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DISCIPLESHIP AS A CATALYST TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION
IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

by

VANESSA M. SEIFERT

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

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2013

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Vanessa Seifert

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to everyone who has supported me along the way. Special feelings of love and gratitude go to my husband, Brandon, whose never-ending support enabled me to complete my dissertation. My parents, Libor and Alicia Frana, also offered words of encouragement and support throughout my dissertation journey.

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DISCIPLESHIP AS A CATALYST TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Vanessa M. Seifert, Ph.D.

University of the Incarnate Word, 2013

Some Christian churches approach the majority of their faith expression with a “go to the community” dynamic, while other churches focus primarily on attracting the community to “come to them.” The problem is that there is a growing population of religiously unaffiliated people in the United States for whom traditional forms of faith expression are not meaningful. A new way of thinking about communal faith expression is needed if the church seeks to reach people who are spiritually curious but not interested in the attractional church model. The journey towards organizational change, even for churches, often begins with a commitment to ongoing personal transformation. This study demonstrates how discipleship can serve as a catalyst for personal transformation in the Christian faith. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the leaders of Mission City in regard to how they foster personal transformation in the participants of the Faith in Action (FIA) program. In-depth interviews and collecting documents were the two primary research strategies for this qualitative case study. Faith in Action leaders foster personal transformation in the program’s participants in a dynamic fashion through a process that is built on spiritual formation and connected to a learning process that results in organic growth patterns. The FIA process involves a personal transformation journey rooted in spiritual formation that connects participants with God so that God can bring the transformation that leads to missional living. God’s presence coupled with transformed

perspectives enables participants to become catalysts who mobilize other Christians to become the functioning body of Christ in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and third spaces to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need. This study indicates that fostering transformational discipleship will require church leaders to engage in a comprehensive overhaul of their current discipleship practices. This process will also require them to challenge their teaching and leadership assumptions, inventory their worldview, examine their leadership approaches, and create systems and structures that enable collaborative leadership.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO A STUDY ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP

Context of Study

A local Christian church leader feels burdened, because attendance at the church where he serves has continued to dwindle over the past 15 years. The only growth that this church experiences is from the transferring of members from neighboring churches in the local area. His coworker is experiencing anxiety because the kids in the same church's youth group are increasingly busy and no longer see youth group activities as a priority. Parents are uninvolved in their children's spiritual development, and they also fail to make their own spiritual development a priority in the rhythms of their daily lives. To make matters more stressful, this particular church is saddled with a three million dollar debt from the construction of its brick and mortar buildings. This church's staff has developed a minutia mentality as each staff member buries his head in piles of to-do lists without giving attention to the big picture.

Today's leaders face a world where continuous change is the norm (Wheatley, 2006). All organizations need management and leadership, but leadership is particularly necessary to solve problems that do not have easy answers (Fullan, 2001). Heifetz provides an image of leadership as mobilizing people to tackle tough situations (as cited in Fullan, 2001). Christian churches are in a tough situation in the Western world because their mission frontier has changed drastically over the past few decades. Christian churches in the Western world today are faced with growing shifts in the religious landscape. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, which was composed of more than 35,000 interviews with Americans age 18 and older. These interviews demonstrated that religious affiliation in the United States is both very diverse and extremely fluid (Pew Forum, 2013a). More than a quarter

of American adults (28%) have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion—or no religion at all (Pew Forum, 2013a).

The religiously unaffiliated make up another component of the changing religious landscape. The Pew Research Center conducted another study with the religiously unaffiliated (also known as the *Nones*) from June 28 to July 9, 2012, using both landlines and cell phones among a representative sample of 2,973 adults. Pew also conducted an additional 511 interviews with religiously unaffiliated adults between June 28 and July 10, 2012, to produce a total sample of 958 religiously unaffiliated respondents in the survey. Pew then aggregated and analyzed data on the Nones population from prior Pew Research Center Surveys. In 2007, 60% of those who said they seldom or never attend religious services nevertheless described themselves as belonging to a particular religious tradition (Pew Forum, 2013b). In 2012, just 50% of those who said they seldom or never attend religious services still retained a religious affiliation—a 10-point drop in five years (Pew Forum, 2013b). These trends suggest that the ranks of the unaffiliated are swelling partly because Americans who rarely go to services are now more willing than in the past to drop their religious attachments altogether (Pew Forum, 2013b).

Hirsch, as cited in Wegner and Magruder (2012) states, “Whether we like it or not, the principles, methods, and thinking about the church that worked in the past and were well suited for the past are simply unable to address the complex context of the twenty-first century” (pp. 11-12). Knowing this, church leaders have the opportunity to question assumptions, imagine possibilities, and explore new forms of faith expression. Approaches to adult education and organizational change can be applied to the leadership challenges of Christian churches today since churches are organizations that have a mission to teach and grow.

Leadership in the church. Church leaders often attend conference after conference seeking new programs or solutions to the challenges the church is facing, yet these actions do not seem to be making a difference with the trended church attendance decline (McNeal, 2003; Roxburgh, 2011). A new way of thinking is needed. Church leaders are emerging from an overprogrammed church culture to realize that church participation alone does not equal spiritual maturity (Hawkins & Parkinson, 2007).

Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006) contend that consumerist views of faith and church have led to this overprogrammed church culture. Consumerism exists as an often unchallenged assumption in American life, especially in churches. “In a consumer-oriented society, consumer-oriented churches will lose their ‘market share’ as soon as another church with flashier offerings hits town. It is simply the nature of the beast” (Ford, 2008, p. 71). Consumers look for what is appealing, and the attractional church model caters to this consumerist church perspective. However, there are growing numbers of people who are not interested in this attractional way of doing church.

An attractional church (a church where the primary energy is focused on how to get people to come to church) will not connect with growing numbers of people for whom church is nice to have around but is not integral to the structures or expectations of everyday life. (Roxburgh, 2011, pp. 14-15)

The problem is that the market share for attractional churches is becoming smaller because there are fewer people interested in that kind of Christianity (McNeal, 2003). Roxburgh (2011) states that it is possible to attract Christians from other churches to better programs, but this model of ministry is ineffective in reaching those not already connected with a local church. Pastors and church staff members can focus on creating the ultimate church with the attractional church model, and unchurched people still will not come. A new way of thinking is needed (McNeal, 2003; Roxburgh, 2011).

The attractional church model continues to compete for the smaller and smaller number of people for whom current forms of church are of value (Hirsch, 2006). This does not mean that people are not interested in spiritual or religious conversation. People in America are interested in spirituality; however, their interest may not necessarily be expressed in the Christian practices currently taught by the institutional church (Conder, 2006). This reality can lead to questions about the church's current forms of institutional faith expression. McNeal (2003) states that institutional church participation is down:

Many church leaders confuse the downward statistics on church participation with a loss of spiritual interest in Americans. That's because these leaders can't think of Christianity outside of the institutional terms. The truth is, although intrigue with institutional religion is down, interest in spirituality is up. (p. 11)

A new way of thinking about communal faith expression is needed if the church seeks to reach people who are spiritually curious but not interested in the attractional church model.

The Christian church in changing times. Transitional times provide avenues of opportunity for churches. Mission matters; it should drive the focus of any organization, including a church (Rainer & Geiger, 2006). The Christian church's mission has not changed, but the frontier context continues to change. The church is in the process of being stretched between a grand vision of the past and a new vision for the future that is not yet completely shaped (Mead, 1991). Since the frontier of the church's mission has changed, the church is in a position to reevaluate how it defines success. Edwards (2008) suggests that church leaders ought to measure success by the church's impact on its local community and the personal growth of members, not on the size of the churches alone. Such thinking reflects a move away from the attractional church model. Local congregations are now being challenged to move from a passive, responding role in support of mission to a front-line, active role (Mead, 1991). Seeing church through a mission-action dynamic may require a change in perspective, with an emphasis

on organizational change. Such large-scale change might begin at the personal level since Quinn (1996) claims that personal transformation can be a viable path to organizational change.

Quinn's (1996) perspectives on personal transformation will be further explored in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Tickle (2008) suggests that a transition is currently happening in some Christian churches and faith communities that reflects a move away from the attractional church model. These faith communities choose to offer routines and rhythms that differ from the congregational model of church life that has directed religious life for centuries. Tickle states that the transitions in these particular Christian churches are emerging in forms that are highly relational and communal in organization and that they seek to be Christ-centered (Tickle, 2008). She also states that these churches will not necessarily replace existing forms of church. McNeal (2011) also writes about the growing phenomenon of such faith communities. Missional communities are one example of an emerging form.

While descriptions of missional communities vary, the measurement of success is the same. Missional communities ask the question: "Are people of the community experiencing the abundant life Jesus promised, and are they sharing it with others?" (McNeal, 2011, p. xx). McNeal (2009) states that this particular ministry model necessitates that leaders have a process-oriented worldview. Wheatley (2006) also speaks of a process-oriented worldview:

What we [are] really asking, and what [is] also being asked of us, [is] that we change our thinking at the most fundamental level, that of our worldview. The dominant worldview of Western culture—the world as machine—doesn't help us to live well in this world any longer. (pp. 189-190)

Wheatley (2006) continues by explaining that a process-oriented worldview includes fostering people and organizations that are adaptive, creative, and resilient. Christian churches in the United States face challenges that require adaptive, process-oriented leadership (Conder, 2006;

Frost & Hirsch, 2009; Hirsch & Ford, 2011; Lyons, 2010; McNeal, 2009; Roxburgh, 2011; Woodward, 2012). Missional communities at their core require this process-oriented worldview (McNeal, 2009).

For a missional church transformation to occur, the recognizable roles of clergy, church professionals, laity, and regional and national leaders must transition. Church leaders ought to be focusing on how churches can transition from solely an attractional model of church to one that is missional in nature—one that enables church members to be catalysts for change in their respective circles of influence (Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2006). This means leaders should not focus on how to do church better; instead, focus should be placed on the process of church leaders developing people as its core activity (Breen, 2012; McNeal, 2009).

Every church member is a missionary in the missional mindset, and reproduction and multiplication are key concepts of the missional mindset (Wegner & Magruder, 2012).

Every follower of Jesus should be a reproducing follower of Jesus. And every church should be a reproducing church. If we believe that reproduction is God's will for all of us [the Great Commission], then we will build our systems accordingly. (Wegner & Magruder, 2012, p. 239)

The problem is that church systems have not enabled followers of Jesus to reproduce and multiply. “Virtually all the systems the church has developed over the last seventeen hundred years have been designed for a single local church where there is one person (the pastor) who takes responsibility for reproduction” (Wegner & Magruder, 2012, p. 239). Confusion also exists about the roles of adult lay leaders in Christian churches. Tickle (2008) states that the Reformation era of the 1500s gave rise to the professionalization of clergy, and it also perpetuated a greater separation between clergy and laity. This divide continued through the post-Reformation era and still exists today through the congregation-based Christendom model of ministry (McNeal, 2011).

Some authors suggest a renewal is needed in Christian churches to refresh the leadership movement of the laity. Such authors advocate for this movement to be missional-incarnational in nature (Frost & Hirsch, 2009; Hirsch, 2006; Hirsch & Ford, 2011; Hirsch & Hirsch, 2011; Roxburgh & Boren, 2009; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2006; Roxburgh, 2011; Wegner & Magruder, 2012; Woodward, 2012). Wegner and Magruder (2012) describe this renewal as happening at the micro-level of church: “Micro describes the type of church where every member lives as a missionary. Micro is another way of referring to a church that intentionally plants a missional community among every subculture in a community” (p. 237). Missional communities depend on the personal development of lay leaders.

In a micro-church, ordinary men and women are equipped to plant their own simple church in their workplace or neighborhood. Every member is equipped and released to unleash their ministry, not as a volunteer at the campus, but as a way of life in the domain of society where God has already placed them. (Wegner & Magruder, 2012, p. 237)

The personal development of lay leaders happens through discipleship, the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. “In the New Testament the word for disciple is the Greek word *mathetes*, which can also be translated pupil or apprentice. Disciple simply means learner or student” (Geiger, Kelley, & Nation, 2012, p. 7). Wegner and Magruder (2012) contend that everything rises and falls on the ability of the local church to make disciples.

In the older-church growth model, the weekend service was the catalytic engine that was designed to power everything else. But in apostolic movement [rooted in missional living], while the weekend service has an important role, disciple making is seen as that catalytic engine. (Wegner & Magruder, 2012, p. 241)

The process of discipleship invites individuals and communities to be transformed. “Jesus isn’t merely interested in conforming—changing the appearance and behavior of people. He’s interested in transformation. Transformation is more than a surface-level alteration; it’s actually

becoming something else entirely” (Wegner & Magruder, 2012, p. 9). Transformation comes through the discipleship process, and discipleship fuels missional living.

Missional living. The words missional and incarnational describe two distinct and yet connected practices. Missional refers to the outgoing thrusts of social movements led by followers of Jesus; incarnational is connected with the theology of *missio Dei* [the mission of God], focusing on God first sending His Son and then sending all people into the world to live the message of God’s love (Hirsch, 2006). The missional side focuses on the active, sending role; the incarnational aspect encompasses the unique ways each individual follower of Jesus is called to dwell and fill the “cracks and crevices of culture that are unique to each person” (Breen, 2010). Hirsch and Ford (2011) add to this by stating “it [missional-incarnational living] is about living the gospel in such a way that people are drawn into the direct influence of Jesus through our lives” (p. 34). Participation is a central norm to this faith expression that is “movemental in nature,” since it has a *go to them* ethos instead of holding the expectation that *they will come* (Hirsch, 2006). Action flows from the being with this missional-incarnational philosophy. For the purposes of this study, the researcher described this philosophy as missional living.

Leadership structures and processes either enable or disenable followers to be participants in an organization’s mission. Missional living calls Christians to move toward an incarnational impulse outside of a church’s centralized efforts (Wegner & Magruder, 2012). The problem is that current leadership structures in the majority of mainline denominational churches disempower this active form of participation from taking place, since many of a church’s efforts typically focus on what happens inside the church walls (Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2006). A new way of thinking about leadership of church staff and laity is needed. Wegner and Magruder

(2012) paint a picture with words of how churches could look with a decentralized shift in leadership structures.

Imagine if those [of a church's leadership and discipleship development efforts] could be connected into a cohesive, loyal network. Some might be businessmen, stay-at-home moms, teachers, lawyers, doctors, students, or social workers, all incarnating and impacting right where God has placed them. (p. 259)

All of life is seen as ministry in this holistic way of thinking, regardless of whether a person is a trained church professional or not. There may be a need for personal transformation in order to view life in this holistic way.

Personal transformation. The journey towards organizational change often begins with a commitment to ongoing personal transformation, since personal change generally precedes organizational change (Herrington, Creech & Taylor, 2003; Quinn, 1996). Since structures and norms are deeply embedded in organizational life, large-scale change is a complex process (Herrington, Bonem, & Furr, 2000; Schein, 2010). Herrington et al. (2003) assert that personal transformation in one's own life is the only foundation on which effective church leadership can be constructed. "To the degree that we are personally being transformed, we are able to lead the way as our congregations change, so that they will be available to God for the transformation in their community" (Herrington et al., 2003, pp. 14-15). Ongoing commitment to personal transformation is part of the leadership journey for all people, regardless of their position power in a church (Herrington et al., 2003).

The church's goal is to help facilitate spiritual transformation in people's lives. This personal spiritual transformation comes from our apprenticeship to Jesus—living as he lived and doing the things he did. "He [Jesus] lived in intimate community, and he sought out regular times of solitude. He worshiped, lived simply, joined in celebrations, and served the needs of other" (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 132). The challenge is that we live in a fast-paced, individualistic

culture that competes with this way of thinking and being (McNeal, 2011). Herrington et al. (2003) suggest that in many cases personal transformation is needed in order to obtain a new worldview that questions a highly individualistic culture.

Transformative learning theory is one framework for understanding the personal transformation process. Though developed in higher education, the theory of transformative learning has been growing in the last decade in its application to multiple settings such as corporations and communities (Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009). Mezirow et al. (2009) define transformative learning as “an approach to teaching based on promoting change, where educators challenge learners to critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them” (p. xi). The theory of transformative learning along with other frameworks for understanding personal transformation was explored throughout this study.

Statement of the Problem

Although there is a large amount of research that has been conducted on the topics related to changing the organizational norms of individual Christian churches, few studies highlight the personal change processes necessary in order to facilitate the needed mind-set shift to make these changes happen (Taylor, personal communication, October 1, 2012). The problem is that many leaders suffer from “organizational blindness” and fail to see the need for a new paradigm, a new operational framework, and a new way of doing things (Hirsch & Catchim, 2012). Additionally, many people deny the need for deep change because the process involves a great deal of pain and effort (Quinn, 1996). The theory of transformative learning in adult education is one framework for understanding how individuals challenge their assumptions about how they relate to the world around themselves and ultimately change a mindset. Therefore, researchers should give

attention to how adult education practices can facilitate environments for transformative learning to occur.

Herrington et al. (2003) note that individuals can have accountability on their personal transformation journeys by joining a community of others who are also committed to the transformational journey. One example of such a process is a program called Faith in Action (FIA) that is based in a metropolitan city in the Southwestern part of the United States. FIA is creating a community of disciples of Jesus who are being personally transformed by becoming catalysts for mobilizing Christians. The mobilized Christians in FIA become the functioning Body of Christ in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and third spaces to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need. These Christians work for the common good and to restore individuals, social systems, communities and nations to God's design (Herrington, Capper, & Taylor, 2012, p. 2). A commitment to ongoing personal transformation is central to FIA. This research addressed the gap in the literature by engaging in an exploration into this one spiritual program, which fosters personal transformation through the philosophy of missional living.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study explored the process of facilitating personal transformation through an established program designed to foster missional living among its participants. The purpose of this study was to explore the process of how the leaders of Mission City, a religious organization in the Southwestern part of the United States, foster personal transformation in participants of the FIA program. The researcher explored the perceptions of Mission City's leaders as they foster personal transformation in participants of the FIA program. The study documented perceptions of the leaders who facilitate personal transformation in the participants along with the

educational processes utilized by the leaders. This study employed a qualitative case study method.

Research Questions

The focus of this study was to explore the processes of Mission City's FIA program. The central research question asked, "How is personal transformation fostered by the leaders of Mission City through the Faith in Action program?"

Sub-questions for this study are listed below:

1. How do you describe personal transformation?
2. What are the outcomes of personal transformation?
3. What is needed in the learning process to foster transformation?
4. How do you perceive the FIA program fostering personal transformation in participants?

Theoretical Framework

The underpinnings of this study flowed from the personal transformation process, particularly Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (2000). Mezirow pioneered the word *transformative* in adult education circles; however, new perspectives about transformative learning are continually emerging. Transformative learning theory has been developing and evolving since 1978, and it is a significant research and theory topic in the field of adult education (Kitchenham, 2008). In addition to this, transformative learning theory has become a standard of practice in higher education, professional education, organizational development, international education, and community education (Mezirow et al., 2009). Jack Mezirow (2000), the author of transformative learning theory, defines it thusly:

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind sets) to make

them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (pp. 7-8)

Stated another way, transformative learning theory is “an approach to teaching based on promoting change, where educators challenge learners to critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them” (Mezirow et al., 2009, p. xi). Transformative learning theory will be further explained in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions provided a common understanding of terms that were utilized throughout the study:

Attractional Church. *Attractional church* was defined as:

Essentially, attractional church operates from the assumption that to bring people to Jesus we need to first bring them to church. It also describes the type or mode of engagement that was birthed during the Christendom period of history, when the church was perceived as a central institution of society and therefore expected people to “come and hear the gospel” rather than taking a “go-to-them” type of mentality. Not to be confused with being culturally attractive. (Hirsch, 2006, p. 274)

Christendom. *Christendom* was described as:

The standardized form and expression of the church and mission formed in the post-Constantine period (AD 312 to present). It is important to note that it was not the original form in which the church expressed itself. The Christendom church is fundamentally different from the New Testament church, which is made up of a network of grassroots missional communities organized as a movement. Christendom is marked by the following characteristics:

1. Its mode of engagement is attractional as opposed to missional/sending. It assumes a certain centrality of the church in relation to its surrounding culture. (The missional church is a “going/sending one” and operates in the incarnational mode.) (Hirsch, 2006, p. 276)

2. A shift of focus to dedicated, sacred buildings/places of worship. The association of buildings with *church* fundamentally altered the way the church perceived itself. It became more static and institutional in form. (The early church had no recognized dedicated buildings other than houses and shops, etc.) (Hirsch, 2006, p. 276)
3. The emergence of an institutionally recognized, professional clergy class acting primarily in a pastor-teacher mode. (In the New Testament church, people were commissioned into leadership by local churches or by an apostolic leader. But this was basically different from the denominational or institutional ordination we know in Christendom, which had the effect of breaking up the people of God into the professional Christian and the lay Christian. The idea of a separated clergy [Hirsch maintains] is alien to the New Testament church, as it is in the Jesus movements of the early church and China.) (Hirsch, 2006, pp. 276-277)
4. Hirsch (2006) states that the paradigm is also characterized by the institutionalization of grace in the form of sacraments administered by an institutionally authorized priesthood. (The New Testament church's form of communion was an actual [daily?] meal dedicated to Jesus in the context of everyday life and the home.) (p. 277)

Coach. *Coach* was defined as:

Someone in our lives who plays the role of furnishing an outside angle; someone outside our relationship system who offers a degree of objectivity about our lives and with whom we can consult in our attempt to become more differentiated. (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 169)

Differentiation of self. *Differentiation of self* was described as: "A person's capacity to remain true to his or her principles, to be thoughtful rather than reactive, while remaining emotionally connected to others who are important to him or her" (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 169).

