, footnote 10 above.



and behavior averaged 16% (+/-6%).<sup>19</sup> The researcher also noticed higher growth numbers in the understanding and recognition category compared to familiarity and behavior.

The second overall evaluation question of this study was: Did congregants who were more involved in the curricular venues grow more than those who were less involved? For surveys 2-7, in every category higher participation was reflected in a higher average Likert score increase compared to lower participation, though the amount varied widely between surveys and within categories (table 12). Table 12 shows the Likert score difference between high and low participants expressed numerically and as a percentage.

Table 12. Low and High Participant Growth Difference and Percentages by Survey and Category

	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6	Survey 7	Survey 1/8
Familiarity	0.15 2%	0.70 10%	1.05 15%	1.00 14%	1.45 21%	0.00 0%	0.80 11%
Understanding	0.55 8%	2.3 33%	0.30 4%	1.30 19%	2.20 31%	1.00 14%	0.10 1%
Recognition	0.30 4%	2.10 30%	0.50 6%	0.90 13%	2.20 31%	2.00 29%	0.75 11%
Behavior	0.60 9%	0.50 7%	0.30 4%	0.35 5%	1.10 16%	0.00 0%	-0.45 -6%

Based on a comparison of Likert scale perceived growth and survey responses, higher participation respondents grew more than lower participation respondents, though there are not clearly discernable trends in the amount of growth. Sometimes there was

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19. This excludes survey 2 because of comments made about the clarity of the survey. Deviations are the difference between the average and the percentage growth for survey 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

little to no difference while other times there was a staggering gap of more than thirty percent.

Interestingly, on the summative survey 8, overall perceptions of growth matched general trends in surveys 2–7 (table 11), however the differences between low and high participant perceived growth differed from other surveys particularly in the low understanding difference, and the inverted behavior difference (table 12). This survey had nine respondents with a low participation score of 1–3, while 23 had a high participation score of 4–7. It seems unlikely, comparing with previous surveys, that in the behavior category lower participation congregants grew more than higher participation, though this may be true in some cases. It is possible that in a summative survey, this is an example of low-participation respondents inflating scores for social desirability or overestimating competence. However, the researcher reviewed the qualitative comments of these lower-participation respondents, and they were, in most cases, thoughtful and specific. While this does not explain the discrepancy between the typical difference between low and high participation Likert scores across surveys, it does show that low participation does not imply a low quality of engagement with, reflection on, and application of Jesus’s teachings.

The trendline graphs showed “how much more” high participants grew than low participants. Another way of looking at this data is by looking at “how many more” high participants showed a Likert growth of 1+ compared to low participants. To evaluate this, the researcher combined responses of surveys 2–7.<sup>20</sup> The participation scores of 1–3 were grouped, and they were labeled “low participation.” Scores of 4–7 were labeled as “high participation.” These two categories were then compared to see how many low

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20. This excludes survey 1 and 8 which were baseline and summative surveys.

participation and high participation respondents had either no Likert growth, or a growth of at least one Likert scale point. This was graphed for each of the four categories.

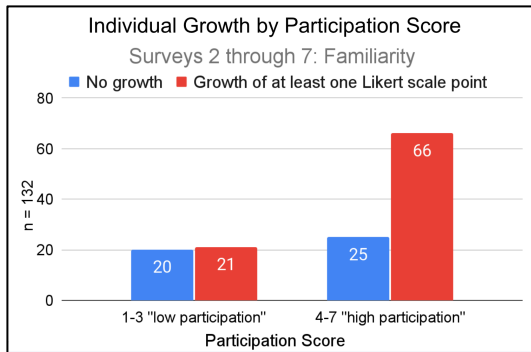


Figure 53. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Familiarity

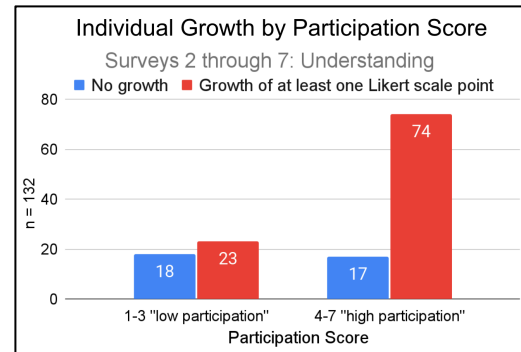


Figure 54. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Understanding

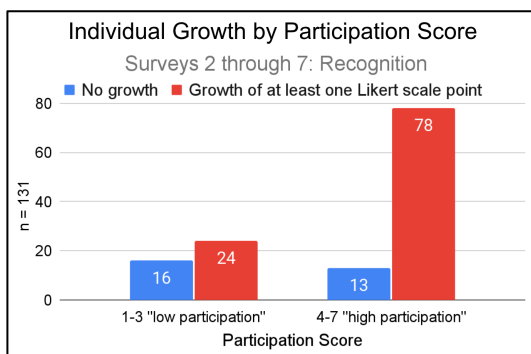


Figure 55. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Recognition

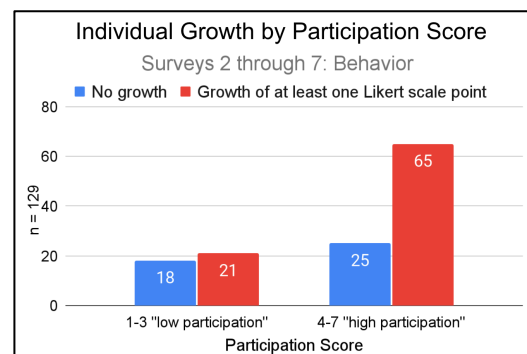


Figure 56. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Behavior

In the familiarity category (figure 53), nearly the same number of low participation participants showed no Likert growth compared to those who showed a Likert growth of one or more. However, nearly three times more (264%) high participation respondents showed Likert growth of one or more. In the understanding category (figure 54), 22% more low-participation respondents showed a one-point perceived growth above no growth. However, over four times more (435%) high participation respondents showed a Likert scale perceived growth of one or more. In the reflection category (figure 55), 33% more low-participation respondents showed

perceived growth above no growth, while six times (600%) more high participation respondents showed a Likert scale perceived growth of one or more. In the behavior category (figure 56), 37% more low-participation respondents showed perceived growth above no growth. However, nearly three times (270%) more high participation respondents showed a Likert scale perceived growth of one or more. This strongly suggests the correlation between higher participation and higher perceived growth. Yet it also suggests that higher participation in curricular activities does not guarantee higher growth and that lower participation in curricular activities does not imply lower growth. Lastly, as the survey data showed that the low participation respondents were most engaged in the Sunday worship, these figures suggest the impact and importance of the other curricular venues of guided personal reflection and small group participation, to increased perceptions of growth.

### **Summary**

The data suggests that implementation of the Curriculum of Christlikeness at Keystone Nazarene Church played a part in character development of congregants. Character development was measured in four categories—familiarity, understanding, recognition, and behavior—in light of Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. Every category across every survey saw a 10% or greater increase of perceived growth based on Likert scale responses. Examples of this perceived growth was triangulated with congregant qualitative feedback. Congregants grew more in the categories of understanding and recognition than the categories of familiarity and behavior. Congregants who participated in more of the curricular venues of Sunday worship,

reflection journal usage, and discipleship group participation, and with greater frequency generally saw greater perceived growth than those who participated less.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to address the problem of followers of Jesus who do not consistently obey his instructions or reflect his character, the researcher developed a “Curriculum for Christlikeness” for Keystone Nazarene Church, an international congregation in Okinawa, Japan. This curriculum was based on Dallas Willard’s view of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1–7:29 and provided a biblical framework for character development and discipleship through trusting obedience to Jesus’s teachings.

The curriculum was designed using the ADDIE and backwards design methods of curriculum design and applied prescriptive and experiential curricular methodologies alongside Willard’s “Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation” and knowledge-recognition-application cycle of learning. The curriculum was implemented with the Keystone Congregation over 24 weeks, centering in the corporate worship service, and offering discipleship groups and a daily reflection journal.

The researcher’s goal in implementing the curriculum through the corporate worship service was to use participatory action research to track the transformation of character across four categories: familiarity with, understanding of, self-reflection on, and obedient practice of Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon. The curriculum’s effectiveness was measured through eight voluntary purposive sampling of congregants using a Likert survey. Qualitative feedback was received through written survey reflections, discipleship group leader responses, and an anonymous survey in which congregants could share from their reflection journals.

In this chapter the researcher will summarize the study's major findings from chapter 4. Next, it will describe conclusions based on the research, summarizing the project's practical implications for ministry. Recommendations will be made for future research based on this study. And finally, it will give overall conclusions from this Ministry Research Project.

### Summary of Major Findings

The data suggests that implementation of the Curriculum of Christlikeness at Keystone Nazarene Church played a part in congregant character development in Christlikeness. In every category of character transformation, perceived growth based on Likert scale responses increased 10% or greater (table 11).<sup>1</sup> Survey respondents wrote how the curriculum helped them understand the Sermon on the Mount and see its applicability in daily life.

Table 11. Growth Amount and Percentages by Survey and Category

	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6	Survey 7	Survey 8
Familiarity	0.786 11%	1.308 19%	1.111 16%	1.208 17%	1.143 16%	1.481 21%	1.451 21%
Understanding	0.928 13%	1.885 27%	1.926 28%	1.833 26%	1.357 19%	1.778 25%	1.968 28%
Recognition	1.286 18%	1.807 26%	1.963 28%	1.541 22%	1.072 15%	1.462 21%	1.646 25%
Behavior	0.715 10%	1.209 17%	1.037 15%	1.261 18%	0.714 10%	1.222 17%	1.281 18%

1. The survey four column is shaded as the timing of this survey was delayed compared to other surveys. These figures will not be compared to other surveys.

The growth amount was largely consistent in each category across surveys (particularly surveys 3–8, excluding survey 4). Perceived growth amounts in the familiarity and behavior categories were consistently lower than understanding and recognition.

The data also showed that greater participation across the three curricular venues of corporate worship, reflection journal, and discipleship groups generally led to greater perceived growth. When evaluating participant responses across surveys 2–7, low participation respondents were only slightly more likely to rate perceived growth of one or more on a Likert scale than to show no growth. However, high participation respondents were three times more likely to show perceived growth of one or more on the Likert scale (figures 53–6).

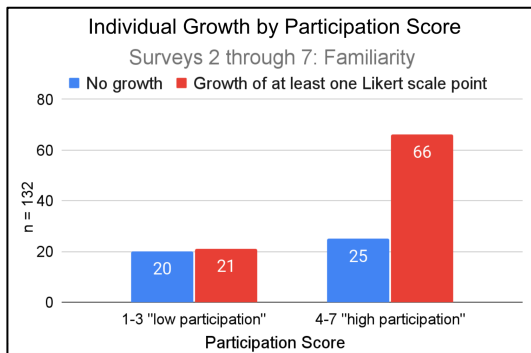


Figure 53. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Familiarity

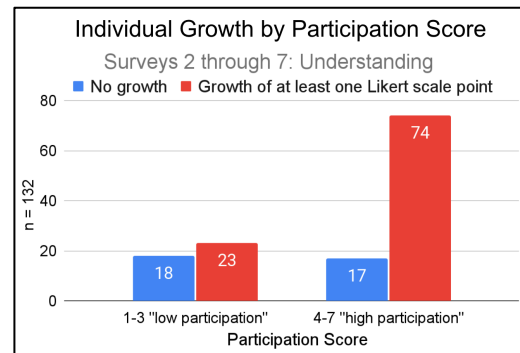


Figure 54. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Understanding

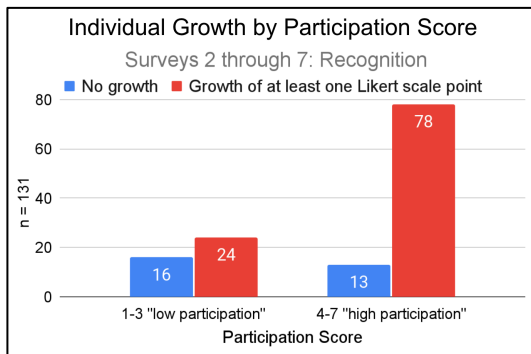


Figure 55. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Recognition

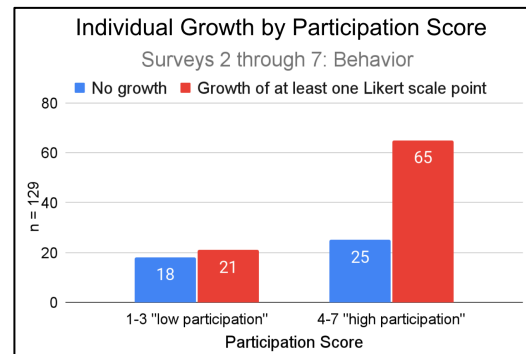


Figure 56. Individual Growth by Participation Score – Behavior



## Research Conclusions

The purpose of developing this curriculum was to lead people to a point where they habitually or routinely do what Jesus says is good and right. The researcher sought to track this transformation of character across four categories: familiarity with, understanding of, self-reflection on, and obedient practice of Jesus's teachings in the Sermon.

Congregational feedback implied that participants were largely familiar with the Sermon on the Mount. The researcher sees this matching with the lower growth scores in the familiarity category. As one respondent wrote, "I knew the Sermon on the Mount, but I didn't really 'use' it in my daily life." However, based on survey responses, congregants did grow in familiarity from being able to passively recognize to being able to actively summarize the Sermon. This was manifested in congregants' understanding of the unity of the Sermon, illustrated in one's comment, "I never thought about the topics being connected and building on each other before this. Now I see how they are connected."