Emerging Missional Church (EMC). *Emerging missional church* was described as:

The term to identify and describe the new form of *ecclesia* forming in our day. As such it is not just emerging or missional, but it is the combination of these two factors that has created a new form of church. It will also be used to describe the phenomenal movement that is going on in our day. This is not to deny the continuity of the EMC with the people of God in all ages, but to distinguish it in form alone. In this new form of church, the church is once again on the fringes of society and culture. (Hirsch, 2006, p. 65 & p. 280)

Fostering Transformative Learning. *Fostering transformative learning* was defined as:

Helping to create conditions whereby students will become conscious of their assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives; realize that there are alternate points of view; and begin to see their perspectives in a different way. (Cranton, 2006, p. 115)

Incarnational. *Incarnational* was described as:

The Incarnation refers to the act of God in entering into the created universe and realm of human affairs as the man Jesus of Nazareth. When we talk of *incarnational* in relation to mission it means similarly embodying the culture and life of a target group in order to meaningfully reach that group of people from within their culture. The term is also used to describe the missionary act of *going* to a target people group as opposed to the invitation to come to our cultural group in order to hear the gospel. (Hirsch, 2006, p. 281)

Institutionalism. *Institutionalism* was described as:

Institutionalism happens when institutions move beyond mere structural support and become a governing body of sorts. Institutionalization occurs when we outsource an essentially grassroots/local function to a centralized structure/organization. Over time the centralized structure tends to become depersonalized and becomes restrictive of deviating behavior and freedom. In other words, it occurs when in the name of some convenience we get others to do what we must do ourselves. When this happens there is a transfer of responsibility and power/authority to the governing body. In this situation it inevitably becomes a locus of power that uses some of that power to sanction behaviors of its members who are out of keeping with the institution. It becomes a power to itself and begins to assert a kind of restrictive authority on nonconforming behaviors. The problem exaggerates when over time power is entrenched in the institution and it creates a culture of restraint. When institutions get to this point, they are extremely hard to change. Seen in this light, all great innovators and thinkers are rebels against institutionalism. (Hirsch, 2006, p. 282)

Learning community. A *learning community* was defined as: “A set of significant relationships among people who are mutually committed to the transformational journey and who provide a source of objectivity, accountability, and wisdom for one another” (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 170).

Missional. *Missional* was described as: “*Missional* – a term used to describe a certain type or mode of church, leadership, Christianity, etc. For example, *missional leadership* is that form of leadership that emphasizes the primacy of the missionary calling of God’s people” (Hirsch, 2006, p.284).

Missional Church. The *missional church* was defined as:

A church that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose as an agent of God's mission to the world. In other words, the church's true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus. (Hirsch, 2006, p. 285)

Missional Community. Descriptions and applications for missional communities vary as each approach has its own unique expression, but the central affinity is *mission*:

Missional affinity is approached in two basic ways, with some mixing and matching. Some communities primarily see themselves as having a mission together – a common cause that they feel called to give their lives to (serving the homeless, mentoring school children, adopting people groups, and so on). The missional community in these cases *is* the missionary. Other missional communities mainly see their group as a community *of* missionaries, each living intentionally in their life assignments, drawing encouragement and nurture for their mission from the missional community they are a part of. These communities might serve in projects together but they do not see the group as their major missional engagement with the world. Their lives are their mission trips. These two essential components that provide the relational Velcro for all missional communities are their defined missional focus and the intentional community life they practice. (McNeal, 2011, p. 28)

Movement. *Movement* is a sociological term used to describe the organizational structures and ethos of the missional church. The New Testament church was a movement, not an institution (Hirsch, 2006).

Post-Christian Culture. A *post-Christian culture* was defined as: “A sociological term used to describe the growing reality that the church is no longer the cultural center of society” (Hirsch as cited in Wegner & Magruder, 2012, p. 12).

Transformation. *Transformation* was defined as: “Change in an individual, a church, or a community that alters both the mental model one uses to view the world and one's behavior in the world” (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 172).

Overview of Research Design

Qualitative research involves a scientific inquiry process where information is gathered for the purpose of describing a particular group with no intention of generalizing the findings (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Interpretive research is central to qualitative inquiry. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Through qualitative research, the researcher’s priority is to describe the central phenomenon of the study from the participants’ perspectives, not the researcher’s perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument, and she collects data through multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents (Schram, 2006). Observation in the natural setting is a key piece of qualitative inquiry. “This up close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research” (Creswell, 2009). Once data is collected, an inductive process is used to analyze data as researchers “gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). In conclusion, qualitative inquiry provides a richly descriptive product of themes, categories, concepts, and even theory about a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Since the researcher investigated the personal experiences of each participant, qualitative inquiry served as the methodological choice for this study. “Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved” (Glesne, 2006). Such phenomena are unique to each individual based on meaning-making perspectives. Constructivism, how individuals make meaning and construct their realities, is central to qualitative research (Merriam & Associates, 2002). This qualitative case study explored the

perceptions of the leaders of Mission City about how they foster personal transformation in participants of the Faith in Action program.

While the case study approach shares characteristics with a basic qualitative study, the delimiting object of the study, the case, is what sets this approach apart from other forms of qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative case study involves an in-depth description and analysis of a system bounded by space and time (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). This method of inquiry was appropriate because the researcher explored the process of fostering personal transformation.

Setting of the Case

This study was conducted in connection with Mission City. While Mission City has a central office, its program offerings are hosted at various locations throughout the city. FIA is the leadership development arm of Mission City. FIA is an 18-month, process-oriented program aimed at building a community of transformational leaders. FIA is built on the premise that personal transformation precedes the transformation of families, neighborhoods, congregations and workplaces.

FIA seeks to create a community of disciples of Jesus who are being personally transformed and who are also becoming catalysts, to mobilize other Christians to become the functioning Body of Christ in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces and third spaces. As the Body of Christ, these Christians will serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need and work for the common good and to restore individuals, social systems, communities and nations to God's design.

This study explored the perceptions of the leaders of Mission City as they seek to foster personal transformation in FIA participants.

Significance of the Study

While qualitative research findings cannot be generalized to large populations, reader transferability can occur as researchers and readers ask how the inquiries might contribute to an understanding of similar issues in other settings (Schram, 2006). Patton (2002) talks about transferability by using the term *extrapolation*: “Extrapolations are modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions. Extrapolations are . . . problem oriented rather than statistical and probabilistic” (p. 584). Reader transferability and extrapolations make this study significant to various groups of people in similar conditions.

These research findings are valuable to educational leaders who seek to develop other leaders, particularly in regard to fostering discipleship. As leaders seek to understand the personal transformation process of developing new mental models, they will be further enabled to create contexts where transformative learning is likely to occur. Additionally, these leaders will also be further equipped to facilitate and encourage the movement toward personal transformation in individuals who desire such action.

These findings are also beneficial to local church leaders and regional/national denominational church leaders. The creation of missional communities is the end goal of the FIA process. It is evident that emerging forms of faith expression, such as missional communities, are becoming more common in certain Christian circles. These new forms of faith expression are redefining the roles of the laity and church leaders. Therefore, church leaders, at all levels will gain further insight into the phenomenon of missional communities as a result of this study. Individual Christians will also benefit from this information, since the study demonstrates how people can truly *be the church* by taking part in missional communities.

College and seminary professors will gain insights from this study as they seek to facilitate learning environments for current and future pastors and church leaders. Challenging assumptions and discerning the leadership context are just two of the many areas in which professors focus their personal learning and teaching. This study will provide additional resourcing in those areas.

Limitations

Paid and volunteer leaders were included in the purposeful sample for this study, which is a limitation. The paid leaders came from different backgrounds, and in some cases, they had years of teaching and leadership experience. This may have influenced their perception of fostering personal transformation.

Delimitations

The study was confined to individuals who are leaders in the Faith in Action program. Chapter 2 of this document will review the literature that is relevant to this study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following literature review (a) provides an overview of how the church at large is situated in transitional times; (b) summarizes the scope and philosophy of missional communities, including Mission City's philosophy of missional communities; and (c) identifies three frameworks for understanding personal transformation: Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory, Kegan's (2000) perspectives on constructive-developmental theory, and Quinn's (1996) deep change philosophy of personal transformation.

The Church in Transition

Christian churches face tensions with a changing, relativistic, postmodern culture. Conder (2006) states that many church leaders and Christians fear postmodern thinking because they believe it results in the loss of truth. "Whatever one may call it, this shift from the modern to the postmodern, or from solid modernity to liquid modernity, has generally been difficult for the church to accept" (Hirsch, 2006, p. 16). Hirsch (2006) continues by stating that the majority of today's church leaders perceive that it is getting harder for their faith communities to navigate the complexities of the culture, and as a result, church attendance in the West is on a massive, long-trended decline. Barna's (2006) research predicts that by 2025 the local church will lose roughly half of its current market share, and alternate forms of faith expression will become increasingly important. Hirsch and Ferguson (2011) encourage leaders by stating that these massively shifting contexts provide avenues for church leaders to discern new ways of doing church. For example, Conder (2006) suggests that when churches make adjustments in thought and theology, they transition. He continues by stating that churches do not transition when they simply adjust their current programs and practices while keeping the same mindset.

The culture at large holds a postmodern mindset. Multiple truths exist in a postmodern worldview, and the Christian narrative is no longer the primary cultural narrative in postmodern culture (Hirsch & Ferguson, 2011; Hunter, 2010; McNeal, 2003). Exclusive belief may come across as fundamental, extreme, or intolerant to a postmodern thinker. Tolerance is a concept that is deeply rooted in the ethos of postmodern culture (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Putnam and Campbell (2010) found that Americans are religiously devout, religiously diverse, and religiously tolerant. Their research states that Americans have become more tolerant of other religious views because of the relationships they have formed with individuals from different religions. Since some of postmodern thinking deconstructs the Enlightenment worldview of the goodness of knowledge (Conder, 2006), Christians today are invited into more philosophical conversations about the Gospel. Simply making rational knowledge declarations about their faith is no longer sufficient. According to Roberts (2007), the relativistic thought present in today's time was also present in biblical times. This means that Christians have an opportunity as old as their faith to stand firm in conviction while being sensitive to other ways of thinking and believing. The Church is in transition as it is faced with a post-Christian culture.

Sociologists classify the culture of United States as post-Christian, because Christianity is declining and because the majority of individual cultural worldviews are no longer rooted in the language and assumptions of Christianity (Hirsch & Catchim, 2012). A post-Christian culture is further evidenced by the rapid growth of the Nones, who were previously mentioned in this study. The Nones comprise a large and growing group of Americans who are less religious than the public at large on many conventional measures, including frequency of attendance at religious services and the degree of importance they attach to religion in their lives (Pew Forum, 2013b). However, a new survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life,

conducted jointly with the PBS television program *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, finds that many of the country's 46 million unaffiliated adults are religious or spiritual in some way (Pew Forum, 2013b). Two-thirds of them state that they believe in God (68%). More than half state that they often feel a deep connection with nature and the earth (58%). More than a third classify themselves as "spiritual" but not "religious" (37%), and one-in-five (21%) say they pray every day (Pew Forum, 2013b). In addition, most religiously unaffiliated Americans think that churches and other religious institutions benefit society by strengthening community bonds and aiding the poor (Pew Forum, 2013b). With few exceptions, though, the unaffiliated state that they are *not* looking for a religion that would be right for them (Pew Forum, 2013b). Overwhelmingly, they think that religious organizations are too concerned with money and power, too focused on rules and too involved in politics (Pew Forum, 2013b).

McNeal (2011) describes the Nones in this way:

The fastest growing religious affiliation in the country is the 'non-affiliated' – a category that has doubled in the past fifteen years. This designation reflects a rejection not just of Christianity but every organized religion (Hinduism, Buddhism, Wicca, and so on). One out of six Americans (16 percent) says he or she doesn't wish to be identified with any existing group. Underneath that number are two startling findings: The rate of non-affiliation is 20 percent of men and a whopping 25 percent of young adults ages eighteen to twenty-nine. These 'Nones' are not anti-spiritual. Half of them believe in God and the Bible. It's just that they are not turning to institutional, traditional church as part of their spiritual journey. (pp. 7-8)

Conder (2006) describes a portion of the Nones as a new, emerging culture of individuals who are community oriented, spiritually seeking, politically active, and open to Christianity but suspicious of the institutional church. Hirsh (2006) urges that if existing churches are going to meaningfully reach the Nones, then more of the same will not work.

McNeal (2011) states that some of the Nones can be characterized as post-congregational Christians.

Post-congregational Christians are people who, for a variety of reasons, choose to pursue their spiritual journey outside the routines and rhythms of the congregational model of church that has dominated the church landscape for centuries. This development, coupled with the growing eclectic street spirituality in our culture, has created ripe conditions to produce and nurture a new life form. It is a concept of church that intersects people in the middle of life—in their homes, their workplaces, their leisure pursuits, and their passions to help others. (p. xx)

The type of post-congregational Christian spirituality that McNeal (2011) writes about reflects the philosophy of missional living. Faith communities that have a missional, or people-sent ethos move beyond just the attractional ways of doing church.

Attractional churches are predominantly congregation-based and value bringing people *into* the church building; whereas, missional churches are not as concerned with bringing people *to* church since they emphasize bringing the message and ministry of Jesus to people in their workplaces, schools, and the community at large through the daily rhythms of life. The attractional model of doing church has been popular for the last 40 years, but new things are happening in churches where the attractional model meets the missional mindset (Hirsch & Ferguson, 2011). The thinking that goes into this intersection, and even mindset shift, involves the challenging of assumptions and deep changes in habits, attitudes, and actions.

Hirsch (2006) questions the attractional church model and contends that telling people to *come and see* in church buildings is not enough; he states that leaders must rethink their understanding of church to reclaim the biblical focus of the church as an organic movement outward into the world. Wegner and Magruder (2012) state that a church can be both missional and attractional, and they encourage leaders to integrate of a both/and perspective. “As we incarnate the gospel message in new contexts (missional), that will be profoundly attractive to people within those contexts (attractional)” (Wegner & Magruder, 2012, p. 87). While Hirsch and Catchim (2012) acknowledge that existing attractional churches can become missional,

Hirsch (2006) specifies that new, emerging missional churches seek simpler forms of church that align more closely to the rhythms of life. Missional living emerges out of natural life rhythms.

Missional living calls followers of Jesus to take an active role in how they act and interact with the culture outside the church building. Missional is a way of living, not an affiliation or activity (McNeal, 2009).

Its [missional living's] emergence springs from a belief that God is changing his conversation with the world and with the church. . . . To think and to live missionally means seeing all of life as a way to be engaged with the mission of God in the world. (McNeal, 2009, p. xiv)

McNeal (2011) states that the missional conversation does not change evaluation methods for churches; he states that it actually and fundamentally changes the *ways* we do church since missional Christians see church as a verb, or a way of life. Missional Christians see their *sentness* into the world, beyond the church doors, as a way to partner with what God is doing in the world (Roxburgh, 2011).

When we think of the church as being the body of Christ in the world, we continue to perpetuate a church-centric perspective. We will begin our thinking inside the church and strategize about expanding it outward. If, however, we think of the body of Christ in the world as being the church we begin our thinking very differently. We begin in the world, looking for ways God is moving. We search for the kingdom outcroppings where good is breaking out and triumphing over evil. Instead of creating a congregation, hoping to affect the world, we see the church distilling out from the swirl of God's Spirit mixing it up with the world. (McNeal, 2011, p. 24)

This incarnational approach to ministry empowers Christians to live intentionally as they learn to love God and their neighbors more, by making a contribution to their community with people they know and are known by (McNeal, 2011). McNeal (2011) suggests that existing churches need to expand the bandwidth of how the Church can express itself in our culture, and he states that a missional philosophy is the recipe for a new church life form called missional communities.

Missional Communities

In his book *Missional Communities: The Rise of the Post-Congregational Church*,

McNeal (2011) summarizes the emerging phenomenon of missional communities:

We are witnessing the rise of a new life form in the taxonomy of the North American church. Though it contains the DNA of the movement that Jesus founded, its expression is different from the institutional church that has developed over the centuries. It is church in a new way for a new day—our day—a period that can be described as the post-congregational era of Christianity. This new church life form is the missional community. (pp. 1-2)

McNeal (2011) notes that there are a variety of approaches to missional communities and that there is no uniform template for how they are formed, the rhythms they choose, the way they are positioned with other church structures, their size, or how they engage the community. He continues by stating that a lot of experimentation is taking place, because missional communities are a newer faith expression in our culture.

While there is no uniform template for missional communities, key leaders in the movement have created definitions for this faith expression (Wegner & Magruder, 2012). Halter (2010) defines missional communities as “intentional webs of relationships bound together for the express purpose of bringing to light the kingdom of God to those outside the faith” (para. 3). Jeff Vanderstelt, the lead pastor of Soma Communities, defines a missional community as a “family of missionary servants who make disciples who make disciples” (Vanderstelt, 2011).

Breen (2010) explains the make-up of a missional community:

[A missional community is] a group of twenty to fifty people who exist, in Christian community, to reach either a particular neighborhood or network of relationship. With a strong value on life together, the group has the expressed intention of seeing those they are in relationship with choose to start following Jesus through this more flexible and locally incarnated expression of the church. They exist to bring heaven to the particular slice of earth they believe God has given them to bless. The result is usually the growth and multiplication of more missional communities. (para. 2)

Wegner and Magruder (2012) have summarized Breen's perspectives by defining a missional community as "a reproducing group of people living together on mission to *be* the church among an unreached pocket of people" (p. 247).

Wegner and Magruder (2012) are proponents for diverse expressions of church, specifically regarding ways that Christians can be both gathered together for worship *and* scattered into the world to express God's love outside of the church walls. They believe missional communities are the best way for Christians to be both gathered and scattered. Granger Community Church, where Wegner and Magruder work, seeks to keep missional communities small with only twenty to fifty people in each community. This encourages the communities to reproduce. Table 1 summarizes an exemplar process of missional community expression.

Missional communities are a growing phenomenon with rhythms, celebrations, activities, and evaluations for success that are different from those found in the institutional church (McNeal, 2011). Some missional community structures are composed of a networked structure, where a church sees itself as a network of missional communities instead of a gathered congregation. In other cases, missional communities are connected within a congregational structure and give members opportunities for missional service and spiritual formation (McNeal, 2011).

Missional communities do not have buildings to maintain, and in many cases, they have no clergy to support (McNeal, 2011). McNeal also states that mission and community are the primary focuses of missional communities:

In missional communities, the key affinity is mission. Missional affinity is approached in two basic ways, with some mixing and matching. Some communities primarily see themselves as having a mission together—a common cause that they feel called to give their lives to (serving the homeless, mentoring school children, adopting people groups, and so on). The missional community in these cases is the missionary. Other missional communities mainly see their group as a community *of* missionaries, each living

intentionally in their life assignments, drawing encouragement and nurture for their mission from the missional community they are a part of. These communities might serve in projects together, but they do not see the group as their missional engagement with the world. Their lives are their mission trips. (McNeal, 2011, p. 28)

Table 1

Exemplar Process of Missional Community Expression

Purposes for Missional Communities at Granger Community Church

- Centered on living out the lordship of Jesus together
 - Exists to make disciples
 - Shares a common mission of proclaiming the Gospel among their pocket of people through a mixture of verbal proclamation (Word) and demonstration proclamation (strategic service)
 - Lives among the pocket of people on a daily basis. Incarnational living is demonstrated through frequency, proximity, and spontaneity
 - Looks for the “person of peace” in their community of desired impact. Jesus gave a simple strategy for mission—look for the person who welcomes you, receives you, serves you, and responds to you. A person of peace is the gatekeeper to a whole network of relationships
 - Meets formally on a regular basis in a “low-bar meeting” to engage the Scripture, encourage corporate practices, and deepen community
 - Is led by laypeople, who receive ongoing coaching, training, and accountability
 - Is made up of smaller groups of two or three people each (Life Transformation Groups) that provide peer-based pastoring and challenge toward mission and shared core practices
 - Does not require people to be professing followers of Jesus to belong
 - Is reproducing. The mindset from day one is “Our missional community will multiply”
-

Note. Adapted from *Missional moves: 15 tectonic shifts that transform churches, communities, and the world*, by R. Wegner and J. Magruder, 2012, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, pp. 248-249. Copyright 2012 by Rob Wegner and Jack Magruder.

Wegner and Magruder (2012) note that life together and discipleship constitute the two main purposes of a missional community. McNeal (2011) states that instead of asking if a missional community is *the* church, the better question would be: How is a missional community being the church? Wegner and Magruder (2012) state, “Missional communities are comprised of people

committed to living outward beyond themselves and to demonstrating the gospel in word and deed in their neighborhood, workplace, or specific pocket of people they are called to reach and serve” (p. 247). Woodward (2011) states, “Missional communities are a sent people who connect with God, do life together and receive power from the Holy Spirit to partner with God to accomplish his purposes in our neighborhoods and in the world” (para. 3).

McNeal (2011) describes how the structure of church as congregation developed the expectation that people would demonstrate loyalty to the faith by participating in congregational activity with worship as the central focus. He continues by explaining that seeing the church as a congregation can perpetuate the worldview that church is an *it*, a place a person goes; which is contrary to the New Testament understanding of the church as a *who*, the people of God wherever they go. “Biblical teaching on the church sees the church as the ongoing incarnation of Jesus in the world, an organic life form vitally connected to him, even married to him, depending on the metaphor chosen by the writer” (McNeal, 2011, p. 4). This biblical teaching utilizes images of relationship and community, both of which happen to be part of the culture of missional communities.