Congregants showed large improvements in perceived growth in the understanding category, from being able to explain the Sermon's meaning to grasping its significance for life and living and beginning to translate the teachings into their lives. Survey respondents noted, "First, it didn't tie with my life, but it made me realize that it does tie with my daily life as I walk with Jesus." Another noted, "I had never thought of the Sermon on the Mount as instructions for living!" Other respondents reflected, "I love the beauty of the thread how one concept leads into the other and it's really our instructions for life. God loves us so much that he taught us how to live. He knew what we needed and that not only for our spiritual health but our physical health as well." Yet

another wrote, “Instead of simply seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a passage of the Bible, I see it as a recipe for a good life, and a recipe for the kind of life Jesus wants us to live. With this journey through the Sermon on the Mount I have been able to not just see what the Sermon on the Mount really is, but to learn and understand how I need to act in order to live this life.” Yet another noted, “What I understand now is [the Sermon’s] importance in my own attitude and actions and what it should look like to be a follower of Jesus.”

Growth was also reported in the recognition category where congregants went from being able to recognize their response to an issue Jesus addressed in the Sermon after they acted and sometimes while acting, to being able to recognize it while acting. This new understanding of the meaning of the Sermon seems to have brought about recognizing the issues discussed in the Sermon in respondents’ lives and around them. Some examples of this are:

- “That I should be more conscious of my actions in the words I choose to use.”
- “That I need to be more self-aware of my anger and judgment toward others.”
- “[I am recognizing] a tendency to think that the way I was doing certain things was the only way to accomplish them and a lack of trust in God’s wisdom and methods of living.”

The researcher noticed the tendency of respondents to use the word “should” highlighting the difference between a behavior or attitude goal and where individuals were at. This also led to numerous respondents being hard on themselves. One individual

wrote, “[It is challenging] seeing my wrongdoings. Coming on Sunday and hearing his words then realizing how I fall off the track and having to look within me is challenging.”

Congregants’ behavioral growth progressed from congregants having behavior that aligned with Jesus’s teachings semi-frequently to frequently. Respondents noted:

- “I pray more frequently.”
- “[I’m improving at] forgiving others and releasing the hurt/pain/anger/resentment/etc. to Jesus.”
- “[I am] actively removing negative temptations.”
- “[I am] able to stop, ask God and rethink my decisions.”
- “[I am] (attempting [to be]) more empathetic when talking to others.”
- “[I have] been able to pray for someone, even when I’m upset with them.”

The difference between the Likert scores and the responses may show the need for more time and consistency to help these practices move into habits.

The findings indicate the possibility that behavior, the habitual putting into practice of Jesus’s teachings, necessitates a critical mass of engagement and progress in the lower three categories which takes time, thought, effort, and engagement. This is the hard work of encountering the realities of entrenched habits which are challenging to confront, and which bring temptations that seek to justify such wrong responses. This seems to mirror the message of Jesus in the Sermon of a righteousness that goes beyond profession but into habitual practice (Matt 7:21–23) and beyond religiosity into the hard road of life change (Matt 5:17–20; 7:12–14, 24–27). One panel respondent shared, “I think that’s been the most challenging thing, recognizing that it’s easy to know the

information and a lot harder to actually apply it, stick with it, and to get back up when we do fail and keep going.”

The emphasis of Jesus is not simply in external obedience, but an obedience from the heart. Numerous responses spoke to this understanding:

- “I see [the Sermon] more as instructions for the heart not just actions. Focus on changing your heart to fully experience the [K]ingdom.”
- “That diligent and deliberate ‘maintenance’ of the attitudes of my heart are absolutely critical.” “I’ve learned—or been reminded I should say—that it’s very easy to fall on the track of legalism, to follow all the rules, do all the right things live the outward actions. But it’s much harder to maintain that proper attitude of the heart and the choice to pursue the deeper relationship with Christ throughout all of it what that really means. Through the Sermon [on the Mount], it talks about how you know the tree by the fruit it produces.”
- “In week 20 [of the reflection journal] there was a quote that really struck me by Martin Copenhaver. [He] says, ‘the goal of the question and the parable is not to communicate knowledge but to elicit new understanding in the listener. Information is not the goal... transformation is.’”
- “Put [Jesus’s teachings] into practice, taking it from head knowledge to heart knowledge, that’s what the Holy Spirit does in us.”

While character formation is hard to prove, the quantitative data strongly suggests that Keystone congregants improved in Christlike character as seen through their growth in the practice of his teachings from Sermon on the Mount. The qualitative responses helped to triangulate the quantitative data reflecting examples of the growth of

congregants' understanding and application of Jesus's teachings. These qualitative responses also reveal the growing sense of epiphany and revelation in the lives of congregants as they recognized Sermon topics in the light of daily situations and habitual responses. The qualitative responses also reveal how many congregants were starting to address these responses in behavior and re-shaping habits. The consistency of the data across a six-month longitudinal study and the amount of self-reported growth compared with the qualitative feedback does suggest that participation in the curriculum did bring about change in understanding of and obedience to Jesus's Sermon teachings in the lives of Keystone congregants.

However imperfectly, increased engagement in the curricular venues, seemed to show the desire of a congregant for growth and change based on qualitative responses. The reflection journals provided a consistent reminder and practice, while discipleship groups provided a communal venue of discussion, confession, and question-asking. More engagement and more practice led, generally, to higher perceived growth during the same period of time. While higher participation showed higher growth, there were also "low participation" congregants who showed growth and "high participation" congregants that showed no growth. Growth, at its heart, is the result of engagement with the Holy Spirit. Quantity of participation in the curricular venues was one way of seeking to measure that engagement, but does not measure quality.

Congregant responses align with Mezirow's theory of transformational learning described in the Curricular Considerations to the Development of a "Curriculum for Christlikeness" section of chapter two. Jesus' teachings about the presence and resources of God and his Kingdom enabled them to see new possibilities of attitude and action in

daily life experiences that helped them grow in Christlikeness. The curriculum was in many ways an introduction to a process of constant improvement in Christlikeness guided by the Holy Spirit that engaged core principles and key topics laid out by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. This growth is not linear but cyclical, matching Loder's theory of transformation introduced in chapter two. One congregant noted to the researcher that he or she continued to recognize and practice a particular topic months after it was covered in the curriculum. This continued recognition was seen clearly in the survey 8 qualitative responses. Seventeen of the thirty-two respondents (53%) mentioned anger and contempt, which was covered five months before the survey.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Change and transformation are not linear. As Loder stated, such development is cyclical, and as one of the panel respondents mentioned, her growth feels like it is always cycling up and down. It would be helpful to survey or interview participants after six months to one year to assess the longer-term impact over time. While interviews would be more time-consuming, they would allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions to better ascertain the degree and the specifics of recognition, understanding, reflection, and behavior in congregants' lives.

This Ministry Research Project was the first time to test both the Curriculum for Christlikeness as well as the research survey tool. As such, the results cannot be compared to other implementations to see if they are unique, or if similar patterns emerge between other congregations and other church contexts. It would be illuminating if the

Curriculum for Christlikeness and the same research tool were employed in a different place or at a different time and the results compared to these.

It would also be interesting if a researcher used the same survey tool in a different sermon series or church curriculum and compared the results to note if correlations existed in the four categories and in qualitative responses. Ministers desire to see Christlike character change in congregations, and the further use and development of this research tool and conceptual framework might provide a means for future Doctor of Ministry students to make this assessment.

One limitation of this study is the small sample size. A larger sample size would reveal trends more clearly. It would be helpful to reimplement this study with a larger sample size or across multiple locations to increase the overall sample size.

Another limitation of the study is the balance within a multi-method approach. Developing the curriculum, itself a tremendous task, kept the researcher from having the time or ability to meet with focus groups throughout the curriculum to gather more qualitative data, similar to what was done in the eighth survey. Using the qualitative questions from survey 8 across surveys 2–7 is recommended in future research. The researcher also recommends meeting with a consistent focus group after every survey to ask the same qualitative questions. In evaluating the qualitative responses, the researcher did not know if a respondent's general answer meant they specifically understood, recognized, or had been working at a specific issue. A focus group would allow the researcher to ask specific follow-up questions.

The researcher sought in this project both to create the curriculum, implement, and evaluate it. An attempt was not made to evaluate the curriculum itself according to

ADDIE or backward design. A review of the curriculum itself by a trained curriculum analyst would fortify the strength of the curriculum.

The evaluation of congregational growth is a difficult and potentially risky task. Can congregational growth be evaluated reliably? This project has been an attempt to use the best research mixed methods available to do this. In some respects, the growth of congregants is beyond the strategy, plans, and activities of the church. On the other hand, the lack of evaluation can easily result in missional drift in a church. Research about methods and tools of regular congregational evaluation would be helpful to aid churches and pastors in planning and helping congregations improve at doing what Jesus taught and in making Christlike disciples.

### **Conclusions from the Study**

Throughout this project the researcher encountered both the deep desire, as seen by the significant degree of congregational engagement over a six-month longitudinal study, as well as the engrained resistance in himself as well as in the Keystone congregation to learn, practice, and be transformed. For the researcher, worship and teaching are much easier to plan when simply talking “about” and significantly more difficult when they involve how to practice and what specifically to practice. Congregants likewise noted the ease of passively receiving information, but the difficulty and resistance in application in order to be transformed. The researcher recognized the temptation to present topics in terms of guilt or duty rather than as good news of a wonderful way of practicing life in the Kingdom with Jesus, one that becomes increasingly deep and broad (cf. Ezek 47:1–12).



The data supports Willard's thesis of the essence of discipleship as practiced obedience beyond conceptual understanding or simple profession. The researcher sees a progression and interconnection of the four categories with character development. The researcher sees familiarity and understanding are essential yet incomplete. This is where Willard argues that many churches remain. Character development is fostered with the inclusion of recognition and behavior. Maturation into Christlikeness is revealed in knowledge of Jesus's teachings, obedience to those teachings, and a progressive conformity to Christ's character. These four categories are not necessarily sequential but can be applied in a multitude of ways. The key is that all four are being engaged. One example is how Keystone congregants grew both in how they viewed the Sermon (understanding), which seemed to lead to a far greater recognition of the issues Jesus discussed in and around them (recognition), and began working through the process of regulating their responses by the help of the Holy Spirit and practicing doing what Jesus said (behavior). This example shows the alignment with the project's theoretical framework, Willard's Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation (figure 57).

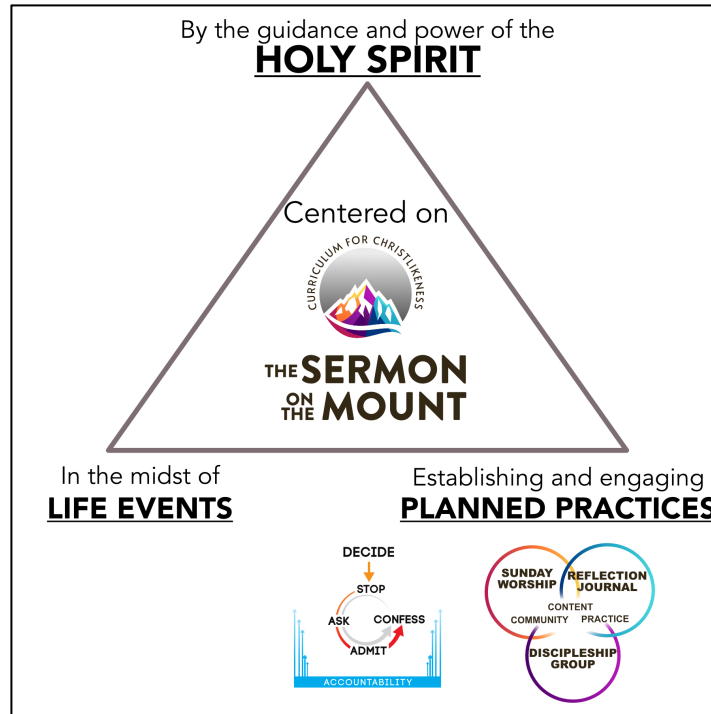


Figure 57. Golden Triangle of Spiritual Formation within the Curriculum of Christlikeness

Respondent comments showed the degree to which the congregation began to understand, recognize, and begin the process of putting Jesus’s teachings into practice in new and active ways. The researcher sees this process of putting into practice as the critical step for character formation in Christlikeness, noted by Jesus in Matthew 7:13–27. This step of behavior is the most advanced of the four categories of character—familiarity, understanding, recognition—but also the most important when relating to character change. This is also the step where one must engage “how” to practice what Jesus taught, that can easily be left out of Christian teaching or vaguely expressed. The researcher found this aspect of specific practice to be the most difficult aspect of backwards design in the curriculum development and also the one that congregants mentioned was most difficult to execute.

The congregation as well as the researcher were challenged by and greatly benefitted from the emphasis on practiced obedience from the heart through the specific, practical topics of the Sermon on the Mount. Willard's approach to spiritual formation through the Sermon helped the Keystone congregants use their daily life as the practice-ground. It also provided a framework by which congregants could make evaluations and assessments with God and with others of their desires, character, and practice of and obedience to Jesus's teachings in light of specific situations of life.

The researcher sees this curriculum as a significant and repeatable study to reuse on a regular cycle. It is highly practical and aligns the congregation with the church's mission statement. As growth is not linear, but cyclical, revisiting these topics will allow long-term Keystone congregants to re-engage the material for renewed assessment and continual improvement. As character formation is a never-ending process, the constant practice of Jesus's teachings leads one into continually deeper Christlikeness.

The curriculum can benefit from ongoing revision and development. The researcher noted a tension in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the research. Congregants needed time and activities to begin to engage a topic of Jesus, understand it, begin to recognize it in and around them, and then move into action. The process of habit-change is one that takes intentionality over weeks and months. The curriculum timeline might not have given enough time per topic for lasting habits to be formed. On the other hand, this was a very long series, 24 weeks. The researcher sensed some congregational fatigue as the curriculum moved into its third month. The month-long break for Advent and Christmas was needed. As the curriculum resumed in January, by mid-February there was also a sense of congregational and discipleship group leader

fatigue. This was particularly true for the researcher himself as each week involved the creation of the curriculum as well as implementation and assessment. In future iterations of the curriculum, individual units may be lengthened to 4–5 weeks, but units could be separated by other series, thus allowing the entire curriculum to be enacted over the course of a 2–3-year cycle that is continually repeated.