Worship and teaching are key elements of the congregational, whereas fellowship, life debriefing, and service comprise key elements of missional communities (McNeal, 2011). The rhythms of these elements in missional communities are more flexible than the programmatically planned weekly rhythms of worship and Bible study in a congregation. “[In a missional community] there is no obligation to cover a lesson, get through the liturgy, or process through a prescribed set of activities. The gathering is not program-centric; it is life-centric. People *are* the program” (McNeal, 2011, p. 29). McNeal (2011) continues by explaining that the missional community’s philosophy is that the focus of the gathering is about what happens away from the

gathering. This does not mean that missional communities are devoid of intentional worship, prayer, Bible study, or discipleship. Hirsch (2006) describes discipleship as the life-long task of becoming like Jesus and embodying His message. Discipleship and spiritual formation are part of missional communities; however, they are practiced differently in missional communities than they are in the institutional church. McNeal (2011) explains:

The institutional church, with its goal of participation, helps people develop the disciplines of attendance and giving and serving the church. Privatized disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and scripture reading are encouraged but not necessary to sustain the program-based congregation. Missional communities, however, have maturation as their end game—developing people who are increasingly identifiable as followers of Jesus. Communal practice and personal formation are intertwined because each person expresses the life of the community incarnated in him or her. (p. xi)

A missional community has the maturation of its members through the discipleship journey as an end goal, and missional communities know that they are successful when the people of the community love God and love their neighbor while experiencing and sharing the abundant life Jesus promised (McNeal, 2011). Discipleship is part of the culture of a missional community. Since partnering with God in His redemptive mission does not allow for a compartmentalized life, all relationships become arenas of spiritual formation (McNeal, 2011).

McNeal (2011) notes that the leadership structures of missional communities differ significantly from those of the congregational church. He states that missional communities do not require clergy leadership and that missional community leadership reflects a distributive model where leadership is simple and shared. “In most missional communities all are expected to contribute, whether in food preparation, discussion, cleaning up, child care, praying, sharing or whatever” (McNeal, 2011, p. 31). McNeal (2011) states that the leadership roles for various tasks most often flows to the person(s) most gifted and interested in those functions. “The key leadership role (which, again, may or may not reside in a single individual) is that of facilitating

community life, making sure that the various community functions of serving, hospitality, and spiritual formation are all accomplished” (McNeal, 2011, p. 32). According to McNeal (2011), leadership is not about simply filling functions. Missional community systems take leadership development seriously through apprentice training, systematic training, and personalized coaching, all with a focus on the personal and spiritual development of the leader. McNeal (2011) offers a comparison of leadership in the traditional congregational church versus leadership in missional communities:

In the traditional congregational church, leadership is usually gauged in terms of organizational effectiveness and professional abilities, including the competencies necessary to create and manage church programs. In missional communities, leadership effectiveness is tied to the development of people and the competencies that are required to be an effective coach for life issues and soul nurturing. (p. 32)

McNeal (2011) notes that some critics of missional communities assert that missional communities lack spiritual authority. He states that this misunderstanding is either uninformed or that it comes from a perception of a need for a clergy-dominated structure. According to McNeal (2011) this desire for control is psychological, not biblical or theological. Missional communities often practice spiritual authority in ways that congregational churches can avoid, since participants in missional communities have much greater accountability as to whether or not they are living out biblical truth (McNeal, 2011). Personal accountability for leaders and for every member of a missional community is a hallmark of missional community life. Breen and Absalom (2010) note that missional communities are small enough to care and big enough to dare (be mission focused). Missional communities breed accountability and action as a result of personal and communal faith expression.

Conder (2006) contends that missional communities and established churches need one another in the emerging culture.

The established church has so many resources and experiences to offer missional communities. In return, missional communities offer the larger church the intensity of community life, the freedom to take risks in missional expression and cultural engagement, and the capability to react rapidly to changing needs and new contexts. (Conder, 2006, p. 206)

McNeal (2011) notes that many people participating in missional communities are retaining their congregational affiliation. He also states that missional communities are not for everyone and that they are not meant to be a replacement for centuries of church practice.

The leaders of Mission City, the site for this exploratory case study, state that they do not desire to pull people away from their church homes through the creation of missional communities; instead, they hope to strengthen what local churches are already doing in their city (McNeal, 2011).

Mission City. Many of the missional community processes currently utilized focus on the architecture of the missional community itself, with the hope that individual members will also develop the characteristics of disciples (McNeal, 2011). Mission City turns this around by focusing first on developing missional followers of Jesus. The expectation is that missional communities will follow: “Our [Mission City’s] process has been to create and engage people in a deep spiritual formation process” (McNeal, 2011, p. 126). The spiritual formation process that Mission City utilizes is called Faith in Action (FIA). McNeal (2011) notes that FIA focuses on personal transformation that results in and accelerates community transformation, and the central premise of FIA is that when a person lives missionally, he becomes fully human and fully alive. McNeal (2011) summarizes the FIA process by stating that individuals who go through FIA 101 and 201 will either join or start a missional community. The FIA process is further explored in the methodology section in Chapter 3.

Mission City views missional communities as vehicles for spiritual formation and community transformation:

The missional community is a continuation of the participants' spiritual formation, turning its focus to community transformation by the group's contribution to the common good of the city. Each missional community (tending to be composed of five to nine people) discerns its common service direction and venue—its mission—acting as a catalyst to improve people's lives as a kingdom expression. Their goal is not multiplication of the missional community itself. Nor is it evangelism, at least not in the typical evangelical approach, though they do recruit others to join them in their mission, not all of whom are Jesus followers [Christians]. (McNeal, 2011, p. 128)

McNeal (2011) notes that Mission City's missional communities gather and function in various forms, and he continues by explaining that the purpose of Mission City's missional communities is to serve a need or people group in a long-term way. McNeal (2011) states that the first focus of a Mission City missional community is advancing the mission by addressing these key questions: "What are the needs? How are we doing? Are we reaching our goals? What things are we measuring? What adjustments need to be made?" (p. 128). Second, the group will focus on strengthening relationships among missional community members by asking: "Whose story have we not heard? Can we do that over a shared meal? Is there any conflict we need to attend to? How are we each holding up under this load? How can we pray for one another?" (McNeal, 2011, p. 128). McNeal (2011) states, "each missional community has a coach who teaches for community transformation, including how each missional community has decided to develop metrics for measuring its activities and impact" (p. 138). Missional community leaders have access to resources and accountability via the coaches of Mission City (McNeal, 2011). McNeal (2011) explains that missional community leaders come together with Mission City leaders four times a year for celebration and training time. The group "eats together, welcomes new retreat graduates, shares stories of success, problem-solves common issues, and worships" (p. 139).

McNeal (2011) states that many, if not most, Christians from Mission City's missional communities keep their congregational affiliation, if they have one.

McNeal (2011) notes that Mission City's strategy for their missional communities focuses on the integration and reinforcement of personal transformation. McNeal continues by stating that Mission City believes accountability, or the willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions, is essential to the transformation journey. Hirsch (2006) notes that transformation includes a fundamental change in thoughts, perceptions, and values. The researcher now turns her attention to three different frameworks for understanding the personal transformation process: Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory, Kegan's (2000) perspectives on constructive-developmental theory, and Quinn's (1996) deep change philosophy of personal transformation.

Personal Transformation

Kegan (2000) notes that the topics of transformation and transformative learning theory have grown in popularity, which is good for conversations and theoretical applications about change, but it is also cautionary, since the concepts can become watered down if they are used to talk about all types of change. Brookfield (2000) echoes Kegan's (2000) statement: "The word transformative—when indiscriminately attached to any practice we happen to approve of—thereby loses any descriptive or definitional utility. More specifically it falls victim to the danger of evacuation" (Brookfield, 2000, p. 140). Brookfield (2000) continues by describing *evacuation* as a process of using a term so frequently to refer to so many different things that it loses its distinct points of reference. He clarifies the meaning of transformative from his perspective: "I believe an act of learning can be called transformative only if it involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how one thinks or acts. If something is transformed, it is different

from what it was before at a very basic level” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 139). Mezirow (2000) states that transformation typically follows some variation of the following phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (p. 22)

Mezirow (2000) continues by stating that the transformation process is not linear and that it is holistic in that it involves “cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of thinking” (p. 16).

The following section of the literature review will focus on the unique aspects of transformation as demonstrated through three frameworks for understanding personal transformation:

Mezirow’s (2000) transformative learning theory, Kegan’s (2000) perspectives on constructive-developmental theory, and Quinn’s (1996) deep change philosophy of personal transformation.

Transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory is one framework for understanding personal transformation. In 1978, Jack Mezirow put forth the concept of transformative learning through his study with women who chose to continue their formal education by returning to community college after being away from school for many years (Mezirow, 1991). As the women in his study grew in their understandings of their personal, cultural, and social histories, they were able to modify their assumptions and expectations of learning (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) put forth a theory of transformative learning based on his research with this group of women, and decades later the theory continues to grow and develop (Cranton, 2006).

Mezirow's (2000) perspectives about transformative learning are rooted in constructivism, the idea that individuals learn and seek understanding from the world in which they live. "We make meaning with different dimensions of awareness and understanding; in adulthood we may more clearly understand our experience when we know under what conditions an expressed idea is true or justified" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 3-4). Mezirow (2000) continues by stating that it is not uncommon for adults to rely on the interpretations and *ways of knowing* that worked when they were children. He states that living in a world of rapid change confronts adults with opportunities to question their frames of reference or to "know under what conditions an expressed idea is true or justified" (p. 4). "Our understandings and beliefs are more dependable when they produce interpretations and opinions that are more justifiable or true than would be those predicated upon other understandings or beliefs" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4). Simply stated, an adult experiences transformative learning when she abandons what others have told her to believe and adopts beliefs from her own perspectives that were developed by challenging her previously held assumptions and changing her habits, attitudes, and actions (Mezirow, 2000). Kegan (2000) explains that transformative learning changes not only what we know; it also changes how we know. Mezirow (2000) states that adult education must facilitate experiences for adults that allow them to formulate more dependable beliefs about their experiences by assessing the contexts in which they occur. This process leads to an understanding of meaning and facilitates decision-making. Transformative learning theory seeks to explain this process.

Mezirow et al. (2009) explain that transformative learning is "an approach to teaching based on promoting change, where educators challenge learners to critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them"

(p. xi). Mezirow (2000) continues by explaining that transformative learning necessitates discourse with others to bring clarity to one's reasons for justifying assumptions. Discourse also leads to creating decisions and acting in new ways based on the resulting insights.

Mezirow (2000) notes that in the context of transformative learning, discourse involves “the use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief” (pp. 10-11). Therefore, through dialogue with others, an individual is able to critically assess personal assumptions with the goal of arriving at a “tentative best judgment” (p. 11). Discourse, the process where individuals engage in dialogue with others in order to better understand the meaning of an experience, is a significant component of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). Such perspectives show how transformative learning involves both individual and social dynamics. Mezirow (2000) contends that discourse calls participants to have the will and the readiness to reach an owned perspective based on understanding. He continues by stating that open-mindedness is an important component of discourse. Bruner (1990) defines *open-mindedness* as “a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without the loss of commitment to one's own values” (p. 30). Mezirow (2000) states that participants must have the following in order to more freely and fully participate in discourse:

- More accurate and complete information
- Freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception
- Openness to alternative points of view: empathy and concern about how others think and feel
- The ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively
- Greater awareness of the context of ideas and, more critically, reflectiveness of assumptions, including their own
- An equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse
- Willingness to seek understanding and agreement and to accept a resulting best judgment as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgment. (pp. 13-14)

Mezirow (2000) further explains that these ideal conditions make up a principle—they are never fully realized in practice.

Discourse leads to the questioning of a frame of reference during the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 2000). “A frame of reference is a ‘meaning perspective,’ the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16). Mezirow (2000) continues by explaining that frames of reference are the result of how an individual interprets his experiences and that “cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions” exist in a frame of reference (p. 16). A frame of reference has two dimensions: “a habit of mind and resulting points of view” (p. 17). Mezirow (2000) states that a *habit of mind* is “a set of assumptions—broad, generalized, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience” (p. 17). He continues by explaining that a habit of mind becomes expressed as a point of view: “A point of view comprises clusters of meaning schemes—sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments—that tacitly direct and shape a specific interpretation and determine how we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality” (p. 18). Mezirow (2000) continues by stating that many frames of reference typically operate outside of awareness. Habits of mind and points of view in a frame of reference can be varied. “Assumptions on which habits of mind and related points of view are predicated may be epistemological, logical, ethical, psychological, ideological, social, cultural, economic, political, ecological, scientific, or spiritual, or may pertain to other aspects of experience” (p. 19). Mezirow (2000) states that “a more dependable frame of reference is one that is more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change, and integrative of experience” (p. 19). Transformative learning brings about such dependable frames of reference” (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow (2000) notes that an individual transforms a frame of reference by becoming critically reflective of her assumptions in a given context. “Transformative learning refers to transforming a problematic frame of reference to make it more dependable in our adult life by generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20). Mezirow (2000) continues by explaining that this critical segment of the process happens by “trying on another’s point of view” (p. 20). “Imagination is central to understanding the unknown; it is the way we examine alternative interpretations of our experience by ‘trying on’ another’s point of view” (Mezirow, 2000, p 20).

Transformative learning theory posits that transformations can happen suddenly and dramatically or more incrementally. “Transformations in habit of mind may be epochal, a sudden, dramatic, reorienting insight, or incremental, involving a progressive series of transformations in related points of view that culminate in a transformation in habit of mind” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 21). Mezirow (2000) notes that action flows from a transformed habit of mind. “This decision [to act] may result in immediate action, delayed action, or reasoned affirmation of an existing pattern of action” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 24). Mezirow (2000) states, “taking action on reflective insights often involves overcoming situational, emotional, and informational constraints that may require new learning experiences in order to move forward” (p. 24).

In conclusion, Mezirow (2000) asserts that personal transformation happens when a person has a transformation in perspective, in a frame of reference, and in a habit of mind; therefore, transformative learning involves a reordering of assumptions. Mezirow’s (2000) theory centrally focuses on the personal process of critical reflection as it relates to personal transformation. “This process of perspective transformation can be individual (as in

psychotherapy), group (as in Friere or popular education in Latin America), or collective (as in the civil rights or other social movements)” (Mezirow, 1989, p. 170). While the context of this study reflects the need for group and collective change in Christian churches in the United States, the study itself focused particularly on the personal change process as it relates to an individual’s new way of thinking about missional living.

Constructive-developmental theory. Kegan (2000) notes that transformative learning theory and constructive- developmental theory are two bodies of knowledge that are complementary to one another for understanding personal transformation. Constructive- developmental theory is rooted in human development, a life-span developmental facet in the field of psychology (Bjorklund & Bee, 2008). Kegan (2000) states, “Constructive-developmental psychology (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Piaget, 1954; Kohlberg, 1984; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986) attends to the natural evolution of the forms of our meaning-constructing (hence ‘constructive-developmental’)” (p. 53). As previously stated, Mezirow (2000) contends that a frame of reference includes a habit of mind and a point of view. Kegan (2000) adds that a frame of reference is a *way of knowing*. A way of knowing reflects how one knows. Kegan (2000) continues by explaining that epistemology “refers not to what we know but to our way of knowing” (p. 52). He states that epistemological approaches give attention to meaning-forming and reforming our meaning-forming. Both are part of the transformation process. Meaning-forming involves “the activity by which we shape a coherent meaning out of the raw material of our outer and inner experiencing” (Kegan, 2000, pp. 52). Meaning-forming also reflects constructivist perspectives (Kegan, 2000). Simply put, personal meaning has less to do with objective facts and more to do with a person’s interpretation of the facts.

Kegan (2000) states that the second process rooted in epistemology involves reforming our meaning-forming, or reforming the way we interpret facts.

This is a meta-process that affects the very terms of our meaning-constructing. We do not only form meaning, and we do not only change our meanings; we change the very form by which we are making our meanings. We change our epistemologies. (Kegan, 2000, p. 53)

This is when personal transformation occurs (Kegan, 2000).

Transformative learning theory gives attention to the educational lens (Mezirow, 2000), and constructive-developmentalism gives attention to the psychological lens (Kegan, 2000).

Kegan (1980) describes the uniqueness of developmental theory:

Development is costly—for everyone, the developing person and those around him or her. Growth involves a separation from an old system of meaning. In practical terms this can involve the agony of felt meaninglessness and the repudiation of commitments and investment. ... Developmental theory gives us a way of thinking about such pain that does not pathologize it. (p. 439)

Kegan (2000) posits that transformative learning should “attend to the deliberate efforts and designs that support changes in the learner’s form [or way] of knowing” (p. 53).

Constructive-developmental theory offers a source of ideas about “(1) the dynamic architecture of ‘that form which transforms,’ that is, a form of knowing; and (2) the dynamic architecture of ‘reforming our forms of knowing,’ that is, the psychological process of transformations in our knowing” (Kegan, 2000, p. 53). Kegan (2000) notes that “a form of knowing always consists of a relationship or temporary equilibrium between the subject and the object of one’s knowing” (p. 53). Kegan (2000) describes the subject and object dynamic in the following manner:

The subject-object relationship forms the cognate or core of an epistemology. That which is ‘object’ we can look at, take responsibility for, reflect upon, exercise control over, integrate with some other way of knowing. That which is ‘subject’ we are run by, identified with, fused with, at the effect of. We cannot be responsible for that to which we are subject. What is ‘object’ in our knowing describes the thoughts and feelings we say we have; what is ‘subject’ describes the thinking and feeling that has us. We ‘have’ object; we ‘are’ subject. (p. 53)

Lewis and Lewis (2011) describe Kegan's (2000) subject/object dynamic this way:

Kegan suggests that developmental change is inherently stressful. From a constructive/developmental perspective, it is nothing less than the loss of one's current identity or way of making meaning in the process of constructing a new identity. The old self is, at first, repudiated. The new self ("subject") has not yet been consolidated. Or as Kegan suggests, one must lose one's mind on the way to gaining a new mind. In the midst of these sorts of developmental transitions there can be substantial distress and risk. (p. 1504)

Kegan (2000) identifies five complex epistemologies in his subject/object theory from Kegan (1994) that can each "be described with respect to what is subject and what is object, and each shift entails the movement of what had been subject in the old epistemology to object in the new epistemology" (as cited on p. 60). Table 2 outlines Kegan's (1994) subject object theory.

Table 2

Kegan's (1994) Subject/Object Theory

Stage/Name	Subject	Object	Perspective
1. (Impulsive)	Immediate perceptions, feelings, and impulses	Actions, sensations and physical objects	Single perspective; can't take other's point of view
2. (Imperial)	Enduring interests, personal agendas, and role expectations	Immediate perceptions, feelings, and impulses	Can take multiple perspectives one at a time
3. (Interpersonal)	Shared meaning, mutuality, social ideals, and self-consciousness	Enduring interests, personal agendas, and role expectations	Takes two or more perspectives simultaneously
4. (Institutional)	A self-authored system of values and standards	Shared meaning, mutuality, social ideals, and self-consciousness	Has own personal perspective on relationships and societal ideals
5. (Inter-individual)	Universality, paradox, and multiple selves as vehicles for connection	A self-authored system of values and standards	Recognizes that own perspective on experience is a created convenience

Note. Adapted from *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*, by R. Kegan, 1994, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Copyright 1994 by Robert Kegan.

Lewis and Lewis note that “Kegan’s theory (1994) is not so much about stages as it is about the ongoing process of gaining and then losing successive ways of making sense of experience” (p. 1364). Furthermore, Lewis and Lewis (2012) note that “There are no definitive data on how long we spend at each stage relative to how long we spend in transitions from one stage to the next, a significant portion of our lives is probably spent in the transitions” (p. 1364).

Some of a person’s transitional times are spent in the “holding environment.”

In describing the dynamics of developmental change, Kegan draws upon psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott’s concept of the “holding environment.” Kegan describes the holding environment as an interpersonal and cultural context that is attuned to the person’s current developmental capability and provides neither too much nor too little support for that current level of capability. The elements of an adequate holding environment necessarily change as the person being “held” grows in capability. (Lewis & Lewis, 2011, p. 1423)

Kegan (2000) concludes with this subject/object description, “constructive-developmental theory looks at the process it calls development as a gradual process by which what was the ‘subject’ in our knowing becomes ‘object’” (p. 53).

Kegan (2000) also describes how a transformation can occur, even if the content of knowledge does not change.

The beliefs [one] comes to endorse might be no different, and yet a transformation would still have occurred because the form of knowing that gives rise to these beliefs has been transformed (i.e. to internal authority instead of external identification); what was ‘subject’ in knowing has become ‘object.’ (Kegan, 2000, p. 58)

Kegan’s (2000) constructive-developmental theory posits that learning over the lifespan is “like the gradual traversing of a succession of increasingly more elaborate bridges” (p. 60).

Kegan (2000) references Hegel’s classic, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, to further explain the concept of *forms*: “The spirit is never at rest but always engaged in ever progressive motion, in giving itself a new form” (as cited on p. 69). In the constructive-developmental framework, personal transformation is understood through lifespan development.

Deep change. Quinn (1996), an organizational theorist, offers a philosophical approach to personal and organizational transformation in his book *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*. This framework for understanding personal transformation is significant for this study, because Mission City believes that individuals can bring about societal transformation through their own transformed perspectives that lead to action for the greater good.

Quinn (1996) asserts that an individual can change the larger system, or organization she is a part of, by committing to personal transformation through deep change. He explains,

We are all potential change agents. As we discipline our talents, we deepen our perceptions about what is possible. We develop a reverence for the tools and relationships that surround us. We then bring a discipline to our visions and grow in integrity. Life becomes more meaningful. We become empowered and empowering to our context. Having experienced deep change in ourselves, we are able to bring deep change to the systems around us. (Quinn, 1996, p. xiii)

Quinn's (1996) thinking reflects the personal transformation assumptions of Mission City in that personal transformation precedes societal transformation (McNeal, 2011).

Quinn (1996) posits that an individual has two choices: (a) commit to deep change or (b) agree to the slow death of self. Deep change differs from incremental change in that deep change involves transformation—new ways of thinking and behaving (Quinn, 1996). “It [deep change] is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. The deep change effort distorts existing patterns of action and involves taking risks” (Quinn, 1996, p. 3). He continues by stating that it is not surprising that so many people deny the need for deep change because it is costly.