The six-step and habit timing tools became very simple, practical, and helpful ways for congregants to recognize, engage, and assess issues Jesus addresses in the Sermon.<sup>2</sup> The researcher's own understanding and ways of talking about these developed over the course of the curriculum, ending with a laminated wallet-card that congregants could use as a reference as they engaged issues in daily life. This also made the researcher wonder if better resources could be created, perhaps a smartphone app, which could help congregants track issues they were facing, where in the habit timing they engaged the issue, and which could help them see trends, improvements, and declines over time.

In many ways this project was an exercise in the “how” of practicing Jesus's teachings. What and how Christians practice doing what Jesus said is contextual, challenging, and essential. The backwards design model of curriculum planning is one which is challenging but deeply helpful in thinking in terms of learning activities that match specific outcomes. The use of the corporate worship service as a primary curricular venue has helped the researcher begin to conceptualize practice that moves beyond the specifics of the Sermon on the Mount and help congregants continue to practice and grow

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2. The habit timing tool was developed during the curriculum. Participants, when they encounter an issue from the Sermon on the Mount, log whether they recognized the issue after acting, while acting, while thinking about the issue but before acting, and at the moment of thought. This same terminology was used in the recognition survey questions. The habit-log reveals small steps of character improvement for large issues that may take much time.

beyond this series. The data revealing the perceived growth differences between low- and high-participation congregants highlights the importance of ongoing discipleship groups and the benefits of daily guided reflection options for congregants.

The call of Jesus is for people to become his disciples, sharing his character and living with him within the fellowship of the Father and Spirit and the resources of the Kingdom of the Heavens as he himself did. This is accomplished by practicing what he taught. As the master teacher, Jesus has given us the fundamental content and curricular sequence in his Sermon. This project took Jesus's teaching, guided by the perspective of Dallas Willard's approach in *The Divine Conspiracy*, to develop a "Curriculum for Christlikeness" designed to help the people of Keystone Nazarene Church learn and do what Jesus taught in such a way that their lives increasingly reflected his character, power, and purposes. This is a process in which one recognizes the resources, power, and action of God's Kingdom, which is available to him or her in the normal situations of daily life as he or she practices the teachings of Jesus. This trusting and cooperative engagement of God leads one to increasingly share Jesus's character and to find his or her life becoming a location through which "[God's] kingdom may come and [his] will be done here on earth just as it is done in heaven" (Matt 6:10). Such disciples become a part of the loving and joyful divine conspiracy of God and his Kingdom to "overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).

One congregant's reflection gives a poignant picture of this process: "Lately as I have been going through the Sermon on the Mount, I have really noticed my behaviors and thought processes. As a Christian my ideal goal is to be who Jesus taught us to be throughout this Sermon and throughout the rest of the Bible. I've caught myself thinking

and doing exactly what I have been told not to do. But this is the part where I learn that change comes over time with submission and understanding to God.... Just because you asked Jesus to live inside you doesn't mean you've personally changed your life. Change as I described above is submission to God and his perfect will. Changing one's identity to glorify God takes [one's] whole life. It's not an easy path but it's the path I believe to be true and strive to take."

## APPENDIX 1: SURVEY 1

### A Curriculum for Christlikeness The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 1

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral research.

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*Check one option*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Years at Keystone</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Worship attendance</b>
<input type="radio"/> 12-19	<input type="radio"/> 0-1	<input type="radio"/> Japanese	<input type="radio"/> 4-5 times month
<input type="radio"/> 20-45	<input type="radio"/> 2-4	<input type="radio"/> Filipino	<input type="radio"/> 2-3 times a month
<input type="radio"/> 46+	<input type="radio"/> 5+	<input type="radio"/> American	<input type="radio"/> Once a month or less
		<input type="radio"/> Other	

---

Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below

*Circle one number*

**Familiarity** - recall the topic from memory or recognize it when presented  
How familiar are you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount?

1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s)	5 I can summarize the passage(s)
2	6
3 I can recognize the passage(s)	7 I can recite the passage(s)
4	8

**Understanding** - explain the meaning in my own words, it's consequences in the world and for living

To what degree do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount?

1 I do not understand the teaching	5 I grasp its significance for life and living
2	6
3 I can explain its meaning	7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
4	8

**Recognition** - critically reflect on my own life  
To what degree do you recognize how the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount reveal situations you face in life and your responses to those situations?

1 I do not recognize	5 I recognize while I am acting
2	6
3 I recognize after I act	7 I recognize before I act
4	8

**Behavior** - act from my understanding and critical reflection  
To what degree do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount?

1 Rarely	5 Frequently
2	6
3 Infrequently	7 Consistently
4	8

Reflections or Comments

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry research project.

## APPENDIX 2: SURVEY 2

### A Curriculum for Christlikeness

The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 2

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral research.

Check one option

- |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Age</b>                                 | <b>Years at Keystone</b>               | <b>Nationality</b>                      |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 12-19                | <input type="radio"/> 0-1              | <input type="radio"/> Japanese          |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 20-45                | <input type="radio"/> 2-4              | <input type="radio"/> Filipino          |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 46+                  | <input type="radio"/> 5+               | <input type="radio"/> American          |  |
|  |  | <input type="radio"/> Other             |  |
| <b>Worship attendance</b>                  | <b>Journal Usage</b>                   | <b>Discipleship Group Participation</b> |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 4-5 times a month    | <input type="radio"/> 4+ times a week  | <input type="radio"/> 3+ times a month  |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 2-3 times a month    | <input type="radio"/> 1-3 times a week | <input type="radio"/> 1-2 times a month |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Once a month or less | <input type="radio"/> Not using        | <input type="radio"/> Not participating |  |

Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below

Circle one number

**Familiarity** - recall the topic from memory or recognize it when presented  
 Prior to the sermon series, how familiar were you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 I was unfamiliar with the passage(s) | <input type="radio"/> 5 I could summarize the passage(s) |
| <input type="radio"/> 2                                      | <input type="radio"/> 6                                  |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 I could recognize the passage(s)     | <input type="radio"/> 7 I could recite the passage(s)    |
| <input type="radio"/> 4                                      | <input type="radio"/> 8                                  |

After the past weeks, how familiar are you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s) | <input type="radio"/> 5 I can summarize the passage(s) |
| <input type="radio"/> 2                                     | <input type="radio"/> 6                                |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 I can recognize the passage(s)      | <input type="radio"/> 7 I can recite the passage(s)    |
| <input type="radio"/> 4                                     | <input type="radio"/> 8                                |

**Understanding** - explain the meaning in my own words, it's consequences in the world and for living

Prior to the sermon series, how much did you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 I did not understand the teaching | <input type="radio"/> 5 I grasped its significance for life and living   |
| <input type="radio"/> 2                                   | <input type="radio"/> 6  |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 I could explain its meaning       | <input type="radio"/> 7 I was able to translate the teachings to my life |
| <input type="radio"/> 4                                   | <input type="radio"/> 8  |

After the past weeks, how much do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 I do not understand the teaching | <input type="radio"/> 5 I grasp its significance for life and living    |
| <input type="radio"/> 2                                  | <input type="radio"/> 6   |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 I can explain its meaning        | <input type="radio"/> 7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life |
| <input type="radio"/> 4                                  | <input type="radio"/> 8   |

**Recognition** - critically reflect on my own life

Prior to the sermon series, how much did you recognize how Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom revealed situations you faced in life and your responses to those situations?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 I did not recognize        | <input type="radio"/> 5 I recognized while I was acting |
| <input type="radio"/> 2                            | <input type="radio"/> 6                                 |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 I recognized after I acted | <input type="radio"/> 7 I recognized before I acted     |
| <input type="radio"/> 4                            | <input type="radio"/> 8                                 |

After the past weeks, how much do you recognize how Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom reveals situations you faced in life and your responses to those situations?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 I do not recognize      | <input type="radio"/> 5 I recognize while I am acting |
| <input type="radio"/> 2                         | <input type="radio"/> 6                               |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 I recognize after I act | <input type="radio"/> 7 I recognize before I act      |
| <input type="radio"/> 4                         | <input type="radio"/> 8                               |



**Behavior** - act from my understanding and critical reflection

Prior to the sermon series, how much did your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

After the past weeks, how much do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the Kingdom?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

**Reflections or Comments**

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry research project.

## APPENDIX 3: SURVEY 3

### A Curriculum for Christlikeness

The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 3

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral research.

*Check one option*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Years at Keystone</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	
<input type="radio"/> Middle/High School	<input type="radio"/> 0-1	<input type="radio"/> Japanese	
<input type="radio"/> 20-45	<input type="radio"/> 2-4	<input type="radio"/> Filipino	
<input type="radio"/> 46+	<input type="radio"/> 5+	<input type="radio"/> American	
		<input type="radio"/> Other	
<b>Worship attendance</b>	<b>Journal Usage</b>	<b>Discipleship Group Participation</b>	
<input type="radio"/> 4-5 times a month	<input type="radio"/> 4+ times a week	<input type="radio"/> 3+ times a month	
<input type="radio"/> 2-3 times a month	<input type="radio"/> 1-3 times a week	<input type="radio"/> 1-2 times a month	
<input type="radio"/> Once a month or less	<input type="radio"/> Not using	<input type="radio"/> Not participating	

Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below

*Circle one number*

**Familiarity** - recall the topic from memory or recognize it when presented

Prior to the sermon series, how familiar were you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding anger and obsessive desires?

- 1 I was unfamiliar with the passages
- 2
- 3 I could recognize the passages
- 4
- 5 I could summarize the passages
- 6
- 7 I could recite the passages
- 8

After the past weeks, how familiar are you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding anger and obsessive desires?

- 1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s)
- 2
- 3 I can recognize the passage(s)
- 4
- 5 I can summarize the passage(s)
- 6
- 7 I can recite the passage(s)
- 8

**Understanding** - explain the meaning in my own words, it's consequences in the world and for living

Prior to the sermon series, did you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding anger and obsessive desires?

- 1 I did not understand the teaching
- 2
- 3 I could explain its meaning
- 4
- 5 I grasped its significance for life and living
- 6
- 7 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8

After the past weeks, do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding anger and obsessive desires?

- 1 I do not understand the teaching
- 2
- 3 I can explain its meaning
- 4
- 5 I grasp its significance for life and living
- 6
- 7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8

**Recognition** - critically reflect on my own life

Prior to the sermon series, did you recognize situations of anger and obsessive desire and your responses to those situations?

- 1 I did not recognize
- 2
- 3 I recognized after I acted
- 4
- 5 I recognized while I was acting
- 6
- 7 I recognized before I acted
- 8

After the past weeks, do you recognize situations of anger and obsessive desire and your responses to those situations?

- 1 I do not recognize
- 2
- 3 I recognize after I act
- 4
- 5 I recognize while I am acting
- 6
- 7 I recognize before I act
- 8

**Behavior** - act from my understanding and critical reflection  
Prior to the sermon series, how often did your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding anger and obsessive desires?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

After the past weeks, how often do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding anger and obsessive desires?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

**Reflections or Comments**

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry research project

## APPENDIX 4: SURVEY 4

### A Curriculum for Christlikeness The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 4

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral research.

*Check one option*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Years at Keystone</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	
<input type="radio"/> Middle/High School	<input type="radio"/> 0-1	<input type="radio"/> Japanese	
<input type="radio"/> 20-45	<input type="radio"/> 2-4	<input type="radio"/> Filipino	
<input type="radio"/> 46+	<input type="radio"/> 5+	<input type="radio"/> American	
		<input type="radio"/> Other	
<b>Worship attendance</b>	<b>Journal Usage</b>	<b>Discipleship Group Participation</b>	
<input type="radio"/> 4-5 times a month	<input type="radio"/> 4+ times a week	<input type="radio"/> 3+ times a month	
<input type="radio"/> 2-3 times a month	<input type="radio"/> 1-3 times a week	<input type="radio"/> 1-2 times a month	
<input type="radio"/> Once a month or less	<input type="radio"/> Not using	<input type="radio"/> Not participating	

**Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below**

*Circle one number*

**Familiarity** - recall the topic from memory or recognize it when presented  
Prior to the sermon series, how familiar were you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies?

- 1 I was unfamiliar with the passages
- 2 I could recognize the passages
- 3 I could recognize the passages
- 4 I could summarize the passages
- 5 I could summarize the passages
- 6 I could recite the passages
- 7 I could recite the passages
- 8 I could recite the passages

After the past weeks, how familiar are you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies?

- 1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s)
- 2 I can recognize the passage(s)
- 3 I can recognize the passage(s)
- 4 I can summarize the passage(s)
- 5 I can summarize the passage(s)
- 6 I can recite the passage(s)
- 7 I can recite the passage(s)
- 8 I can recite the passage(s)

**Understanding** - explain the meaning in my own words, it's consequences in the world and for living

Prior to the sermon series, did you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies?

- 1 I did not understand the teaching
- 2 I could explain its meaning
- 3 I could explain its meaning
- 4 I grasped its significance for life and living
- 5 I grasped its significance for life and living
- 6 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
- 7 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8 I was able to translate the teachings to my life

After the past weeks, do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies?

- 1 I do not understand the teaching
- 2 I can explain its meaning
- 3 I can explain its meaning
- 4 I grasp its significance for life and living
- 5 I grasp its significance for life and living
- 6 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
- 7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8 I am able to translate the teachings to my life

**Recognition** - critically reflect on my own life  
Prior to the sermon series, did you recognize situations of verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies and your responses to those situations?

- 1 I did not recognize
- 2 I recognized after I acted
- 3 I recognized after I acted
- 4 I recognized before I acted
- 5 I recognized while I was acting
- 6 I recognized while I was acting
- 7 I recognized before I acted
- 8 I recognized before I acted

After the past weeks, do you recognize situations of verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies and your responses to those situations?