Quinn's (1996) thesis involves “the confrontation of the deep change or slow death dilemma and the necessity for first transforming self” (p. xv). Quinn's (1996) thinking aligns with Kegan's (1994) epistemological theory since both focus on development as the core, operating principle. Quinn (1996) states that “he [Quinn] wanted to help people develop the

courage to step outside their old roles and to evaluate and establish new ones” (p. xvi). He continues by stating that he was not able to foster this for others since he had not committed to the personal transformation process himself (Quinn, 1996). This dynamic aligns with Brookfield’s (2000) call for adult educators to suspend the role of educator and take on the role of collaborative learner in the process of fostering transformative learning with adult participants. Such thinking necessitates that adult educators have an authentic, participatory ethos (Cranton, 2006).

Quinn (1996) notes that people who commit to personal transformation are typically empowered and do not worry about the dangers of change in an organization. He continues by stating that this sense of empowerment has a replicating effect, so personal transformation yields empowerment that is also empowering to others. Quinn (1996) states that deep personal change can contribute to organizational change from a bottom-up perspective, with individuals changing an organization through personally owned perspectives. Quinn (1996) believes organizational change starts with personal transformation.

There is an important link between deep change at the personal level and deep change at the organizational level. To make deep personal change is to develop a new paradigm, a new self, one that is more effectively aligned with today’s realities. This can occur only if we are willing to journey into unknown territory and confront the wicked problems we encounter. This journey does not follow the assumptions of rational planning. The objective may not be clear, and the path to it is not paved with familiar procedures. This torturous journey requires that we leave our comfort zone and step outside our normal roles. In doing so, we learn the paradoxical lesson that we can change the world only by changing ourselves. This is not just a cute abstraction; it is an elusive key to effective performance in all aspects of life. (Quinn, 1996, p. 9)

As an organizational theorist, Quinn (1996) puts forth a rationale for individuals to commit to personal transformation as a way of bringing about organizational renewal. This framework is significant for this study, because Mission City sees the formation of missional communities as a

way to bring about Kingdom organizational renewal to the church (McNeal, 2011). This organizational renewal begins with the personal transformation process.

Conclusion

The institutional church continually loses influence in American culture; therefore, there is a need for individual followers of Jesus to help influence the culture themselves (Conder, 2006). A new reformation involving a transformation in the church's structure and leadership that will equip and release followers of Jesus for transformation, both inside and outside of the church walls, is needed (Breen, 2012; Edwards, 2008; Woodward, 2012). This is important because missional theology is not content with church-based efforts alone; instead, it proclaims that every Christian is called to be a disciple carrying the mission of God into every sphere of life (Hirsch, 2006). Putting the word *missional* in front of all the church work we do will never get at the real challenge. We need new habits, attitudes, and actions in our relationships and engagements with the Gospel and our culture (Roxburgh, 2011, p. 55). A transformation is needed in our frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000). Personal transformation is the process that is necessary to obtain and act on new frames of reference. Mission City seeks to help facilitate such processes for individuals through the Faith in Action program. Chapter 3 will discuss the research methodology utilized in this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

All forms of research are rigorous, because they require a justifiable rationale and process for methodological choice. Research involves a systematic process by which we seek to know more about something than we did before engaging in the process (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Both quantitative and qualitative research use similar components, but how they address the research process makes them different.

They [quantitative and qualitative research] state a purpose, pose a problem or raise a question, define a research population, select research methods, develop a time frame, collect and analyze data, and present outcomes. They also rely (explicitly or implicitly) on theory and are concerned with rigor. (Glesne, 2006, p. 4)

Each research tradition puts forth unique frameworks to organize and conduct research. Marshall and Rossman (2006) offer a framework for qualitative design soundness. Attention to seven topics ensures a clear, logical rationale in support of qualitative methods:

(1) the assumptions of qualitative approaches; (2) the logic for selecting a site, a sample, the participants, or any combination of these; (3) the choice of overall design and data collection methods; (4) an acknowledgement of the intensive aspects of fieldwork; (5) a consideration of ethical issues; (6) the resource needs; and (7) attention to the trustworthiness of the overall design. (p. 13)

This methodology section gives attention to these seven topics.

The focus of this study was to explore the process of how the leaders of Mission City, a religious organization in the southwestern part of the United States, foster personal transformation in participants of the Faith in Action (FIA) program. The research questions that guided the study are listed below:

Central Research Question: How is personal transformation fostered by the leaders of Mission City through the Faith in Action program?

Research Question 1: How do you describe personal transformation?

Research Question 2: What is needed in the learning process to foster transformation?

Research Question 3: How do you perceive the FIA program fostering personal transformation in participants?

Research Question 4: What are the outcomes of personal transformation?

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The central research question guided the approach that the researcher took for this particular study. Since the researcher explored the perceptions of Mission City's leaders as they foster personal transformation in FIA participants, a qualitative approach was employed. This methodology was appropriate, because qualitative research focuses on an individual's lived experiences (Merriam & Associates, 2002). With its interpretive focus, qualitative research assumes that multiple realities, or interpretations, coexist (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative inquiry was also appropriate for this study, because it approaches the study of social phenomena broadly. Rossman and Rallis (2003) describe five characteristics of qualitative research: "[Qualitative research is] (a) naturalistic, (b) draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of participants in the study, (c) focuses on context, (d) is emergent and evolving, and (e) is fundamentally interpretive" (p. 2). The researcher committed to a dynamic play between herself and the participants as they influenced each other during the interview process.

Taking a particular methodological research approach requires more than simply understanding its characteristics and using a specific set of fieldwork tools (Schram, 2006).

Marshall and Rossman (2006) share several assumptions that are unique to qualitative research:

(a) knowledge is not objective Truth but is produced intersubjectively; (b) the researcher learns from participants to understand the meaning of their lives but should maintain a certain stance of neutrality; and (c) society is reasonably structured and is orderly. (p. 5)

Since qualitative inquiry employs its own unique philosophical assumptions, the strategies of inquiry and methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation reflect those assumptions (Creswell, 2009).

Case study. In order to better understand leadership processes that foster personal transformation in participants of the FIA program, this study employed a qualitative case study method. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2011), topics often examined in case studies include individuals, events, and groups. “Case studies represent another type of qualitative research. They are different from other types in that they are intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time” (p. 10).

Through case study methodology, researchers seek an exploratory understanding of the situations and meanings of the participants involved. First, case study research focuses on either (a) an individual representative of a group, (b) an organization or organizations, or (c) a phenomenon (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The primary focus of this case study included an exploration of the phenomenon of how leaders foster personal transformation in participants of the FIA program. Second, “the phenomenon being researched is studied in its natural context, bounded by space and time” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 15). This study observed the leaders of the FIA program in their natural context, and the Faith in Action program was the system bound by space and time. Third, case study research is richly descriptive, since it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information. “It [case study research] employs quotes from key participants, anecdotes, narratives composed from original interviews, and other literary techniques to create mental images that bring to life the complexity of the many variables inherent in the phenomenon being studied” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 16). The researcher

thoroughly explored the phenomenon by mining the data through the use of interviews and documents in the case study environment.

Various methods of case study research serve different purposes. Since the process of fostering personal transformation in participants was the main focus of this study, an instrumental case study research design was employed. Stake (2005) explains how an instrumental case study is unique: “An instrumental case study is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (as cited in Merriam, 2009). While many of the Faith in Action program’s processes were examined, the primary focus of this study was the process of fostering personal transformation.

Hancock and Algozzine (2011) echo Stake’s (2005, as cited in Merriam, 2009) perspective on the unique characteristic of instrumental case study design: “When this approach [instrumental case study] is used, enhanced understanding of the particular issue being examined is of secondary importance to a greater insight into the theoretical explanation that underpins the issue” (p. 36). In this particular study, the researcher’s primary goal was to explore the process of fostering personal transformation in program participants. Insights regarding specific instructional and leadership practices that foster personal transformation in participants were also derived from the study.

Case Setting

This study took place in the large Southwestern United States metropolitan city where Mission City was formed in 1998.

[The Founder] and some of his colleagues formed [Mission City] in 1998, with the goal of helping congregations move beyond Constantinian triumphalism into being salt and light so that the community at large can experience the kingdom of God. From 1998

through 2005 [the founder of Mission City] labored for this by working through congregations, focusing on church leaders. (McNeal, 2011, pp. 126-127)

After a period of self-reflection in 2006, the founder of Mission City began to focus his efforts on lay people and the creation of missional communities. With this new perspective, a group of 18 people gathered for a three-day retreat in September 2007. They had two shared convictions. “First, that the church needed to be making more of a positive impact in the community beyond its walls; and second, that personal transformation results in and accelerates community transformation” (McNeal, 2011, p. 125). Mission City’s goal is not to replace congregations with missional communities. Instead, its aim is to strengthen and add to the work congregations are already doing (McNeal, 2011).

Mission City’s story can be seen through the lens of a journey, since its founder launched a journey with friends seeking the answers to two questions: “What is a disciple of Jesus? and, How do you make one?” (McNeal, 2011, p. 126). This particular journey led to the project called Faith in Action (FIA). FIA is also the case for this particular qualitative study.

FIA is a journey of spiritual and personal transformation grounded on the standpoint that we were created to be faith walkers (2 Corinthians 5:7).

[Faith in Action] is creating a community of disciples of Jesus who are being personally transformed and becoming catalysts mobilizing Christians to become the functioning Body of Christ in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and third places to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need to work for the common good and to restore individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God’s design. (Herrington et al., 2012)

The primary focus of FIA involves helping people understand and develop a missional lifestyle. The core principle of FIA is that as we live missionally we become fully human and fully alive (McNeal, 2011). Leaders of FIA believe that this vision of what it means to be fully human directly competes with the view that defines human beings as consumers (Herrington et al.,

2012). Therefore, they believe that living missionally involves a brand new way of thinking, being, and acting for many Christians. In these cases, a new mental model is needed for individuals to live missionally. In order to change a mind-set and break down compartmentalization, personal transformation is necessary (Herrington et al., 2012). This setting provided the researcher with rich opportunities to explore the process of fostering personal transformation.

Participants. The researcher utilized a purposeful sampling to identify participants for this study. Through purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally seek individuals and sites that will help them explore the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The researcher identified leaders from Mission City who shared their experiences with fostering personal transformation in the FIA program, since that was the central phenomenon in the study.

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information rich* cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance for the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful sampling*. (Patton, 1990, p. 169)

Mission City's leaders believe that if an individual begins by focusing on personal transformation, then there will be greater potential for community transformation (Herrington et al., 2012). Therefore, this was an information rich sampling in regard fostering personal transformation.

Ten participants were purposefully selected from Mission City's pool of staff and volunteer leaders for this study. These 10 participants were selected based on a variety of demographics, including both male and female representation, a variety of generational cohorts, and variation in leadership roles within FIA. Each leader in the study has gone through the FIA process personally as a participant. Three of the study's participants developed the curriculum for FIA. One participant serves as the FIA team leader, one participant serves as the coaching

team lead, three participants are key retreat leaders, two participants are FIA 301/401 leaders, and three participants lead in other ways.

Each participant was invited by letter (Appendix A) to participate in the study, and each also received a letter of consent (Appendix B) that was signed and returned to the researcher as a confirmation of willingness to participate in the study.

Researcher's Background and Assumptions

The researcher is a Christian and has an educational leadership and church-work background as a director of Christian education (DCE) in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Ideas for this study emerged from both her personal and her professional experiences. This study's topic resonated with the researcher's focus on her personal mission and calling in life—the call to invest in ongoing personal transformation. Applying her interests in people potential, developing leaders, and discipleship for the greater good, the researcher explored a deeper understanding of how to foster personal transformation in individuals who are both open and willing to commit to such a process.

The researcher has a Master of Science degree in family life studies and a Bachelor of Arts degree in theology. At the time of this writing, the researcher was on sabbatical from full-time church work and adjunct college teaching in an effort to focus on the dissertation writing process full-time. The researcher assumed that the participants in this study aim to foster personal transformation in the participants of FIA, since that is the stated intention of the FIA program.

Since qualitative research is concerned with the meaning people make of their experiences, a human element exists in the research process. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Merriam & Associates, 2002). This means that

the researcher learns from the participants' perspectives, while striving to maintain an objective stance throughout the research process. Bias and subjectivity are not the key issues; rather, what the researcher does with them is important. Creswell (2009) states, "Researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and that they may position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (p. 8). To limit bias, the researcher employed the practice of reflexivity. Reflexivity is a process that helps the researcher critically reflect on the researcher as a human instrument (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The researcher also committed to engage in the data collection phase for a long enough time to become well versed in the phenomenon.

Constructivism. The researcher approached this study from a constructivist worldview. Constructivism portrays a world where reality is socially constructed, multifaceted, and always changing (Willis, 2007). This perspective makes reality unique and subjective to an individual, given all of the social constructs in existence. Reality is relative to a specific location and the specific people involved (Glesne, 2006). Therefore, the interpretation of meaning is unique to a certain standpoint or situation. Creswell (2009) describes the perspectives held by social constructivists in this way: "Constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things" (p. 8). The constructivist generates exploratory questions that seek critical awareness and understanding of the presented problem:

The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons. (Creswell, 2009, p. 8)

The social constructivist worldview fit this study since the participants who were interviewed developed a personal understanding of how they foster personal transformation in FIA participants.

Research Strategies

The researcher was committed to utilizing thorough research strategies as she explored the process of how leaders foster personal transformation in the participants of the FIA program. In qualitative inquiry the researcher is the primary instrument and has an active role during the data gathering process, since the process is field-focused (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Case study research is unique in that it involves in-depth analysis in the natural context with multiple research strategies:

Because it [case study research] involves collecting and analyzing information from multiple sources, such as interview transcripts, observations, and existing documents, case study research sometimes requires the researcher to spend more time in the environment being investigated than is the case with other types of research. (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 16)

Wolcott (1992) discusses the roles of interviews and documents in qualitative data gathering by describing data collection as a process of asking and reviewing (as cited in Merriam, 2009). The researcher made use of both interviews and documents as research strategies in this exploratory case study.

Interviews. Interviewing, or asking questions, is an important component of case study research. DeMarrias defines an interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 87). A variety of approaches to interviewing exist in the qualitative paradigm, and researchers are charged with selecting the interview structure that is best suited to both their theoretical assumptions and their particular research study (Roulston, 2010). In-depth

interviewing is a technique that qualitative researchers rely heavily upon for data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In-depth interviewing was the primary data collection technique for this study. The interview questions for this study were semi-structured, and questions focused on the personal transformation process.

Semi-structured interviews are flexible in that the interviewer can modify the order and details of how topics are covered. This cedes some control to the respondent over how the interview goes, but, because respondents are asked more or less the same questions, this makes possible comparisons across interviews. (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 29)

The semi-structured questions were open-ended. Creswell (2005) notes that in qualitative inquiry, a researcher asks open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences without being constrained by the perspectives of the researcher or past research findings. Creswell (2009) speaks further about the researcher's role in facilitating an environment for the participant to construct his reality during the interview:

The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings. (p. 8)

This interview strategy reflected the assumptions of a constructivist worldview.

Documents. The researcher also employed the use of documents as an additional form of data collection. Documents are a form of data that is not dependent on interpersonal exchanges. "Documents are, in fact, a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator" (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). Common documents include "official records, letters newspaper accounts, poems, songs, corporate records, government documents, historical accounts, diaries, and autobiographies" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 139-40). Merriam (2009) notes that documents also include "artifacts, 'things' or objects in the environment differentiated from

documents that represent some form of communication” (p. 139). The researcher paid close attention to all forms of communication found in documents. Merriam (2009) notes that documents are utilized in qualitative inquiry so that the researcher can “learn more about the situation, person, or event being investigated” (p. 149). The researcher will now explain the FIA process as it relates to the data collection plan.

Data Collection Procedures

The FIA program as overviewed served as a framework for the planned data collection procedures. FIA begins with 101, a three-day retreat that provides a framework for understanding and working towards personal transformation. During 101, the intent of the FIA process is revealed. “It is our clear intention to develop a community of transformational leaders who can be used by God as He reverses decades of declining impact of the Church” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 2). At the conclusion of 101, participants are invited to continue the process by joining 201, a 24-week small group experience that prepares participants to become part of a missional community. During 201, groups meet for 75 minutes every other week for a total of 12 sessions. Encouragement, accountability, and resourcing are also offered through coaching phone calls during 201. Each participant is assigned a personal transformation coach, and participants have phone calls with their coach and one additional 201 participant on a weekly basis. After completing 201, participants are invited to join 301, during which they either join an existing missional community or start a new one in the place where they spend most of their day.

[Faith in Action] focuses on the process of personal transformation that results in and accelerates community transformation. The end goal of the experience is the multiplication of transformed and transforming leaders who are leading missional communities in families, neighborhoods, communities, work places, and third places of our city. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 2)

FIA participants have opportunities to practice the FIA discipleship mental model in practical ways during 301, since living missionally is at the core of being a part of a missional community. High levels of accountability and support for this new way of thinking, being, and acting are offered through the missional community. FIA processes are further discussed in the data analysis section in Chapter 4.

The researcher collected data through personal interviews and the review of Faith in Action documents.

Personal interviews. The interviewees were identified through the purposeful sampling, and each returned a consent form (Appendix B). The researcher obtained participant permission to audio record interviews, and the researcher interviewed each participant one-on-one by asking open-ended questions in a semi-structured format. Verbatim transcripts were created from the audio-recorded interviews to ensure validity.

Each interview lasted from 60 to 120 minutes. The researcher audio recorded the questions and responses, and the data was stored on MP3 files. The researcher did not take notes during the interviews. Instead, the researcher gave her full attention to the participant who was speaking. The researcher returned to the audio recording at the conclusion of the interview to listen and to interpret the data.

Utilizing member checks is one way that qualitative inquiry engages in an *iterative* process of the data further informing the research process.

Here [through member checks] you ask participants to comment on your interpretation of the data. That is, you take your tentative findings back to some of the participants (from which you derived the raw data through interviews or observations) and ask whether your interpretation “rings true.” While you may have used different words, participants should be able to recognize their experiences in your interpretation or suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their perspectives. Some writers suggest doing member checks throughout the course of the study. (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 26)

The researcher had an interview plan but remained flexible enough to allow the participants to mold the interview time. Merriam (2009, pp. 120-121) offers a checklist that framed the researcher's interview guide. Appendix C contains the interview protocol that served as the framework for the researcher's semi-structured interview plan.

Review of documents. The researcher was exposed to various forms of documents throughout the stages of data collection. The researcher utilized a checklist of questions put forth by Clark (1967) as cited by Merriam (2009):

- What is the history of the document?
- How did it come into my hands?
- What guarantee is there that it is what it pretends to be?
- Is the document complete, as originally constructed?
- Has it been tampered with or edited?
- If the document is genuine, under what circumstances and for what purposes was it produced?
- Who was/is the author?
- What was he trying to accomplish? For whom was the document intended?
- What were the maker's sources of information? Does the document represent an eyewitness account, a secondhand account, a reconstruction of an event long prior to the writing, and interpretation?
- What was or is the maker's bias?
- To what extent was the writer likely to want to tell the truth?
- Do other documents exist that might shed additional light on the same story, event project, program, context? If so, are they available, accessible? Who holds them? (pp. 238-39)

The researcher located documents, determined the authenticity of the documents, and then coded and cataloged them. Merriam (2009) notes the importance of establishing categories early in the research process so that the researcher will have easy access to document information in the analysis and interpretation stages. The researcher maintained a regular connection with Mission City's gatekeeper to obtain documents such as curriculum, leader and participant handouts, letters, homework assignments, etc.

Protection of Human Subjects

Ethics are important for any discipline, especially qualitative research since the researcher is privileged to have access to the personal and private information of participants. The qualitative researcher is the instrument, so she needs to have her own code of ethics by which she tests her practices. First priority was given to obtaining permission from the willing participants in the researcher's purposeful sampling. Creswell (2005) states that in order to conduct interviews, the researcher must first receive permission from the participants. The invitation letter (Appendix A) explained the research objectives and contained a request for participation. The researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of the Incarnate Word before beginning the interviews (Appendix D). Interviews were scheduled after participants had returned the letters of consent (Appendix B). The letter of consent outlines an agreement to be interviewed and documented for the study along with the right for each participant to withdraw from the study at any time.

The researcher protected the participants by keeping confidentiality and also by assigning pseudonyms in an anonymous fashion. The researcher also made her intentions clear regarding her plans for the research data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis section focuses on the systems that were utilized for presenting the data and findings. In case study inquiry, the researcher makes sense of the data collected through a *recursive* process during which the researcher interacts with the data throughout the investigative process (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). "Case study research involves ongoing examination and interpretation of the data in order to reach tentative conclusions and to refine the research questions" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 62). The researcher utilized Table 3 as a framework

for guidelines to simultaneously summarize and interpret information gathered through this case study research.

The researcher kept the research questions and subsequent data at the forefront of the investigative process so that data analysis was ongoing and more manageable. (Merriam & Associates, 2002) describes the importance of ongoing data analysis:

To wait until all data are collected is to lose the opportunity to gather more reliable and valid data; to wait until the end is also to court disaster, as many a qualitative researcher has found himself or herself facing hundreds of pages of transcripts or field notes without a clue where to begin. (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 14)

Table 3

Guidelines for Case Study Data Analysis

Guidelines for Case Study Data Analysis

-
- Ongoing refinement of the study's fundamental research questions in light of data obtained early in the investigation.
 - Constant focus on the research questions being investigated. Each new piece of information should be examined in light of these fundamental questions.
 - Collection and interpretation of only those data that are potentially meaningful to the research effort.
 - Develop a method for labeling, storing, and accessing information acquired during the research effort. As a minimum, every piece of information gathered must be labeled with the date, location, persons involved, and circumstances surrounding the collection of that piece of information.
-

Note. Adapted from *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*, by D. Hancock and B. Algozzine, 2011, New York, NY: Teachers College Press, p. 64. Copyright 2011 by Dawson Hancock and Bob Algozzine.

Merriam and Associates (2002) note that the data analysis process involves identifying recurring themes that cut through the data, which leads to the findings—a mix of the recurring patterns supported by the data from which they were taken. Berg (2007) offers a stage model of qualitative analysis (Table 4) that the researcher utilized during data analysis.