- 1 I do not recognize
- 2 I recognize after I act
- 3 I recognize after I act
- 4 I recognize while I am acting
- 5 I recognize while I am acting
- 6 I recognize before I act
- 7 I recognize before I act
- 8 I recognize before I act

**Behavior** - act from my understanding and critical reflection

Prior to the sermon series, how often did your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

After the past weeks, how often do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding verbal manipulation, retaliation, and enemies?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

**Reflections or Comments**

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry research project

## APPENDIX 5: SURVEY 5

### A Curriculum for Christlikeness

The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 5

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral research.

*Check one option*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Years at Keystone</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	
<input type="radio"/> Middle/High School	<input type="radio"/> 0-1	<input type="radio"/> Japanese	
<input type="radio"/> 20-45	<input type="radio"/> 2-4	<input type="radio"/> Filipino	
<input type="radio"/> 46+	<input type="radio"/> 5+	<input type="radio"/> American	
		<input type="radio"/> Other	
<b>Worship attendance</b>	<b>Journal Usage</b>	<b>Discipleship Group Participation</b>	
<input type="radio"/> 4-5 times a month	<input type="radio"/> 4+ times a week	<input type="radio"/> 3+ times a month	
<input type="radio"/> 2-3 times a month	<input type="radio"/> 1-3 times a week	<input type="radio"/> 1-2 times a month	
<input type="radio"/> Once a month or less	<input type="radio"/> Not using	<input type="radio"/> Not participating	

Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below

*Circle one number*

**Familiarity** - recall the topic from memory or recognize it when presented

Prior to the sermon series, how familiar were you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:1-24 regarding 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God?

1 I was unfamiliar with the passages	5 I could summarize the passages
2 I could recognize the passages	6 I could recite the passages
3 I could recognize the passages	7 I could recite the passages
4	8

After the past weeks, how familiar are you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God?

1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s)	5 I can summarize the passage(s)
2 I can recognize the passage(s)	6 I can recite the passage(s)
3 I can recognize the passage(s)	7 I can recite the passage(s)
4	8

**Understanding** - explain the meaning in my own words, it's consequences in the world and for living

Prior to the sermon series, did you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God?

1 I did not understand the teaching	5 I grasped its significance for life and living
2	6
3 I could explain its meaning	7 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
4	8

After the past weeks, do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God?

1 I do not understand the teaching	5 I grasp its significance for life and living
2	6
3 I can explain its meaning	7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
4	8

**Recognition** - critically reflect on my own life

Prior to the sermon series, did you recognize situations of 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God, and your response to those situations?

1 I did not recognize	5 I recognized while I was acting
2	6
3 I recognized after I acted	7 I recognized before I acted
4	8

After the past weeks, do you recognize situations of 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God and your response to those situations?

1 I do not recognize	5 I recognize while I am acting
2	6
3 I recognize after I act	7 I recognize before I act
4	8

**Behavior** - act from my understanding and critical reflection  
 Prior to the sermon series, how often did your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

After the past weeks, how often do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding 1) giving/praying/fasting in order to be seen by others instead of for God alone and 2) treasuring possessions on earth above God?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

**Reflections or Comments**

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in this Doctor of Ministry research project

## APPENDIX 6: SURVEY 6

### A Curriculum for Christlikeness

#### The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 6

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Briant's doctoral research.

Check one option

- |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Age</b>                                 | <b>Years at Keystone</b>               | <b>Nationality</b>                            |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Middle/High School   | <input type="radio"/> 0-1              | <input type="radio"/> Japanese/Okinawan       |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 20-45                | <input type="radio"/> 2-4              | <input type="radio"/> Filipino                |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 46+                  | <input type="radio"/> 5+               | <input type="radio"/> American                |  |
|  |  | <input type="radio"/> Other                   |  |
| <b>Worship attendance</b>                  | <b>Journal Usage</b>                   | <b>Small Group Participation (past month)</b> |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 4-5 times a month    | <input type="radio"/> 4+ times a week  | <input type="radio"/> 3+ times a month        |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 2-3 times a month    | <input type="radio"/> 1-3 times a week | <input type="radio"/> 1-2 times a month       |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Once a month or less | <input type="radio"/> Not using        | <input type="radio"/> Not participating       |  |

Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below

Circle one number

**Familiarity** - recall the topic from memory or recognize it when presented

Prior to the sermon series, how familiar were you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding worry and judging?

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 I was unfamiliar with the passage(s) | 5 I could summarize the passage(s) |
| 2                                      | 6                                  |
| 3 I could recognize the passage(s)     | 7 I could recite the passage(s)    |
| 4                                      | 8                                  |

After the past weeks, how familiar are you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding worry and judging?

- |                                       |                                  |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s) | 5 I can summarize the passage(s) |
| 2                                     | 6                                |
| 3 I can recognize the passage(s)      | 7 I can recite the passage(s)    |
| 4                                     | 8                                |

1 of 3

**Understanding** - explain the meaning in my own words, it's consequences in the world and for living

Prior to the sermon series, did you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding worry and judging?

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 I did not understand the teaching | 5 I grasped its significance for life and living   |
| 2                                   | 6  |
| 3 I could explain its meaning       | 7 I was able to translate the teachings to my life |
| 4                                   | 8  |

After the past weeks, do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding worry and judging?

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 I do not understand the teaching | 5 I grasp its significance for life and living    |
| 2                                  | 6   |
| 3 I can explain its meaning        | 7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life |
| 4                                  | 8   |

**Recognition** - critically reflect on my own life

Prior to the sermon series, did you recognize situations of worry and being judgmental and your response to those situations?

- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 I did not recognize        | 5 I recognized while I was acting |
| 2                            | 6                                 |
| 3 I recognized after I acted | 7 I recognized before I acted     |
| 4                            | 8                                 |

After the past weeks, do you recognize situations of worry and being judgmental and your response to those situations?

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 I do not recognize      | 5 I recognize while I am acting |
| 2                         | 6                               |
| 3 I recognize after I act | 7 I recognize before I act      |
| 4                         | 8                               |

**Behavior** - act from my understanding and critical reflection

Prior to the sermon series, how often did your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding worry and judgmentalism?

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1 Rarely       | 5 Frequently   |
| 2              | 6              |
| 3 Infrequently | 7 Consistently |
| 4              | 8              |

(turn over)  
2 of 3



After the past weeks, how often do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding worry and judgmentalism?

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1 Rarely       | 5 Frequently   |
| 2              | 6              |
| 3 Infrequently | 7 Consistently |
| 4              | 8              |

Reflections or Comments

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry research project.

3 of 3

APPENDIX 7: SURVEY 7

A Curriculum for Christlikeness

The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 7

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral research.