The write-up for this study includes a discussion of the research focus, the outline of the research process, and the study findings. Lastly, descriptive findings are presented and reflected upon, utilizing the literature that framed this research study.

Table 4

Stage Model of Qualitative Analysis

Stage Model of Qualitative Analysis

-
- Identify research question.
 - Determine analytic categories.
 - Read through data and establish grounded categories.
 - Determine systematic (objective) criteria of selection for sorting data chunks into analytic and grounded categories.
 - Begin sorting the data into various categories (revise categories or selection criteria, if necessary, after several cases have been completed).
 - Consider the patterns in light of relevant literature or theory (show possible links to theory or other research); offer an explanation (analysis) of your findings; relate your analysis to the extant literature on the subject.
 - Count the number of entries in each category for descriptive statistics and allow for the demonstration of magnitude; review sorted textual materials for patterns and accept that no apparent pattern is a pattern.
-

Note. Adapted from *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, by B. Berg, 2007, Boston, MA: Pearson, p. 72. Copyright 2007 by Bruce Berg.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The topics of trustworthiness and credibility reflect a researcher's competent practices and ethical conduct. Schram (2006) notes,

In this section [trustworthiness and credibility] you address head on the manner in which you are responding to standards for competent performance as a fieldworker, highlighting such issues as researcher presence, the inevitable selectivity of fieldwork, and the play of subjectivity. (p. 173)

A researcher's credibility is based on a set of assumptions. Merriam & Associates (2002) note that a study is good when it is conducted in an ethical, rigorous, systematic way so that its results are trustworthy. Credibility is established through an evaluation of the research process.

The researcher has an obligation to check for *internal validity* to ensure trustworthiness.

Some questions to guide this process include:

How congruent are one's findings with reality? Has the researcher understood the perspectives of those involved, uncovered the complexity of human behavior in context and presented a holistic interpretation of what is happening? Has the researcher used triangulation, member checks, peer review, reflexivity or taken adequate research time? (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p.25).

The researcher committed to a thorough test of internal validity by utilizing the stated methods of confirmation: member checks; rich, thick descriptions; audit trail; triangulation; reflexivity; and adequate engagement in the data collection process.

Member checks. Member checks are one way to ensure validity in qualitative inquiry. Member checks happen when the researcher brings the data analysis back to the participants for review and comment on the interpretation. "That is, you take your tentative findings back to some of the participants (from whom you derived the raw data through interviews or observations) and ask whether your interpretation 'rings true'" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 26). Member checks allow participants to recognize their experiences in the researcher's interpretation. The researcher conducted member checks with participants after the interview transcripts were finalized. When conducting the member checks, the researcher e-mailed the final transcript to each participant to confirm that the printed interview was a valid representation of the interview process. Two participants modified selected words in a few of the sections.

Rich, thick descriptions. Merriam and Associates (2002) suggest that a basic concern for qualitative research surrounds the topic of generalizability, or how a study's findings can be

applied to other situations. She also notes that generalizability needs to be thought about differently in qualitative inquiry since different assumptions exist (Merriam & Associates, 2002). “If one thinks of what can be learned from in-depth analysis of a particular situation or incident and how that knowledge can be transferred to another situation, generalizability in qualitative research becomes possible” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 28). Providing rich, thick description is a research technique to check for external validity or generalizability. The *thick, rich data* contain descriptive documentation, showing which themes emerged through the research process. “Traditional qualitative studies present the findings of the inquiry as a mix of rich, thick description and interpretation” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 21). Merriam and Associates (2002) continue this explanation by stating, “These data are in the form of exact quotes from people interviewed, episodes from field observations, and references from supporting documents” (p. 22). The researcher utilized thick, rich descriptions as a solid foundation for analysis and reporting.

Audit trail. Providing a clear audit trail is necessary so that the reader can understand how the researcher obtained and analyzed the data. An audit trail provides an avenue for readers to validate the researcher’s findings. “An audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 27).

Audit trails happen when a researcher takes notes about the research process. The researcher recorded memos, kept a journal, and created a running record of her interactions with the data through the analysis and interpretation. The audit trail provides a detailed account of how the researcher conducted the study and analyzed the data.

Triangulation. According to Merriam and Associates (2002), *triangulation* is one of the most well-known methods to check for internal validity in a study. Triangulation happens when the researcher compares multiple theories, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm findings (Denzin, as cited in Merriam & Associates, 2002). “In this triangulation strategy the researcher collects data through a combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 25). The researcher utilized triangulation in this study by comparing interview notes with document notes.

Reflexivity. Realizing that the researcher brings her own perspectives to the research process makes it important for the researcher to be *reflexive*. Reflexivity recognizes that the researcher has an opportunity to get entangled in the research, given the social nature of its focus (Holliday, 2002). This is one way to explain the iterative nature of the data. As it interacts, it both informs the researcher and forms the researcher. Reflexivity allows the reader to understand how the researcher arrived at a particular interpretation of the data (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The researcher wrote a personal narrative about the phenomenon explored in the study in order to help with reflexivity.

Adequate engagement in the data collection. Qualitative inquiry, especially case study research, requires the researcher to be in the field for enough time to collect sufficient data in order to adequately explore the phenomenon in an in-depth manner. Merriam and Associates (2002) note that the length of time needed for observation and interviews is difficult to gauge.

The best rule of thumb is that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated; that is, you begin to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data. (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 26)

The researcher experienced a level of saturation before concluding data collection. The researcher's use of the strategies described above made this research study trustworthy and credible.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the process of how leaders of Mission City foster personal transformation in participants of the Faith in Action program. The study included an analysis of Mission City leaders' perceptions about how the Faith in Action program fosters personal transformation in participants. Sub questions which guided the collection of data explored: (a) the personal transformation process; (b) learning environment factors for personal transformation; and (c) outcomes of personal transformation. Ten Mission City leaders were interviewed for this study. Data was collected through personal interviews and the review of documents.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The researcher utilized a qualitative approach since the intention of this study was to explore the individual Mission City leaders' perspectives on fostering personal transformation in Faith in Action participants. Creswell (2009) describes qualitative data analysis as "the process of making sense of text and images to form answers to the research questions" (p. 183). The researcher organized data, transcribed interviews, manually analyzed interviews and documents, and interpreted the data. Subsequently, data was coded, using *lean coding* to put forth three broad themes to describe findings from this study.

The Interview Strategy

The researcher asked questions about the following subjects:

1. personal transformation process,
2. learning environment factors for personal transformation,
3. outcomes of personal transformation, and

4. perceptions about how Faith in Action fosters personal transformation in program participants.

Demographic Overview

This section describes participants' demographic information in order to give the reader a brief understanding of the participants and their experiences with Faith in Action. Individual participants are further described in the interview results section of this chapter.

Descriptive statistics. Age was the first variable selected, and it was grouped into 10-year increments to protect the identities of the participants. Table 5 shows the distribution of the participants' ages.

Gender was the second variable selected by the researcher. Table 6 shows the gender distribution of the participants.

The third and final variable of interest was participants' level of involvement with Faith in Action. Table 7 shows the distribution of the participants' involvement with Faith in Action leadership.

Interview results are documented on the following page.

Table 5

Participants' Age as Depicted at Time of Interview

Age in Years	Number of Participants
18 – 29	0
30 – 39	4
40 – 49	1
50 – 59	4
60 +	1
Total	10

Table 6

Participants' Gender

Male Participants	Female Participants
7	3

Table 7

Participants' Faith in Action Leadership Involvement

Leadership Role	Number of Participants
Team Leader	1
Coaching Team Leader	1
Key Retreat Leaders	3
301/401 Leaders	2
Other Leaders	3
Total	10

Interview Participants

Participant 1: Scott—Faith in Action team leader. Scott, a pastor since the age of 19, has a bachelor degree in psychology and a master's degree in education. He is also an author, mentor, coach, and the current Executive Director of Mission City. As far back as the early 1990s, Scott teamed with a group of people who asked two questions, "What is a disciple?" and "How do you make one?" Scott's personal mission statement reads,

Jesus is my King, and I love His Church. I have lived in a very authentic community of followers of Jesus for a decade. I work for justice, live simply and embrace equality. I am committed to reconciliation, and I live a radically inclusive life.
(<http://www.missionhouston.com>)

Scott is the creator, founding writer, and team leader of Faith in Action. Tammy and Tray, two other participants in this study, subsequently joined Scott to collaborate in Faith in Action's leadership and curriculum writing. Scott helped launch the first Faith in Action retreat

in September 2007, but motivation for the program had emerged several years earlier when Scott, as a young adult, became the executive director of a large association of Baptist churches in the city where he currently lives (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Scott's office employed researchers to conduct a 40-year retrospective study investigating the numerical growth of Baptist congregations in this particular city from 1950-1990. Upon review, "the first line graph in the study results showed that [congregational] growth was generally up during those 40 years" (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). When Scott saw the line graph, he said to the researcher who conducted the study: "This is a good thing." The researcher replied, "That is only half of the story." He laid down the other half of the graph, which showed the numerical growth of the city in population (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). It became clear to Scott that, in business terms, the association of Baptist churches under his leadership had lost continual market share for 40 years. This loss created a disorienting dilemma for Scott as he reflected on the reality that every year he stood up and talked about the remarkable growth of Baptist churches in his city. He now realized that was just part of the story. The other part of the story that had now become clear to Scott was that the Baptist churches in this particular city had less and less ability to impact the culture (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013).

Throughout his leadership journey, Scott was deeply influenced by Dallas Willard's book, *The Divine Conspiracy* (1998). Scott stated,

In Willard's book, he says the reason that Christian churches across the United States experience a decline in market share and a decline in cultural impact is because somewhere along the way we [Christians] quit asking the question, What is a disciple of Jesus? and, instead started asking, What is a good church member? (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Scott notes that this distinction between *church member* and *disciple of Jesus* was and continues to be helpful for him. Scott is a life-long learner and values being a part of a learning community (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Scott showed commitment to the learning community model as he focused on developing disciples through three pilot projects that focused on spiritual formation. It was from these pilot projects that Faith in Action eventually emerged.

The first pilot project was called Leader's Edge. The second pilot project included a three-year training process for 200 church planters connected with the American Baptist Churches USA (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Through this second pilot project, Scott served as the team leader for a group of three who traveled to the Midwest twice a year for four days at a time to meet with the church planters in the program (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). The third pilot project included work with 10 congregations from various Christian denominations. Scott stated, "Those were a lot of fun, but those were just pilot projects to keep exploring the questions: 'What's a disciple?' and 'How do you make one?' Faith in Action is the synthesis of all of that learning" (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013).

Scott's leadership assumption with Faith in Action is that discipleship requires a mental model that is new for most people and that an ongoing personal transformation is needed to live into this new mental model (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Scott described,

My understanding of a mental model, the simple definition is: a set of beliefs and assumptions that we hold, the stories that we tell about how the world works, and because of that how we have to be in action in order to be successful with the world. Faith in Action is built on a set of mental models that are fundamentally different than what most churches hold. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Scott stated,

I had one pastor tell me that for many of his members, church is like an image management experience. I come to manage my image so that folks will see. I'm not

saying that's true for everybody. My experience with local congregations is we put on a face, we pretend to be something we're not. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Faith in Action promotes the opposite experience: Authenticity is a core facet of the Faith in Action community culture. Scott described authenticity in this way, "There is an expectation that if you're going to be successful in the Faith in Action community, you have to grow in your capacity to really say 'what's so' for you" (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013).

Beyond authenticity, great attention to the adult learning process and accountability through coaching are vital components of Faith in Action. Scott described the process in this way: "The two most important things is this understanding of how learning takes place through information, practice, reflection, and then coaches that are really well trained. Those are the two most fundamental things in the culture that foster transformation" (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). The information, practice, and reflection cycle caters to human learning, and Faith in Action organizes all learning modules around this structure. Scott explained,

In the weekend [101] retreat, there is a cycle that we follow where there is a presentation, a solitude, a small group, and then a large group. That pattern follows throughout the weekend retreat. In the second phase, what we call 201, the content of the weekend [101] is translated into action. There are 12 sessions where there is a meeting every other week and you have homework to do. The homework is mostly not about getting more information. The homework is about practicing your relationship with God in a different kind of way or practicing being in a relationship with people in a different kind of way. So, you are sent out to have transformation conversations, you are sent out to work on a spiritual workout that includes the practice of the spiritual disciplines and you get a coach. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Attention to the learning process and accountability through coaching are the two most important things about Faith in Action (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013).

Scott experiences great joy in his involvement with Faith in Action as the team leader.

For him, the stories of transformation keep his involvement strong. He explained,

I've been a pastor 41 years; there's been more life transformation that I've been able to personally be connected to in these last five years [through Faith in Action] than the 35 years before that combined. So, I wake up every day saying, "They pay me to do this?" (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Participant 2: Tammy—Faith in Action key retreat leader. Tammy is an ordained Baptist minister; her profession is psychotherapy, and spiritual formation and discipleship are some of her chief interests (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013). Tammy partnered with a group of Baptist believers in the middle to late 1990s to work on discipleship issues, and she was also a part of the Leader's Edge pilot program that Scott led. Leader's Edge worked exclusively with clergy. Throughout that pilot process their team found that the lives of the clergy in the program were being transformed as a result of the initiative, but their congregations and congregants were not being impacted (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013). This led Tammy, Scott, and the other Leader's Edge leaders to explore that phenomenon. Tammy described the timing connections in the following statement: "[At] about that same time, Mission City was launched and we knew that there needed to be a discipleship component." Tammy notes that several years of concept development transpired before the Faith in Action curriculum coalesced in 2007 (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Tammy did not attend the first Faith in Action retreat, since it was restricted to males; however, she served as a large group presenter at the second retreat in January 2008. (That retreat was open to both men and women.) Tammy's involvement with Faith in Action since 2008 includes roles that are wide and varied. She described,

We work pretty hard on every level: content and curriculum, training, the leaders that will be present, the small group leaders, the hospitality leaders, the presenters; I've had a role in all of those things by the time a Faith in Action retreat happens. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Tammy currently serves as a key retreat leader, but she has served in various roles since the program's inception. She explained,

I was part of a team of three presenting at virtually every Faith in Action retreat until this year [2013] where our presenter team has expanded. During that time I've also had some tasks related to administration, content development, writing of materials, and coaching—I have a fingerprint on most of that. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Tammy also serves as a Faith in Action curriculum developer, and she considers herself a curator of the learning environment. She stated,

I think a huge part of my role both in the moment and leading up to that [first retreat], is to create an experience that's usually unlike what most people have experienced. Not always, but most of the time. To create an experience where people are invited to show up for God in a different way—they are invited to bring different parts of themselves to the experience than typically happens at a church event. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Tammy and the other leaders firmly believe in the power of creating an experience. She explained, “We believe the material is good, we believe the content is good, but, for example, no one could just sit down and read the Faith in Action notebook and have a transformational experience, or that would be really unlikely” (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013). Tammy believes the transformation experience continues well beyond the 101 retreat, especially when a person chooses to continue the Faith in Action journey. She stated, “After that Faith in Action [101] retreat, moving people into the process of 201 is where it becomes more of a lifestyle of opening up to God in new ways” (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Tammy also enjoys being a head coach to the coaches who lead at the 201 level. Tammy believes that encouragement and accountability through coaching make up a large part of the transformation process (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013). She explains, “I believe that [coaching] is as much a part of the transformational process both because I want the

coaches to be transformed and because they are so important in the lives of the people they are working with” (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Tammy enjoys being a part of a learning community through Faith in Action. She described her joy in the following statement

Being a part, not only of what I believe is a movement of God, but getting to be a part of that with these people. This is an amazing group of people, and it’s just astounding to me that I get to hang out with them on a pretty regular basis and that we have come to love each other. These are my people; this is my community. Some of us have pledged ourselves to each other until we die. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Getting to that purpose-driven level of community with other outstanding people fuels Tammy’s Faith in Action involvement.

Participant 3: Tray—Faith in Action key retreat leader. Tray, an Episcopal priest, was a member of the Leader’s Edge team with Scott and Tammy. Tray continued to partner with Scott and Tammy after Leader’s Edge concluded, when Faith in Action launched in 2007, and he remains involved today (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). Tray described how the team’s experience with Leader’s Edge influenced this group of leaders in the area of systems thinking—particularly in regard to whether they were actually practicing systems thinking or just teaching about systems thinking (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). He explained,

We kept having pastors “come up to the mountain” and receive a vision, expecting them to go down and find a receptive audience. Well, that’s just contrary to systems thinking. So, Scott and I decided that we were not going to let pastors come to the next “iteration” unless they brought five people from their congregation who could not all be pastors or paid staff. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Tray stated that the transformation progress was notable when lay leaders were also involved in the learning process. He stated, “There was remarkable progress because up until then, the pastors claimed to have a revitalizing experience individually, but it didn’t translate into

congregation revitalization, nor did it show any community impact” (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). Involving lay people who would partner with the pastor and ‘live into’ the congregation system was key to addressing the issue of the potential anxiety that might emerge as a result of adopting a new mental model of discipleship and leadership (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013).

Tray and Scott continued to emphasize the culture of a learning community in the time leading up to the launch of Faith in Action. Tray notes that Scott came to him and said, “I’m startled by the research out of the Barna group that states that there are increasingly large numbers of people who are disenfranchised from the local congregation, but they are still attracted to Jesus” (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). As a result, Scott proposed a synthesis of various methods and approaches for Faith in Action. Tray explained what Scott told him,

I’d like for us to take some of what we’re doing in Leader’s Edge, some stuff I’ve been exposed to through Landmark Forum, some of the Barna data, and also the Willow Creek Reveal study and offer it to people in the business community. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Attention to systems thinking was also a focus during this time. Their vision included creating a movement to influence the larger system. Tray described the vision Scott shared with him. He explained, “Maybe we’ll get traction by doing what Promise Keepers did. Pastors didn’t get on board for years after thousands of laymen had—and, maybe we can help the systems make a shift that way” (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). Tray agreed with the vision, and the first Faith in Action curriculum was created.

After Scott wrote the original curriculum, he asked Tray to go through the first 101 retreat with him and a group of businessmen in Colorado. The second retreat was opened to both women and men and included Tammy, Scott, and Tray as the team of large group presenters.

Tray describes the sequence of events as follows, “After that 101 retreat, we came back and I went through what was then the 201. Then, Tammy, Scott, and I added to the writing” (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013).

Tray explained that the process of challenging assumptions was central in writing the Faith in Action curriculum. He described,

Faith in Action is built on the premise that God has a design for the Church, both individually and corporately. That design for the church is the pathway to both transformation of our lives and transformation of our communities. So, we [Scott, Tammy, and Tray] had to engage that process ourselves. What is it that “we” believe is God’s design for the church? His intent for the church? His intent for the individuals who are members of the church? (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Faith in Action was created around a set of presuppositions as a result of Scott, Tammy, and Tray asking themselves those questions over a period of years. Namely, a discipleship mental model emerged as a result of the Faith in Action leadership team asking questions about God’s design for the church, His intent for individuals, and about how they are to become the functioning Body of Christ. Tray described, “Becoming a disciple involves investments in three arenas: radical obedience, living in reflection, and authentic community—when those investments are simultaneous, then we get on the path of personal transformation” (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013).

Team dynamics play a role in Tray’s motivation for Faith in Action involvement as a 101 retreat team leader, presenter, and small group facilitator; as a 201 facilitator, coach, and head coach; as a Missional Community coach; and as a member of the Faith in Action Core Leadership Team. He explained,

I’m continuing to see more rapid transformation in my own life now than when I was trying to do it primarily on my own. So, this idea of being a part of a community that speaks the truth with love and grace is accelerating my transformation. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Additionally, he finds joy in watching transformation unfold in the lives of Faith in Action participants. “What could be better than watching before your eyes somebody living into the freedom they hoped was found in Christ, and living into the sense of purpose they thought was someplace in there” (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). The ripple effect of transformation is yet another motivator for Tray’s involvement.

To begin to make huge impact in the lives of people in their small circle of personal relationships as well as taking on missional activities, both as servant and as leader. . . . It is so good. I’m telling you, as a person who has done a lot of public speaking, it [watching life transformation] beats the applause after a presentation, any day and all day. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Participant 4: Henry—Faith in Action key retreat leader. Henry joined the Mission City staff in January 2007, after working with a religious nonprofit organization, that focused on Latino church relations. Henry has a special emphasis on sharing Faith in Action’s vision with the large and growing Latino Body of Christ, both locally and globally. Through Henry’s leadership with Scott, Faith in Action has been offered to Spanish-speaking immigrants in the city where they live and also to participants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica (Henry, personal communication, August 2, 2013). Henry’s vocational background is in the hospitality industry. He was a hotel administrator for more than 10 years in Europe and South America. He also serves as a Sunday school teacher and lay leader in a large Baptist church in the city where he lives.

Henry became involved with Faith in Action in 2007, when he joined the staff of Mission City. His initial involvement was work-related since Scott, the creator of Faith in Action, is his boss. Henry did not attend the first Faith in Action retreat, but he was in ongoing conversation with Scott, Tammy, and Tray about the concepts. He did attend the second 101 retreat with mixed thoughts. Henry explained, “I have to be really honest; it was a work situation more than

anything. I liked the idea of personal transformation, but I can tell you that at that time, I had a lot of resistance and blocks” (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013). Henry notes that he did not have objections to what Faith in Action was striving to do. However, he was initially unable to engage in the Faith in Action process, because some of his past life experiences had amplified his resistance toward confronting things that needed to change in his personal life. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013).

Henry’s journey with personal transformation along with his desire to facilitate personal transformation in others is categorically different today than it was in 2007. He described,

If you had seen me in 2007, you would have seen that I was very different. My approach to Faith in Action was only working to fulfill my tasks, but now it is really a calling. I mentioned to Scott that if a financial situation might happen, I would like to do this [Faith in Action leadership] connected to him even if there is no paycheck. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

He continued, “The huge impact that Faith in Action has had in my life, in my marriage, with my wife, has been great. The Lord has used Faith in Action in many ways” (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013).

Henry described fostering personal transformation in a process-oriented way. “Faith in Action allows space for God to produce what we cannot produce” (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013). He used the word *vessel* as a metaphor to describe the process.

Faith in Action is just a vessel that has a name and it has a process. What that vessel does is creates a space, separates a space, and makes a very specific space where there is no judgment, there is no condemnation. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

He stated that a posture of listening is required to help foster this no-condemnation environment.

I don’t have to teach you, I don’t have to counsel you, I don’t have to give you any solutions, but I can become this mirror, this person who listens and asks questions. I make sure to remind people that the space is without judgment and condemnation, that

they can be out there in their thinking, they can say what is so for them, and I'm not interested in judging or condemning them. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

To see God at work in the lives of Faith in Action participants is Henry's greatest joy.

For me just to see how you are changing this person, how you are fostering this work in this person that is so compelling, so perfect, so great, and so awesome. I could never have imagined it could happen in this way; with God you're doing it. This person, that sometimes you say there is no way, because of "that" frustration, then you see that he starts seeing things. Seeing their joy and their freedom, it becomes a bonding with people that is amazing. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Participant 5: John—Faith in Action 301/401 leader. John, an entrepreneur, is active in leading Christian ministries across the city where he and his wife live. He is the founder of an outreach organization that ministers to male ex-offenders and also males in substance abuse recovery. John and his wife host the Faith in Action 101 retreats in their home, and he is also involved in Faith in Action as a 301/401 leader (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013).

John attended the second Faith in Action retreat in January 2008. He explained how he got involved as follows:

It didn't take much to get me involved; I've been friends with Scott for quite a while. Scott and I started meeting for lunch regularly, and he talked about this deal [Faith in Action] and asked me to come. I really just went on his invitation. I didn't know much about it, but I knew enough about Scott to know that it would probably be a really great thing. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

After John's first retreat, he committed to join the Faith in Action community. John's greatest joys in Faith in Action are experiences related to his coaching relationships. He explained,

For me, most of that joy has come into the place of coaching. I coach in three different arenas. After the times of solitude or small group in 101, we'll have group coaching. I'm also a 201 coach, and I coach people in their Missional Communities. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

John described the personal transformation process that occurs in a coaching relationship as a combination of human effort and divine presence. “To me, it’s a combination of some really deep, hard, painful work in addition to the Spirit of God showing up and revealing things and motivating you” (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013). He explained,

Walking through that [transformation process] with people and being a part of that process is really sacred, to be honest with you. Seeing that, ultimately, God is doing the work, and the work can’t happen if the people don’t do the homework on their own. Participating in it, saying things to help people see things, and holding up the mirror. Being a part of that is just amazing. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Like Henry, John embraces a process-oriented perspective about personal transformation.

There’s no right or wrong answers in transformation. One thing I love about Faith in Action is that it’s not a formula. We’re not saying that if you do this, you’ll be transformed. The key component is that only God can cause ultimate transformation. There’s a lot of ways to experience transformation—this is “a” way. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

John described how the Faith in Action culture lives and calls for transformation through a constant questioning of assumptions as a learning community. He explained,

Through creating that culture of learning, we’re always wondering and questioning. We say regularly that we’re a learning community. Faith in Action is the first learning community I’ve ever been a part of and it’s really powerful. Learning means you haven’t arrived. If you’re doing anything and you think you’ve arrived, you’re really not learning. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

John notes that having learning embedded in the culture and DNA of Faith in Action is critical to their growth.

John stated that the retreats require a great deal of effort from both him and his wife. He explained,

Hosting the retreats is a tremendous amount of work, it’s a lot of work for my wife and I—it’s a lot of work before people show up, when people are here, and it’s a lot of work after people leave. My wife does most of the work after people leave—the washing sheets and all that stuff. When everybody leaves on Sunday, we hardly talk to each other until the next day because we’re both so exhausted. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

In spite of the effort, John and his wife continue to sign up to host the 101 retreats. He explained why,

We keep signing up for more because, again, to hear the stories, to see the breakthrough, to see the things that God is doing is such a privilege. We keep signing up to do more because it's so sacred to be a part of something that God is doing in peoples' lives. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

John described the deep meaning found in the authentic community of Faith in Action.

I'm having conversations with people who embrace these [Faith in Action] values—they may not see everything exactly how I see it, but we're embracing the same core values and the same DNA. To have conversations with people and to engage with people, it's the best thing I've ever experienced in my Christian life. There's a lot of joy in just being in the community and being on journey with people who are authentic and telling the truth. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Participant 6: Kyle—Faith in Action 301/401 leader. Kyle is a pastor, and his involvement with Faith in Action emerged out of a friendship and collaborative connection with Scott. Kyle was also involved with the Leader's Edge pilot group prior to Faith in Action. Like Tray, Kyle noted systems theory as one of the group's key insights from the Leader's Edge years. He explained,

They [participants] would be energized and they would see the light and they would say, "Oh wow, this is great." We literally had a guy give us this story one day—as he was driving back to town from the retreat he said, "This clarity that I had at the retreat just got foggier and foggier and foggier the closer I got back to my congregation." And, so what we learned was the system of a congregation is so powerful that it just sucks you back into the vortex of it. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Kyle stated that Leader's Edge "kind of hit a wall" and eventually stopped. Some of its principles were carried over into the next iteration that focused on lay people (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013).

Kyle left his job as a congregational pastor in 1999 and became involved with the group of people who started Mission City. After some time, Kyle returned to pastoral ministry. He described his motivation and influence in the following way:

I left Mission City and started a new congregation, and in the process of me starting the new congregation, I was also heavily influenced by the book, *The Forgotten Ways*, by Hirsch, and some of the early missional conversations [by other authors]. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

As a result, Kyle was determined to plant a missional congregation with a particular focus on reaching people with a postmodern worldview. He described, “Here in the heart of the Bible belt, there was nobody doing anything like that, and I didn't have a clue what that looked like, but my congregation and I decided that we'd do it” (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013). Kyle described how he and his congregation journeyed together to learn what it means to live missionally, while he also remained connected to Scott's journey with Mission City and Faith in Action.

So, I was over here learning about the missional thing, and Scott was primarily focused on the personal transformation. Along the way, he asked me to go through Faith in Action, and I did. It was a great experience for me, as it is for so many people. Out of that, he invited me to come and help him create the missional components of Faith in Action. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Kyle still continues his personal and community journey of what it means to be a disciple and live missionally. For Kyle, discipleship involves a way of life. “My answer to the discipleship question is: A disciple is an apprentice to the ways of Jesus, not just a belief intellectually in Jesus—but, an apprentice to his way of life” (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013). Kyle's ministry philosophy holds a deep connection between discipleship and missional living. “I'm convinced, we're [Faith in Action] convinced, that missional is a way of life, it's not just something we do or something we add-on” (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013).

Kyle described where most people “get stuck” in their discipleship journey.

Living into the ways of Jesus requires radical obedience, and people can only be obedient to the teachings of Jesus to the level of their emotional maturity. So, I am convinced that we keep bumping up against our emotional maturity because our emotional maturity is about our own reactivity to the anxiety in the world around us. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

He shared a practical example:

It is real easy for me to say, “Oh yeah, I love my neighbor,” until my neighbor comes over here and annoys me, bugs me, and suddenly I don't want to love him anymore. And, I get anxious about that, and I react out of “my reactivity,” rather than out of the values and beliefs of what a follower of Jesus looks like. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Part of the Faith in Action process involves deconstructing existing mental models of how a person reacts in the world. Kyle described,

We've used the tools of family systems theory to help us do that. So, helping people to begin to respond rather than react, to operate other beliefs and values, rather than out of the typical reactive ways that they normally do. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Kyle and the Faith in Action community believe that people practice their way into emotional maturity.

Kyle is one of the current team leaders for Faith in Action 301 and 401. “Our main goal in 301 is to help people understand missional living from a biblical perspective. Our main goal for 401 is to equip, coach, and train people into a missional community somewhere” (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013). Kyle stated that 301 and 401 participants either become catalysts for new missional communities, or they enter into existing missional communities (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013).

Kyle described the joy of watching transformation unfold through the Faith in Action Process:

Probably the biggest joy is seeing breakthroughs in people's lives. I am convinced that much growth and emotional maturity in a person's life translates into every area of their life. Their marriage gets better. Their parenting gets better. Their performance at work gets better. Their church relationships get better. They are better in the community. Those are the things that keep me going—seeing transformation in people. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Kyle also described the joy he receives from working alongside the other Faith in Action leaders.

The other joy is the people that I get to hang out with. Being a part of something that we are creating as we go—that is fun for me. I am deeply passionate about it, and my passion drives me. I'm personally convinced that God is in this, and that this is what He wants me to give my life to. And, so then it's easy. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Participant 7: Bob—Faith in Action emerging leader. Bob, pastor turned nonprofit leader, became involved with Faith in Action through John, introduced earlier in this study. Bob described his situation just before he and his wife attended the 101 retreat.

It was 2008, and I was on the pastoral staff where John and his family attend church. John had just gone through Faith in Action, and he called me and had a conversation with me as a result of what the [Faith in Action] leadership was asking him to do. That resulted in some conversations, when he told me about the impact of Faith in Action in his life. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob explained how John was a mentor to him during that time. They met for breakfast once a week.

I was at a crucial crossroads with the church and my role with the church. During that time, I actually went off staff with the church and on staff with a non-profit organization. It was during that transition that John and his wife graciously offered to fund my wife and I to attend the Faith in Action 101 retreat. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob explained that he knew of Scott and knew a little about Mission City, but he decided to go to the Faith in Action 101 retreat based on John's transformational journey.

I was kind of going on his [John's] word, seeing the impact on him and his wife; so my wife and I went to the retreat. It was awesome. I think, in a lot of ways, my wife and I had been through some pretty life altering moments, for us, in our lives. A lot of them,

we didn't know it at the time, impacted us in a way that we were living really anxiously, we were living out of our vows, we were living in a way that we thought the church wanted us to live. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob explained that at the time, he didn't know how to live any differently as a pastor.

We didn't know how to do that any different, at all. We were kind of blown up, really, I left the church because she said, and this is not her fault, but this was a huge moment for us—she said, “I don't want to be a pastor's wife anymore.” (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob stated that there was something for his wife about how “he played” as a pastor with the ministry, the church, and the home that impacted her greatly. For this couple, the retreat came at a crucial time (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013).

Bob described his experience with another man in his small group at the 101 retreat.

It was the most authentic that a man has ever been with me. I'm in this small group, and as God would have it, I'm sitting with the guy who is leading, who was like my father, basically. He represented everything that my father was going through. He didn't make all of the choices that my dad had, but he represented that for me. I was in this place, in some ways that represented his son. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob explained how that was a transformative experience for him.

So the man and I had this exchange that was pretty, I think, phenomenal. For me, it was the first time that I really ever experienced a guy loving me that well, and that authentically. I thought, “This is what the church needs; it's what I need.” (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob left the retreat with the conviction that he wanted to continue his transformational journey. Transformation happens at different paces. Bob's wife needed more time to process the experience, while Bob decided to pursue Faith in Action 201 right away (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013).

Bob connected with Scott regularly through Faith in Action 201. He explained, “I really got it; I really was taking it on—it was phenomenal. There were a lot of things in that, for me, that were really powerful, that I needed to see, that I wanted to see” (Bob, personal

communication, March 18, 2013). Bob elaborated on how his personal transformation carried over into other areas of his life.

I was ready for the transformation, and it caused a lot of great things that began to start to happen in relation to my marriage, my family, and my relationship with my dad that I thought was never possible. It was stretching me to have conversations that I never thought I'd have. It was really meaningful. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob went through coach's training after his 201 experience, and he also coached some co-workers who went through Faith in Action. He shared,

I had coworkers who went through Faith in Action, and it was really powerful. I got to coach them and their spouses a little bit through some of that. It was really neat; I was seeing some good kinds of transformation. All throughout that, I'm thinking, "this is what the church needs." (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob explained his transformed perspective about knowledge in the following way:

Wow. To put action to the things we are talking about and not just give mental assent to all the theological stuff and make philosophical projections on the stuff we're learning and are really smart about. We're putting it into practice in the way of Jesus. This is really good and challenging. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Even though Bob was growing tremendously in his Christian faith, he received skepticism from his local church.

I was seeing how, even in my own church, there was some push back against that. It was kind of a confusing time for me. I was changing and growing, and becoming more like Jesus than I felt like I had ever experienced. At the same time, this church that I was going to had a little bit of push back and skepticism with all that. So, all that meant for me was that people have a really hard time being authentic and telling the truth. It was really a journey and still is for me. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob quickly became a head coach within the Faith in Action community. As Bob grew in his leadership capacity, he realized more about the generational and gender variations among the community.

I quickly saw that I was one of the younger people that was part of the mix. Which I think was really beautiful and is still a struggle for me; there are these men that are like father figures and mentors but I need to relate to them as peers. Also, in my perspective, some

great women are leading but there is a lack of women leading. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

While Bob reflected on the make-up of the Faith in Action community, he expressed that he could not imagine not being a part of it. He described the inward and outward focus of the Faith in Action community in this way:

There's a phrase we say, "Nobody wins unless everybody wins." It's a really interesting phrase—it's so challenging. But, it's really good because you kind of take on this other perspective. At the same time that you're working on your stuff, you're also really about the Kingdom. We're locking arms in this deal; we're all in the same boat. We're doing it—it's really encouraging. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob explained how his involvement with Faith in Action is life giving.

This is life giving. I can live in the way that Jesus calls me to live. I can be this new creation that God talks about. It brings a lot of life to being a follower of Jesus. I think those are the awesome things. To really see that and be a part of that, to be a part of a group of people that would give their word to something bigger than themselves. It's awesome. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Participant 8: Jennifer—Faith in Action emerging leader. Jennifer is married to Henry, who was introduced earlier in this study. Jennifer met Henry in the spring of 2010. At the time, Henry was going through Faith in Action 201 for the second time. Jennifer explained how she was impressed with Henry as she continued to get to know him better.

I could see how Faith in Action was shaping him and it was really impressive to me. There were some concepts that were familiar to me, and there were some that were totally new—and I was fascinated with them. I thought, "Gosh, I really want to learn this stuff." That's what really motivated me to go through it. As soon as I had a chance, I went through the 101 retreat in October 2010. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Jennifer currently helps with the 101 retreats as a presenter and small group leader. She described her leadership growth in the area of facilitation.

Leading a small group at the retreat was really challenging for me the first time I did it because I'm not used to not giving at least a little bit of advice. I've grown in just listening, facilitating the conversation, giving feedback, maybe holding a mirror up to

someone, but just creating this safe space. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Jennifer also explained how environment impacts personal transformation,

I think that's been one thing that's really awesome about the retreats, a good small group leader creates a safe space where people can share without being given advice but they're just sharing, and the Lord is bringing that revelation. The idea is to create trust with the group, so I think creating the trust and safe space fosters personal transformation. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Jennifer continued explaining her transformation perspectives in this way:

I definitely really believe in the process of the retreats, the way there's teaching, then there's solitude, then there's small group. I think that helps so much. Not only are you receiving the information, but you're going and asking the Lord, the Holy Spirit to speak to you, to speak to you personally about how this applies to your life. Then, as you share that with the small group, sometimes just processing it and having someone repeat back to you what you said—sometimes that helps you see something new that you hadn't seen before. I think the model of the retreats is really good. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Jennifer resonated with the Faith in Action perspective about transformation.

I think that so often in Christianity we are obtaining a lot of information, and we gain all of this information, but it's not transforming us. That's one big concept in Faith in Action—information [alone] doesn't transform, but obedience does. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Jennifer explained how personal transformation is not meant to be inward alone. Instead, it should be shared. “Ultimately, the goal of Faith in Action is to not just be transformed in our character, but ultimately to move towards missional living” (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Jennifer described the joy she experiences through Faith in Action in the following way: “Often, my husband and I are together, and you leave the retreat full of joy. You're like, ‘God, You are at work here, You're moving people's hearts!’” (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Participant 9: Larry—Faith in Action coaching team leader. Larry, a pastor of a congregation located in the same city as Mission City, became connected to Faith in Action through Tray, who was mentioned earlier in this study. Larry participated as a “Catalyst” for a Kingdom effort initiative across the city where he lives, and as part of that experience, Tray shared a Faith in Action presentation.

They came out and presented about Faith in Action and about us participating in that. Tray talked about Faith in Action and what it was doing to help people get into action about what God is showing them. My point of being involved in that meeting was to say, “I’m totally behind it and will continue to send our people to it. Any of our staff can be involved, but I really don’t think it’s for me.” (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Faith in Action leadership shared with Larry that the senior leadership from his church really needed to be involved too. Larry described his reaction in the following way:

So, that threw me a curve. I really believed in Faith in Action, I believed in the missional communities it was launching, I believed in the change I was seeing in the church members that we had, so I told them I would think and pray about it. . . . So, I got involved after listening to Tray. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Larry described the difference between his Catalyst experience and his Faith in Action experience.

What we learned from the Catalyst experience was, there was an external set of ideas and thoughts and you implement this in your area. That just didn’t fit who I was. This other model [Faith in Action] was intriguing, “What is the Lord saying to you? What are you doing to get in action around that for yourself?” That was a big paradigm change for me from our Catalyst days. So, that was the first intriguing thing. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Larry also described the appeal of the coaching process in Faith in Action.

The coach thing keeps popping up, people talking about coaches. I was very intrigued with the idea of helping people to get into action around what the Lord was telling them to do or showing them. I had been wondering if, as a pastor, learning how to coach would help me to pastor people. I actually got involved in 101 because I wanted to learn coaching skills. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Larry described how his agenda for 101 was ultimately changed by what he encountered during the retreat.

The 101 retreat for me, to use language—I was ‘blindsided by the Lord.’ I was going in thinking I’m going to learn coaching skills from Scott and Tray, who are incredible disciple makers. 101 is about personal transformation, it was pretty amazing. The Lord showed up and I was hooked with what the Lord was doing, what He was teaching. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Three church staff coworkers and several church members attended that same 101 retreat with Larry. This helped produce momentum. “We already had a pretty good-sized core of people who had already gone through Faith in Action. So, Faith in Action just took off for us” (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Larry continued his transformational journey once 101 ended.

As soon as I did 101, I went straight to 201 because I wanted to continue learning and also, at that time 201 was talking about how to launch the missional community [this content is now covered in 301 and 401]. I wanted to learn more about that and be involved more strategically in a missional community in our area. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Larry now carries his Faith in Action experiences with him into his congregational leadership.

I’ve been totally blessed by Faith in Action. I teach a class here [at my church], an equipping class. I took the principles I was learning as I was learning them and that became my Wednesday night class. One of the ways I kept transformation alive in me was to talk about what I was learning and what I was doing. That’s what I’ve been doing on Wednesday night since October 2010. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Larry explained that the ripple of effect of his personal transformation led more church members to attend Faith in Action. “We’ve had numbers of people get involved in Faith in Action from that Wednesday night class. They get hungry and want more so they’ve launched out into Faith in Action” (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Larry described his new perspective about transformation in the following manner: “Faith in Action helped to give me an understanding of a mental model of transformation that was holistic” (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013). His transformation journey continues to influence his job as a pastor.

Through the Faith in Action experience, I realized I don’t want to just be task oriented; I want to be a true community. I want us to become the disciples Jesus wanted us to become, and I want us to experience transformation as a group. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Participant 10: Sandra—Faith in Action emerging leader. Sandra became connected with Faith in Action through Tray, who was mentioned earlier in the study, and Tray’s wife. She described their first encounter in the following way.

Tray and his wife go to my church. Randomly someone who is no longer at my church invited me to their house because they had a fellowship with some of the younger people in the church about hearing from God. I was like, “this sounds very weird.” So, when the woman invited me and introduced me to Tray, I said immediately, “Listen, I’m only going to come once and we’ll see.” Now that I know Tray, I tell that story all the time and I think, “How awful.” (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Sandra also described how some of the people at the fellowship talked about their past experiences with Faith in Action 101 and also their present experiences with 201.

Tray’s wife was in 201 at the time and I thought it was interesting information but not something I wanted to do, but it just kept coming up every now and then. I was like, “I’m not doing it—I don’t like anything that sounds like therapy mumbo jumbo; healing myself and all of that. I won’t do Faith in Action.” (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Over time, Sandra’s perspective about giving Faith in Action a try changed.

Towards the end of 2011 I started feeling stagnant in my career, stagnant in my life, I felt like all of the studying of the Word and trying to be a faithful Christian just wasn’t enough. I wasn’t getting it anywhere, I wasn’t on a journey with God; I was just going through the motions. I thought, “This Faith in Action stuff doesn’t sound so bad, maybe I’ll just, as a last ditch effort, try that.” (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

So Sandra signed up for 101 in November 2011, and she attended the February 2012 retreat.

Sandra described her 101 experience in the following way:

I just really felt like I was understanding what was being talked about. I understood that this is what life should look like in the Lord. We should be on mission and this is what being on mission looks like, it's not some far-fetched thing where you sell all of your belongings and give up your job to go somewhere far like Mother Teresa. It's a constant living thing, and I got it. I understand that—I understood what was holding me back. It was like, I'm open to this process. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Sandra also described her reaction to the authentic community she experienced in the 101 retreat.

I witnessed this as a participant: They're being very open here, very raw, and very real. I realized that I gravitated towards that authenticity where someone's not trying to hide something or tell you what you should do because you don't have it right and you're not right. They're saying, "I'm not either and here's what my process has been, here's what I've gone through." I realized that's the way to start. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Sandra's personal transformation journey continued after 101.

After that I went to 201. I really, again, threw myself into the process, and then I got an e-mail from one of Scott's mentees. He was like, "Hey, we're looking for more presenters, there's a lot more Faith in Action retreats than there were even a year ago." I said, 'Ok, I'll go ahead and I will study to do it.'" (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Sandra was in the process of completing her Leadership Course homework to become a Faith in Action presenter at the time of her interview. She described the connection between her leadership development and her personal transformation journey.