Check one option

<b>Age</b>	<b>Years at Keystone</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
<input type="radio"/> Middle/High School	<input type="radio"/> 0-1	<input type="radio"/> Japanese
<input type="radio"/> 20-45	<input type="radio"/> 2-4	<input type="radio"/> Filipino
<input type="radio"/> 46+	<input type="radio"/> 5+	<input type="radio"/> American
		<input type="radio"/> Other
<b>Worship attendance</b>	<b>Journal Usage</b>	<b>Discipleship Group Participation</b>
<input type="radio"/> 4-5 times month	<input type="radio"/> 4+ times a week	<input type="radio"/> 3+ times a month
<input type="radio"/> 2-3 times a month	<input type="radio"/> 1-3 times a week	<input type="radio"/> 1-2 times a month
<input type="radio"/> Once a month or less	<input type="radio"/> Not using	<input type="radio"/> Not participating

Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below

Circle one number

**Familiarity** - recall the topic from memory or recognize it when presented  
 Prior to the sermon series, how familiar were you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding asking (Matthew 7:7-12)?

- 1 I was unfamiliar with the passages
- 2
- 3 I could recognize the passages
- 4
- 5 I could summarize the passages
- 6
- 7 I could recite the passages
- 8

After the past weeks, how familiar are you with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding asking?

- 1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s)
- 2
- 3 I can recognize the passage(s)
- 4
- 5 I can summarize the passage(s)
- 6
- 7 I can recite the passage(s)
- 8

**Understanding** - explain the meaning in my own words, its consequences in the world and for living  
 Prior to the sermon series, did you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding asking?

- 1 I did not understand the teaching
- 2
- 3 I could explain its meaning
- 4
- 5 I grasped its significance for life and living
- 6
- 7 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8

After the past weeks, do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding asking?

- 1 I do not understand the teaching
- 2
- 3 I can explain its meaning
- 4
- 5 I grasp its significance for life and living
- 6
- 7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8

**Recognition** - critically reflect on my own life  
 Prior to the sermon series, did you recognize situations of not asking God or others and instead assuming, forcing, or condemning?

- 1 I did not recognize
- 2
- 3 I recognized after I acted
- 4
- 5 I recognized while I was acting
- 6
- 7 I recognized before I acted
- 8

After the past weeks, do you recognize situations of not asking God or others and instead assuming, forcing, or condemning?

- 1 I do not recognize
- 2
- 3 I recognize after I act
- 4
- 5 I recognize while I am acting
- 6
- 7 I recognize before I act
- 8

**Behavior** - act from my understanding and critical reflection

Prior to the sermon series, how often did your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding asking?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

After the past weeks, how often do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount regarding asking?

- 1 Rarely
- 2
- 3 Infrequently
- 4
- 5 Frequently
- 6
- 7 Consistently
- 8

Give one example of how you are learning to practice asking.

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

Disclaimer: Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry research project

### APPENDIX 8: SURVEY 8

Answer the questions below  
After this series, how do you see or understand the Sermon on the Mount differently?

#### A Curriculum for Christlikeness The Sermon on the Mount - Survey 8

This survey is meant to help you prayerfully reflect with God on your familiarity with, understanding of, and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. If you are willing to turn in the survey, it will help in Pastor Brian's doctoral research.

Check one option

- Age**
  - Middle/High School
  - 20-45
  - 46+
- Years at Keystone**
  - 0-1
  - 2-4
  - 5+
- Nationality**
  - Japanese
  - Filipino
  - American
  - Other
- Worship attendance**
  - 4-5 times a month
  - 2-3 times a month
  - Once a month or less
- Journal Usage**
  - 4+ times a week
  - 1-3 times a week
  - Not using
- Discipleship Group Participation**
  - 3+ times a month
  - 1-2 times a month
  - Not participating

What is one thing you are learning (or recognizing) about yourself?

What is one way you have been practicing what Jesus taught?

What is one way you have gotten better at doing what Jesus taught?

What has been challenging about this journey through the Sermon on the Mount?

Turn over  
1

Turn over  
2

**Prayerfully reflect and answer the questions below**

*Circle one number.*

**Familiarity**

Prior to the sermon series, how familiar were you with Jesus's teachings from the Sermon on the Mount?

- 1 I was unfamiliar with the passages
- 2 I could recognize the passages
- 3 I could summarize the passages
- 4 I could recite the passages
- 5 I could summarize the passages
- 6 I could recite the passages
- 7 I could recite the passages
- 8 I could recite the passages

After the past months, how familiar are you with Jesus's teachings from the Sermon on the Mount?

- 1 I am unfamiliar with the passage(s)
- 2 I can recognize the passage(s)
- 3 I can summarize the passage(s)
- 4 I can recite the passage(s)
- 5 I can summarize the passage(s)
- 6 I can recite the passage(s)
- 7 I can recite the passage(s)
- 8 I can recite the passage(s)

**Understanding**

- explain the meaning in my own words, its consequences in the world and for living

Prior to the sermon series, did you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount?

- 1 I did not understand the teaching
- 2 I grasped its significance for life and living
- 3 I could explain its meaning
- 4 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
- 5 I grasped its significance for life and living
- 6 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
- 7 I was able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8 I was able to translate the teachings to my life

After the past months, do you understand Jesus's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount?

- 1 I do not understand the teaching
- 2 I grasp its significance for life and living
- 3 I can explain its meaning
- 4 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
- 5 I grasp its significance for life and living
- 6 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
- 7 I am able to translate the teachings to my life
- 8 I am able to translate the teachings to my life

Turn over  
3

**Recognition**

- critically reflect on my own life

Prior to the sermon series, did you recognize how the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount reveal situations you face in life and your responses to those situations?

- 1 I did not recognize
- 2 I recognized after I acted
- 3 I recognized before I acted
- 4 I recognized while I was acting
- 5 I recognized while I was acting
- 6 I recognized before I acted
- 7 I recognized before I acted
- 8 I recognized before I acted

After this series, do you recognize how the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount reveal situations you face in life and your responses to those situations?

- 1 I do not recognize
- 2 I recognized after I act
- 3 I recognized after I act
- 4 I recognized while I am acting
- 5 I recognized while I am acting
- 6 I recognized before I act
- 7 I recognized before I act
- 8 I recognized before I act

**Behavior**

- act from my understanding and critical reflection

Prior to the sermon series, how often did your thoughts and actions align with Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount?

- 1 Rarely
- 2 Infrequently
- 3 Consistently
- 4 Frequently
- 5 Rarely
- 6 Infrequently
- 7 Consistently
- 8 Frequently

After this series, how often do your thoughts and actions align with Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount?

- 1 Rarely
- 2 Infrequently
- 3 Consistently
- 4 Frequently
- 5 Rarely
- 6 Infrequently
- 7 Consistently
- 8 Frequently

Turn over  
4

Disclaimer. Completion of the surveys implies consent that the data gathered by the researcher can be used in his Doctor of Ministry research project.

**Other**

In the questions above, if you responded that you experienced growth, do you feel it is a result of this curriculum?  
(circle) Yes No

Why or why not?

Did you research topics further in addition to what was presented in the sermon, reflection journal, or discipleship groups? (circle one)

- 1 No
- 2 Yes, for one topic
- 3 Yes, for some topics
- 4 Yes, for most topics
- 5 Yes, for all topics

**Reflections or Comments**

Place the survey in the tray at the back of the sanctuary.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

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