What I realized is that this is how I keep it alive. Recently I went to a retreat and I was a small group leader instead of a presenter, since I haven't finished my homework—but I realized this is how you keep this going, this transformational process going. So, for me, it's not a matter of just serving, it's a matter of keeping that transformational process alive in my life because it doesn't just end because I'm done with 201. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Sandra reflected on her one-year journey with Faith in Action:

From last February to this February, it's been a year, a lot has changed in my life because of Faith in Action 101, and that's the hope of those seeds being planted in those people who have opened up and now they can't go back. Now they've started, they can't go

back. Once they've started, they don't want to go back to where they had to hide stuff like that. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Sandra also expressed a desire for people to continue their ongoing personal transformation journey.

That's my greatest joy, hoping and seeing, it's the beginning and they'll commit to it [personal transformation] hopefully. Hopefully, if they were brought there, if it's anything like it was for me, they will feel the pressure that God has given them to go in the first place and it's not going to dissipate, so they now can't go back and pretend like it never happened. Hopefully they'll continue with it. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Themes from the Findings

The following themes describe how the study participants and the Faith in Action 101 Notebook described the fostering of personal transformation through the Faith in Action process: (a) Built on Spiritual Formation; (b) Learning Process; and (c) Organic Growth. Figure 1 depicts the themes in a dynamic fashion. The Built on Spiritual Formation theme is displayed with a larger cog because every participant noted that personal transformation is impossible without God.

Theme 1: Built on spiritual formation. Based on the data from participants in this study, *spiritual formation* refers to the lifelong spiritual journey people experience as God forms them into disciples of Jesus Christ. The spiritual journey, according to the Faith in Action study participants, is described in three aspects: the discipleship mental model, the deconstruction of previous mental models, and the role of God's presence.

Henry explained that Faith in Action is a spiritual formation process rooted in the Christian tradition. "This [Faith in Action] is for believers, for Christians. We're very clear that our core values and vision are based in the Bible. Jesus is the example. Jesus is who we want to follow" (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013). Henry continued, "We define

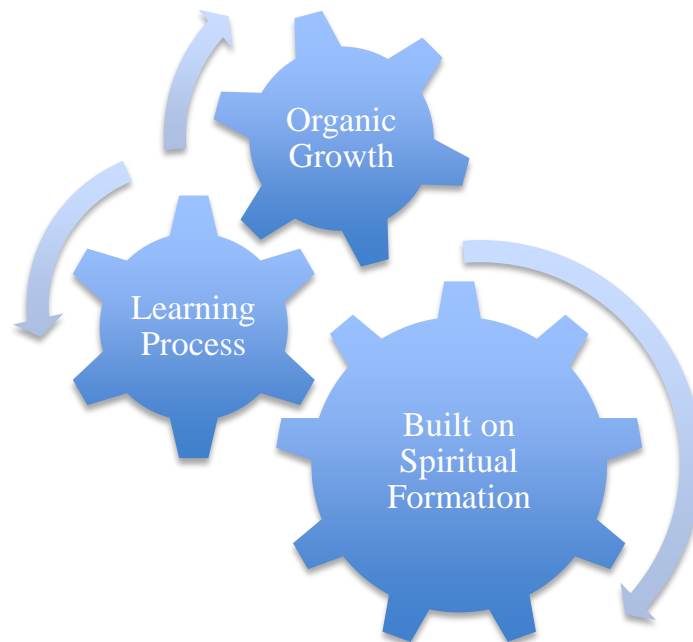


Figure 1. Faith in Action process.

Faith in Action as a spiritual formation process. There are some situations where you [participants] need to have counseling; you need to have extra help—we focus on spiritual formation” (Henry, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Faith in Action utilizes a spiritual formation process that clearly intends to develop a community of transformational leaders who can be used by God as He reverses decades of declining impact of the church (Herrington et al., 2012). More specifically,

Faith in Action is creating a community of disciples of Jesus who are being personally transformed and becoming catalysts mobilizing Christians to become the functioning Body of Christ in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces and third places to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need; to work for the common good; and to restore individuals, social systems, communities and nations to God’s design. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 2)

Faith in Action roots their leadership practices in response to research findings.

Rooted in a long conversation about personal, congregational, and community transformation, and born of clear, undisputed research indicating that the influence of the

Church is diminishing significantly and dramatically across the city and across the United States, Faith in Action focuses on the process of personal transformation that results in and accelerates community transformation. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 2)

Faith in Action measures success by “the existence of functioning Missional Communities that are on mission, embedding and advancing the Kingdom of God in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces and third places” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 2). To frame the personal transformation journey, Faith in Action leaders help participants live into a particular mental model of discipleship (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 2).

Discipleship mental model. Faith in Action’s discipleship mental model is composed of a set of beliefs and assumptions that return to the ancient ways of discipleship in order to empower missional living (Herrington et al., 2012). “This discipleship model represents a way of thinking about discipleship . . . about disciples of Jesus who experience and influence others to experience transformation” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 31). Figure 2 graphically displays the discipleship mental model.

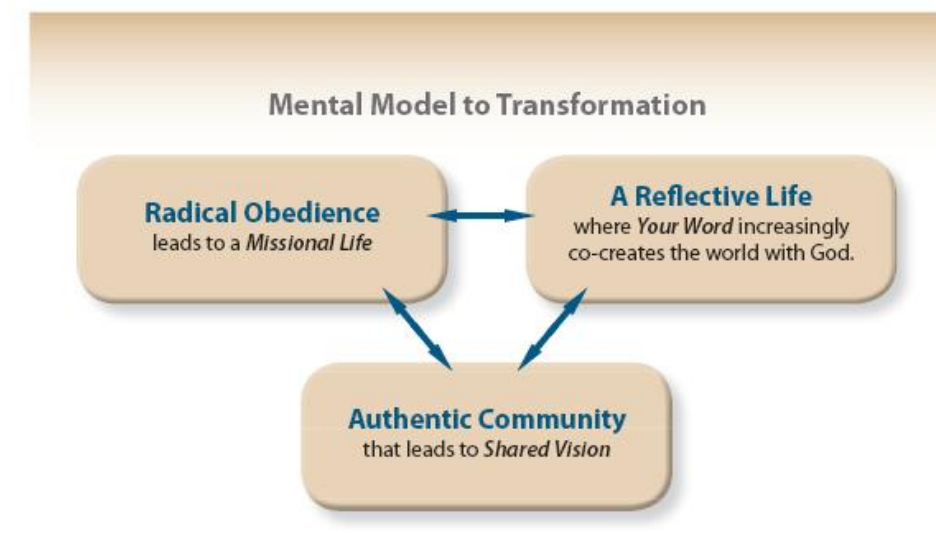


Figure 2. Discipleship mental model. Adapted from *Faith in Action Notebook*, by J. Herrington, S. Capper, and T. Taylor, 2012, Houston, TX: Mission City, p. 31. Copyright 2012 by Jim Herrington, Steve Capper, and Trisha Taylor.

Faith in Action leaders do not believe the program's lifestyle ideas are new, since they are biblical; however, for many people these ways of living are new to their current context (Herrington et al., 2012).

We do believe our ideas reflect the teachings of Jesus and of the broader New Testament. We do believe that if you will embrace these ideas and operationalize them in your own life, over time you will be transformed, and the places you live and work will be transformed into missional outposts where God's Kingdom is being advanced—Matthew 5:14-16; I Peter 2:4-5, 9-12; I John 4:11-12,17. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 25)

Scott explained that much of the discipleship journey for a person and for a community of people involves learning to operate from a new mental model that leads to new ways of thinking, being, and acting (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). In essence, leaders are inviting and guiding Faith in Action participants to exchange their current mental models of what it means to be a Christian for the discipleship model that Faith in Action puts forth, "We are not asking for a different, better version of what already is. We are challenging you [participants of Faith in Action] to exchange your fundamental mental model of what it means to be a follower of Christ" (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 24).

Faith in Action makes reference to the larger conversation that is taking place in the church around the world as it seeks to describe what it means to be a follower of Christ. They also note that the term *Cultural Christian* is used to distinguish those who embrace the outward forms of Christianity without deeply embracing and living out the teachings of Jesus (Herrington et al., 2012). Faith in Action leaders guide Faith in Action participants through "a process that seeks to unlearn Cultural Christianity" (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Faith in Action participants and leaders unlearn and relearn a variety of concepts in their faith journey since challenging assumptions is at the core of personal transformation. John described his journey of unlearning Christianity as a sin-management system,

For me, when I started to get what God was about and what He wanted me to live into—it wasn't just about me being more moral...it changed everything. It changed the way I lived, it changed the way I saw the world, and it changed everything. The idea of all God really cares about is getting people out of hell and getting them into heaven, and once that's happened, it's about having less sin in your life. So, essentially, Christianity is about a sin management system? It's very counterproductive to the Kingdom of God and what I've come to learn is the heart of God and who God really is. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

The discipleship mental model is a pathway to a specific way of thinking, being, and acting. Henry described Faith in Action's discipleship mental model in this manner:

Three big elements make up the mental model of a disciple. A reflective life; this is the authenticity we have with God—our time with God, the fellowship, the intimacy with God. The other one is radical obedience; it's precisely that—radical obedience that leads to a missional life. Then authentic community, authenticity with others—Do you have a community where you are yourself? Where you are seeking a vision where the Lord is bringing purpose for your community. Those are the three big elements. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Tray explained the interrelated connection of the three elements in the discipleship mental model, “The discipleship mental model is comprised of three interactive pieces—when all are simultaneous a person is on the road to personal transformation” (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). The dynamics at play in the discipleship mental model necessitate that a person experiences paradox and tension,

One challenge we face in allowing the Scripture to guide us is that we often take one part of the truth and make it the whole. But reality is filled with paradox and tension. In fact, tension is one of the primary signs of life. When tension is gone, the human body is dead. So we are challenging you [participants] to allow the three components of this [discipleship] model to live in tension in your life. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 34).

Holding tension in all three components of the discipleship mental model leads to a holistic synergy (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 34).

If you make obedience all the truth, you eventually end up making your life about legalism (Matthew 23:23-26; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). If reflection becomes the only truth, you give no time to being on mission (Luke 6:46; Isaiah 29:13). And if community becomes the whole truth, you end up as another self-help group (Matthew 5:46-47). But, if you will let these three live as inseparable parts of a whole—if you will intentionally

embrace the tension they create—you'll find yourself in a place you can't fully get a handle on and control. Then your best option becomes clear—trust God in that tension—the tension of the Refiners Fire—to make you whole. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 34)

Radical obedience is one component of the discipleship mental model. According to Faith in Action leaders, personal transformation requires a person to adopt a posture of radical obedience to the teachings of Jesus. Faith in Action leaders believe that radical obedience will lead to a missional life (Herrington et al., 2012).

One huge component of the truth that Jesus calls us to is this call to obedience. It is clear from Jesus' teachings that He expects us to be obedient. We use the words radical obedience because while most of us tend to pick and choose what teaching or example given by Jesus that we obey, a key to transformation is choosing *yes* to everything Jesus commands even when we don't think we can fulfill that commitment. (Herrington et al., 2012, pp. 31-32)

The Faith in Action journey invites participants to explore facets of habitual disobedience.

Most Christians have some places where they know what Jesus teaches and for a whole variety of reasons, they simply disobey Him. In the Faith in Action journey, you [participants] are being asked to confront that reality head on. You are being asked to begin considering your own places of habitual disobedience and to simply hold those before the Lord. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 8)

Leaders note that participants practice their way into radical obedience, "When we take on radical obedience and get into acting our way into obedience, God reveals to us what we can't yet see" (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 10).

Radical obedience is impossible without a relationship with God,

In John 15:5 Jesus says that we are not able to be obedient unless we abide in Him. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 32)

A variety of perspectives exist regarding what it means to abide in Christ. Faith in Action leaders note that the cultural view of abiding in Christ differs from the biblical image of John 15:5.

In our culture, abiding in Him has usually been taught as something that comes when we have a daily quiet time and regularly attend church services and fellowship groups. But that is not what abiding means. In the context of the vine and branch imagery (John 15:5), when abiding is happening, there is a *continuous* flow of life from the vine to the branch. Abiding is not some compartment of our life assigned to early in the morning and a few worship services each week. Because there is not a clear distinction about what it means to abide, the words, *Reflective Living*, are used in the discipleship mental model. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 32)

Scott explained why leaders chose the term *reflective living* for the discipleship mental model,

I think you have to have a shared set of mental models that has some shared language that's different than the language you currently use. For instance, in Faith in Action, we talk about the reflective life. Always in every retreat someone always, either publicly or privately will say, "So why don't you just say abiding in Christ?" I'll say, "Tell me what you mean when you say abiding in Christ." "I mean my quiet time in the morning, reading the Word, going to church." I say, "That's why we don't say that, it's not what we mean." If we use that language you'd quit listening, you'd say, "Oh yeah, I got that." So, we use a different language so your brain has to engage and say, "What is that? Do I do that?" (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Reflective living is fueled by encounters with God. "Living a life that produces real, authentic encounters with God is what we [Faith in Action leaders] mean by the term, the reflective life" (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 48). The spiritual disciplines offer a framework for reflective living,

We experience the Lord with regularity and in fresh ways when we develop habits that put us in places where we're open and available for God to meet us. These habits are most often referred to simply as the spiritual disciplines. Called disciplines because they require efforts on our part to develop them, they are tools to employ in actively seeking God. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 49)

Faith in Action leaders describe how the spiritual disciplines facilitate reflective living in participants,

The spiritual disciplines of solitude, worship, prayer, fasting, study, confession, giving, and celebration have been the tools down through the ages that were used to assist those seeking to abide in Christ. Their effectiveness comes, in part, because they require the person using them to be intentional about incorporating them in his/her daily schedule and rhythm of life—to slow down, to be thoughtful, to be more reflective in listening for

God. The call to a reflective life is a call to living a life of deep, intimate connection to God assisted by the daily practices of the spiritual disciplines. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 32)

The reflective life is a way of being, not something extra one adds on a list of things to do. Faith in Action leaders describe how the spiritual disciplines should be a way of life, not something to add on a to-do list,

Change makes doing spiritual disciplines an add-on to an already busy life. When we approach it in that manner, we may have seasons of intense connection to Jesus, but over time our busy life beats us down and we grow weary. Transformation makes the spiritual disciplines a way of life that requires the sacrifice of some other things. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 32)

Bob described how some Faith in Action participants initially see the reflective life as something they have to do in order to be a good Christian, as opposed to seeing reflective living as an invitation to a continuous lifestyle of being connected with God,

Part of the work in 201, the personal transformation piece, is the daily workout. So, people get on that and a lot of guilt sets in. A lot of things show up and people get stopped right there. [They think] If I can't do this, I can't do anything else. You have to walk and coach people through—what are these spiritual practices really about for you? It's because maybe they grew up in a church that said if you're going to be a good Christian, you have to do these things. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Reflective living is an attempt to capture a way of living in relationship with Christ that is both dynamic and continuous (Herrington et al., 2012).

Since the reflective life is a lifestyle, Faith in Action leaders model and teach a self-directed approach to the spiritual disciplines. Tray described how leaders encourage Faith in Action participants to experience the spiritual disciplines in a way that is self-directed, as opposed to leader-directed,

And, we are pretty clear about avoiding the role of being too directive, where we give people what we think they ought to be hearing from God. So, we keep pressing people to go back to the engagement of the spiritual disciplines so that they get a sense of God's direction, and none of us is going to hear perfectly. We are going to fail forward, but God

is at work in us, and He's going to get us where He wants us to be. So, we play multiple roles in terms of facilitating others. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Henry also talked about the self-directed approach to the spiritual disciplines,

We let people experience that [spiritual disciplines] without us teaching, "This is the way you should interpret this Scripture, that Scripture.' Some people get a little, 'Why are you not using more Scripture?' We have all of that [Scripture] in the notebook, but we create a space for you to do that. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

John added to this self-directed perspective,

Well, a key component [of personal transformation] is the spiritual disciplines, an important part of the process that we take people to [in 201] is what we call a daily workout. It's where everybody gets to design their implementation of the spiritual disciplines. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Tray described why Faith in Action leaders take a participant-centered approach to spiritual formation,

We really do give a lot of freedom. We think Jesus gave a lot of freedom. Jesus asked, "So, what do you think?" And, some walked away. Jesus was sad when they walked away, and others said, 'You know, I'm not quite sure what He meant by eat my flesh and drink my blood, but we can't really go anyplace else because we've come to believe that He has the words of life"—Even when we don't understand the words of life that you are giving us. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Bob described a challenge some Faith in Action participants experience in this participant-centered model. Some participants want leaders to tell them the right answer instead of allowing for a personal exploration. He explained, "Also, there's a 'right way' to see scripture. You have to have a 'right approach' to Scripture. I think a lot of the theological training with the church can be a roadblock for personal transformation" (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013).

The reflective life is not meant to lead to isolation (Herrington et al., 2012). "The Scripture holds up a deep expectation that followers of Christ are not only intimately connected to Him, they are also intimately connected to each other (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35;

Romans 12:3-16; I Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:1-6)” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 33).

Followers of Christ are connected to each other through authentic community.

The final piece of the discipleship mental model is *authentic community*. Faith in Action leaders believe that authentic community has been lost in our culture (Herrington et al., 2012).

In our culture, “church” has increasingly become a few hours of life each week where we are mostly spectators watching others do some things and where there is no clearly defined understanding of what it means to be a disciple (Isaiah 29:13, 58:1-6, Ezekiel 33:30-32). (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 33)

Faith in Action leaders note the difference between people meeting together regularly in authentic ways as opposed to people seeing each other for a few hours once a week,

It’s not accidental that in the early church, following Jesus’ lead, His disciples met together daily (Acts 2:42-47). In our current church culture we can be good church members and live compartmentalized and hidden double lives. But transformation to missional living requires a level of transparency and intimacy that is seldom present in the church today. (Herrington et al., 2012, pp. 33-34)

Scott explained how one pastor called church “a lesson in impression management” (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Faith in Action leaders describe the process of image management in this way.

We don’t see who a person really is when they come to church. We see their act...and they usually see ours. We send our representative who puts on our very best (even though not our real) face to meet them, talk to them, and invite them to keep attending (John 3:19-20). (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 33)

Impression management can impede transparency. Faith in Action leaders note how transparency and authenticity are crucial components of the transformation journey,

Until relationships can become transparent and authentic, transformation is not possible. It is in vulnerable transparency that our habitual disobedience comes to light (John 3:21; I John 1:5-7). Until that happens—until we can get real and transparent with God and others—we rob ourselves of prayer support, the wisdom of a multitude of counselors, and the genuine accountability that is required for transformation to occur (James 5:13-16). (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 33)

The Faith in Action 101 retreat is “built around a belief that transformation occurs as we are authentic both with God *and* with a small community of individuals. Transformation is sustained, in part, as people grow in their ability to be real with God and with their community” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 62). Tammy described the importance of transparency as participants and leaders grow in authenticity. “I think that level of safety where transparency is rewarded leads to an openness to the idea that they [participants] don’t need more information, they need to give God access to deeper parts of their lives” (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Authentic community is a part of the discipleship mental model, and leaders also described authenticity as a core value of the Faith in Action community. John explained,

One of our core values is authenticity, it’s being able to tell the truth and be transparent about what’s going on in your life. As you participate in our community, it doesn’t matter where you are or what you’re doing. If you’re at a coaches training or you’re on a call, you’re always challenged and asked to talk about what’s going on, what you’re learning, and what’s happening in your life. As people talk about what they’re learning and what they’re experiencing, you see it in their stories. You hear it from people sharing what’s going on, how God’s showing up, what they’re learning, and what’s different. Everyone is challenged to do that every time you’re together. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Scott also described authenticity as a core value for leaders of Faith in Action, “So, when they’re leading, however they’re leading, they’re leading authentically. They really are embracing this and they also really aren’t masters of this yet, so that is all in the space of what they present, when they’re presenting” (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013). Henry described the presence of leader authenticity in the following manner:

You experience it [authenticity] in 101 especially, and also in 201 and 301. “Here I am, showing up to tell you: This is who I am, this is what I learned, and this is how this is showing up in my life.” It [leadership] has to be authentic. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Authentic community is part of the discipleship mental model. It is a core value of the Faith in Action community, and leaders also seek to foster authentic community environments for Faith in Action participants. Tammy described the authentic environment that leaders seek to foster for participants in the 101 retreat.

I think an absolutely essential component is that at some point during the retreat people start to feel safe; they start to feel as if authenticity will not be punished, including authenticity with God. They're really encouraged to bring everything that they are to the Lord and they have some kind of sense that's going to be safe, that it's going to be ok. I think that usually shifts for a lot of people sometime in the afternoon of the first day. For many of them, it's a really a unique experience. It's amazing to me, as someone who has been deep in my faith my entire life, how many Christians truly have never had an experience where they've been invited to be that honest with God and with other people. Thankfully, I've been mostly in an environment where that's encouraged; many of our participants have never been in a place where that's the climate, to be authentic with God and with each other. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Scott also talked about the need for an authentic environment,

I think authenticity, creating a context where people can say, "I think that's bull shit" or they can say, "I don't even know if I believe in God anymore." Whatever it is they need to say and they can say it in a context where nobody freaks out and says, "Oh my God! Something is wrong with you!" In the Faith in Action community, we really, more than anybody that I know, more than any experience I've ever had, we create about the safest environment on the planet. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Tray also described the need for a safe environment in order to foster personal transformation. "We think crucial elements include the ability to engage in conversation with people in an environment that is safe for disclosure, and safe from somebody having all the answers and trying to fix you" (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). He continued,

Somehow creating a safe environment where people are free to be honest about where they fall short of their own standards, their own beliefs, their own hopes, and places where they have been wounded. Without a safe environment where you know you are among fellow wounded folks, it [healthy self-disclosure] doesn't take place. If you create an environment where most of the people are together, then folks are going to hide. So you need a tipping point where you've got enough fellow stragglers that feel like you can

take some risks, both disclosing what you know about yourself and considering things that you don't know about yourself. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Sandra explained the importance of leaders focusing on participants in the authentic community environment, “You’re meant to encourage them [participants] and help them to feel comfortable by being authentic. It’s not about you, it’s about these people who are participating in this” (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013). Bob talked about the role leaders play in facilitating creative tension with participants in the authentic community environment,

Facilitation has to be a safe place for people to grow at their pace and to grow as they are willing because again, I believe it [desire for personal transformation] is internally motivated—so everybody is going to be in a different place. So, the skill of knowing that “this person” is way up here and “this person” is way back here is important. Knowing how to put just enough tension on “this person” that they grow and enough tension on “that person” that they grow. One of the key principles for us is actually a learning discipline of leadership and it's the discipline of creative tension—and we talk about it a lot. We believe it is a key component for personal transformation. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Leaders described the importance of a non-condemning, authentic community environment. Sandra explained,

Don’t make people feel judged, don’t make people feel like they have to perform. It’s [the environment] a safe place for you to get this, you’re all very intelligent people, so just understand what we’re saying, if you don’t understand, ask. Feel free to talk about this, grow in this, and sort of marinate in this. Don’t feel like it’s a test, it’s a pressure, because that’s how life seems a lot, if you don’t get it you’re going to fail. So, that whole experience in 101 has sort of been cultivated to be a safe space to hear these things, try them on, and just experience. Do you agree or do you not agree? Try not to come from a place or perspective of judgment, just hear it and take it in. How does this impact you? (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

She continued to describe the non-condemning environment in this way.

Giving people the opportunity to not feel like they’re being judged against others, they’re free to just be here, listen to this, and see what they’re getting from it. Then, let’s discuss it—it’s not a matter of, “This is what you should get.” It’s “What are you getting?” (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Henry also talked about the non-condemning environment,

A non-condemning place is a place where you can be you—there is nothing bad with who you are, there is no condemnation. We [leaders] have to really create that, I have to really work through it. Just like any other person, I have my preferences. This is an experience that has to start with me. I have to be ok with who you [participants] are and trust that the Lord knows you. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Bob explained that authentic community is necessary for personal transformation. He used the metaphor of a dependent baby to describe the connection between an individual and authentic community,

I think it's dependency. In deep transformation, you're kind of like a baby in this space—you're really dependent on other people around you to walk. You can't do this alone anymore. It's like the 12-step process to quit drinking, smoking, or doing drugs. You can't do that alone. I think deep transformation happens when you recognize that you can't—you clarify, "I cannot do this alone." You have to keep putting it [my growth areas] in front of people, keep putting into this space. It's going to be so hard. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

The desired outcome of the Faith in Action journey is daily integration of the discipleship mental model (Herrington et al., 2012). Henry described how unlearning and relearning a particular mental model involves a long and painful process. "To change any mental model is a long process, and there are a lot of barriers. You [leaders] have to really be patient, loving, and have integrity and perseverance over whatever you are doing" (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013).

The Faith in Action 101 Notebook also elaborates on the process of exchanging one mental model for another.

We will say it again. In order to engage the journey of transformation, your life will have to be re-ordered (Luke 14:25-33). Transformation requires a series of choices. It doesn't come because of new information or insight alone. This challenge to sacrifice may stir up in you the realization that you don't want to be transformed. We pray you hear this as a gentle, non-judgmental reminder both to consider the benefits and to count the cost. (Herrington et al., 2012, pp. 32-33)

The process of deconstruction is necessary for daily integration of the discipleship mental model.

Deconstruction. Based on the data from participants, *deconstruction* refers to the process of cognitive and psychological unlearning and reordering that people experience as they seek to live into Faith in Action’s discipleship mental model. The deconstruction process, according to the Faith in Action study participants, is described in six aspects. Figure 3 graphically presents the six aspects: deconstructing the false self, deconstructing Western culture, deconstructing image management, deconstructing individual morality, deconstructing intellectual processes, and deconstructing compartmentalization.

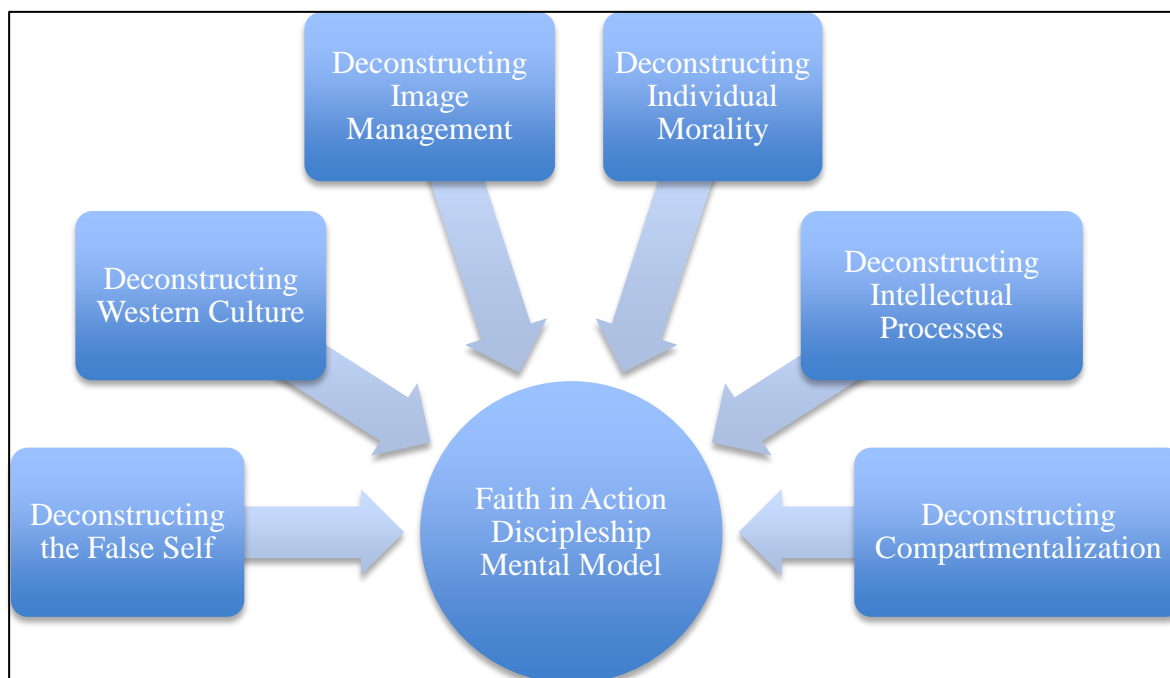


Figure 3. The deconstruction process.

Bob explained how the deconstruction process begins,

I think it [deconstruction] starts with a recognition that something needs to be different for me. This isn’t working like I thought it would work—sometimes you need help with that, sometimes you don’t. Either you just know, but you don’t know what to do. Or, “You don’t know what you don’t know.” Or, you know something is up, but you don’t know how to attack that, or address that. So, I think that’s first, recognizing that there’s a shift you need to make or something needs to change in your life. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Kyle explained the role leaders play in guiding participants through the deconstruction process,

We believe it [the discipline of creative tension] is a key component for personal transformation. There is a current reality in my life, and there is a vision for where I want to go. And maintaining enough tension so that I move from where I am, closer to the vision without breaking me or me just saying, “It's too

overwhelming, and I have to quit.” Really, that's more art than skill, but the person has got to be able to do that to be a good facilitator. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013).

Tammy described a scenario where Faith in Action participants deliberated about how much to engage the deconstruction process:

We just did a Faith in Action retreat for a group of about 50 pastors. I'd say 47% of them ended that retreat incredibly excited about what God had done and at the same time, really ambivalent about needing to stay connected with that in the midst of their busy schedules when they got home. It was just amazing to watch, on the one hand, they really believed God was doing something amazing and they were so jazzed about it. They were really anxious about how do I fit this into my life when I get home? It was very hard for them to think in terms of, “Do I really want this enough to change the life I have at home as opposed to just trying to fit this in?” That's my struggle, that's their struggle—I think that's such a big struggle. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

The deconstruction process necessitates that participants create space to focus on the hard work of unlearning current mental models that impede discipleship. Tammy explained that busyness is the enemy of the transformation process,

Busyness is the enemy of transformation—it absolutely stands in the way, it's an obstacle. I'm insanely busy and other people are insanely busy. All of us are more attached to our schedules than we are thirsty for change. That collision between my busy life as it currently is and then creating the space for God to do something different in me— which He is unlikely to do while I'm on the run, at a frantic pace. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Tray explained that challenging assumptions is a key facet of deconstruction (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). He spoke about the importance of living an examined life as a way to challenge assumptions,

That was Jesus' last instruction—Matthew 28 captures it—'Go and make disciples.' We think he indicated the methodology when He said, 'Teaching them to observe all that I have taught you.' In other words, lead with your life. So, the primary way is to live an examined life, as opposed to an unexamined life, is not worth living. An examined life asks questions regularly. "What I have I experienced? What have I learned? What don't I understand?" And, I need to go find somebody else who might help me understand what I don't understand. I experienced it, but I don't understand it. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

The Faith in Action 101 Notebook provides a series of questions to guide participants toward living an examined life.

So what prevents you from hearing the call to a missional life as a call – as a command – to be salt and light in places where injustice exists and where poverty rules? What prevents you from hearing that call as a call to mobilize the Body of Christ in any place where believers are physically present in some systemic way (Matthew 18:19-20; John 13:34-35; Isaiah 58:5-7)? What filters prevent you from hearing the call to a missional life as a call to mobilize the Body of Christ in the place where you spend most of your day bringing to bear all the available resources to reach out to the widow, the orphan, the alien in our land? What filter stands in the way of you hearing the call to a missional life as a call to use the resources that God has put at your disposal, both personally and professionally, both individually and corporately, to advance His Kingdom (Luke 19:12-13)? (Herrington et al., 2012, pp. 28-29)

Tray explained that the healing of emotional wounding needs attention before a person can truly live into the discipleship mental model,

The biggest obstacle to individuals being sustained long enough to bear fruit is us. It's not any challenges around us, it's not any resistance from our communities, and not even the resistance in the church. We're the biggest obstacle to God accomplishing what He wants to accomplish. Until we get healed we will not be able to live into our design. Most of us won't chose the path of healing until we agree that that design is what He made me for and that's what I want. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

It is for these reasons that Faith in Action has created a process to help individuals choose the path of healing and to also deconstruct mental models that impede discipleship. Deconstructing the false self is one element of the deconstruction process.

Deconstructing the false self. Based on data from the participants in this study, deconstructing the false self refers to the process of unlearning and reordering perspectives about past wounding, vows made at the time the wounding occurred, and current behaviors that result from those vows.

The impact of wounding is explored through the Faith in Action process,

Wounding often comes when authority is misused. The wounding can also occur from simply living in a fallen world where interactions with other human beings hurt us. A young girl raises her hand in school to answer a question. She gives the wrong answer and her classmates laugh. A teenage boy asks a girl out for a date and she says no. Life has a series of experiences where we get hurt. Whether the hurt is from the normal impact of interacting in a fallen world or from the inappropriate use of authority in our life, the wounding results in what the Faith in Action community refers to as a *vow*. A vow is a decision that we make, usually as children, about how we have to be in the world in order to be safe. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 9)

Faith in Action leaders believe that all people are wounded to some degree (Herrington et al., 2012, 2012). The Faith in Action 101 Notebook describes how past wounds lead to the development of a false self,

When our needs go unmet, we feel hurt or unloved or unprotected... We get taught pretty early on to quickly put back on the mask that says to everyone around, "I am alright. It's okay." Instead of giving spiritual "medical attention" to the wound, we are taught to act like the wounds no longer exist. Over time this results in you not being *you*. It results in the development of what some theologians have long called a *false self*. The false self is the one that got created from the lies you believed about yourself in your wounding and the meaning you made of those experiences. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 71)

Faith in Action leaders then describe how wounds lead to the making of vows,

When our needs are not met and our wounds are not healed, we make vows—promises about the future—that obstruct our transformation. These vows are made by the "false self" and also help to further reinforce that false self. By making vows, we seek to get our

needs met in the future or protect ourselves from future hurt. We put the past into the future. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 73)

Figure 4 depicts how the false self emerges.

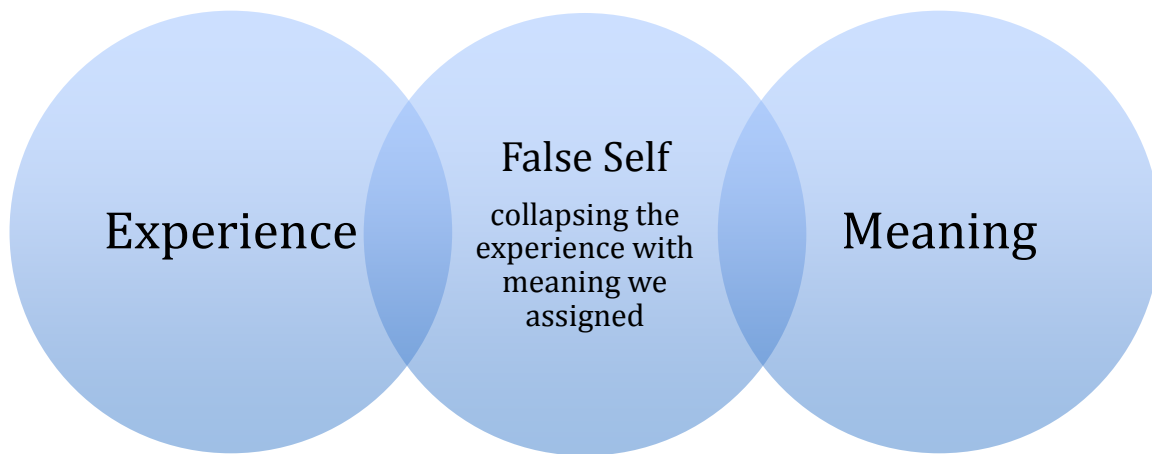


Figure 4. Collapsing the experience with the meaning we assigned. Adapted from *Faith in Action Notebook*, by J. Herrington, S. Capper, and T. Taylor, 2012, Houston, TX: Mission City, p. 31. Copyright 2012 by Jim Herrington, Steve Capper, and Trisha Taylor.

The Faith in Action 101 notebook explains that realizing that vows exist is the starting point for the deconstruction of the false self.

The beginning place is to recognize that the vows are there and to become aware of how they impact our daily interactions and decision making in our home, our neighborhood and our workplace. Making a commitment to radical obedience is the beginning of that journey. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 9)

Kyle described the process of deconstructing the false self in this way.

We have buttons, vows, and lies. So, hot buttons that get pushed . . . those go back to our families of origin. The vows we made, of course go back to our families of origin. And, the lies that we believe about ourselves go back to our family of origin. So all of that [deconstruction of the false self] is spending time in contemplation, asking God's Spirit to illumine and enlighten us. To identify these places deep within us that we don't even

know are there, that are driving our behavior and our life. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Kyle continued with a description of how vows can show up in everyday life,

We [Faith in Action leaders] came to the place to realize that a lot of our emotional maturity is determined from our families of origin, and from issues that occurred in our families of origin that keep showing up in the present. And, if we can somehow find a way to bring those out of our subconscious and into our awareness, and bring them just into the light, that we could get healing. And, we could move past some of those things. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Sandra described the resistance that some participants experience during the presentation, reflection, and discussion on vows in the 101 retreat.

On the first day [of 101] you'll inevitably get a few people who are like, "I don't have any of this [vows]; all of this that's been talked about is not relevant to me. I have a great family; I don't have any wounds. I don't know what they're talking about—everything was great." They resent being pushed into a hole of 'everybody has something.' (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Sandra then explained the role of a leader in helping participants explore the deconstruction of the false self.

There are things that might be positive or they might be negative that happened—they might be big; they might be objectively small. Little incidents that could have impacted you and made you think, "This is going to be the way I look at myself and the way I look at other people. This is how I'm going to present myself to the world." Giving them that insight and seeing them say, "Oh, that's the way I can look at it; ok." And then seeing them come back with, "One of the things I realize is. . . ." (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Faith in Action leaders believe that participants often do not realize that the decisions that they made in their vows as children have a correlation with their behavior in their adult years.

The challenge for followers of Jesus is that some of the decisions we made [in our vows] are in direct violation of the teachings of Jesus. As children, we weren't being rebellious. We were simply trying to protect ourselves. As an adult, the habits we developed as a child stand in the way of full obedience to the teachings of Jesus. It would be nice if intellectual awareness of this conflict would resolve the conflict. However, it doesn't work that way. Habits that have been practiced over a lifetime don't go away with awareness. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 9)

Tammy described how the false self often gets in the way of the transformation process.

Honestly, we don't really "want" transformation. We have a natural resistance, the false self, or the sin nature, or whatever language you want to use to describe that part of us. It really does not want God to get that close, that far in—we don't really "want" to change. That's a pretty big obstacle too. What we try to do in Faith in Action, is try to tell the truth about that; there's always a part of us that doesn't want to change no matter how much we can see that we want and need change. There's a little part of us that will resist it. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Each participant in this study noted that the deconstruction of the false self is necessary in order to live into the discipleship mental model. As individuals grow in emotional maturity through this deconstruction of the false self, they are better able to serve as catalysts in their communities for the greater good (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013). Another element of the deconstruction process involves deconstructing Western culture.

Deconstructing Western culture. Based on data from participants in this study, the deconstruction of Western culture refers to the process of unlearning and reordering perspectives about money, success, consumerism, and comfort. Faith in Action leaders believe that there are two competing views of what it means to be *fully human*. Understanding and exploring the two views of what it means to be fully human is integral to personal transformation.

We live in a day where there are two views of what it means to be fully human, fully alive. These two views have become blurred to the point that they are virtually collapsed into one in the Church in our culture. In fact, they are so collapsed into one that nothing short of personal transformation will be able to get them distinguished. It is our belief that getting these two views clearly distinguished is the first step into the journey of personal transformation. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 5)

Western thinking puts forth a set of precepts about being fully human that does not necessarily align with the Bible's view of what it means to be fully human.

In the Western culture view, being fully human is about being good, obeying the laws, and as a consumer, pursuing the American Dream. In this view a growing life of ease and convenience is the goal; suffering and sacrifice are to be avoided when possible. It's a self-centered life where I take care of me and mine but ignore the poor, the marginalized,

and the oppressed. Somebody ought to take care of them, but that's not my job. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 6)

Faith in Action leaders assert that in many cases the church has enabled Western culture's view of what it means to be fully human.

In Western culture, being a member of a church has simply become another component of our life that helps us get the American dream. It's a place to solve family life problems, many of which occur because we are living lives caught in the vortex of consumerism. Rather than being a place that calls and equips us to live counter-culturally in the midst of a society of consumers, many congregations are places that foster networking for social and business contacts or they are places that superficially address the loneliness that a life of consumerism brings. (Ezekiel 33:30-32) (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 28).

Faith in Action leaders believe that Western consumer culture and church culture often mirror each other.

The consumer view has bled over into the church. Local congregations have increasingly become purveyors of religious goods and services. We have language that reflects this consumer view. We frequently talk about "church shopping." How often have you heard someone say, "We are shopping for another church. The one we currently are attending isn't meeting our needs. The pastor's sermons aren't adequately feeding us. The youth ministry isn't engaging my children." More and more, the call to sacrificial service, denying oneself, and taking up the cross daily are absent from our conversations. So, this consumer view declares that you get the abundant life—the eternal kind of life that Jesus promises—by pursuing a life of growing ease and convenience—defining oneself by what is possessed and consumed. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 6).

John also described how Western culture has infiltrated churches. "The whole Western culture view of money and success. Success is money. The more you make, the more valuable you are—and that has bled into the church a lot" (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013).

Participants in this study explained that deconstructing Western culture is a challenging process for many Faith in Action participants. Bob described his personal journey with deconstructing Western culture in this way.

In America we've got this capitalist, self-centered, individualistic mentality that says, "Do whatever you can to be successful, to look good, and to be right." You know? It's hard to break that; it's been hard for me. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

John elaborated on the sacrifice needed to deconstruct Western culture,

To be transformed, that [deconstruction process] has got to be a high priority, so you can't give a couple of hours a week to transformation and then be everything God wants you to be. Getting to the place where you stop living into the cultural values and live in the Kingdom of God. . . . That may mean I have to give up some stuff—some of my golf on the weekends, or some of my football watching, whatever it is. Really [giving up] living a consumerist lifestyle that it's about me, and my happiness. You hear from people, "I don't have time for this." Really? You don't have time to be transformed and be all that God wants you to be? So, consumerism and self-centeredness, it's about me, my convenience, and ease of life—all of those are in the space that make it very hard for transformation to take place. (John, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Larry also described the sacrificial elements of deconstructing Western culture,

I think we've got selfish issues. In Matthew 16 [Jesus says], "If you're going to follow me, you've got to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. You have to lay down your life for my sake." You have two totally different lifestyles there: self-centeredness versus self-surrender. An obstacle is that self-satisfaction, self-centeredness are the grids that we hear everything through. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Tray described how some Faith in Action participants experience tension with church life as they begin to deconstruct Western culture.

So, for people who are members of the church, membership in the church is a huge challenge. And, by that I mean, so they go away, they have a weekend, and have the freedom to consider assumptions—challenges to their assumptions. Have the freedom to consider that God has a design, but for many people, their local congregation is a place of great delight, and it has fed this kind of consumer mentality. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Tray continued to explain the dilemma in this way.

The local congregation that a person has been deeply involved in and has a pattern of regularly saying yes to requests for volunteers—that crowds out the time to live missionally in a specific location and among a specific people group with others in the Body of Christ who may or may not be part of that congregation. And, we just face that. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Faith in Action leaders are not anti-church; they are students of systems thinking. Tray explained that there are competing worldviews among the various systems that a Faith in Action participant engages.

Church is a place that asks for demands of most of its committed. While we really do believe there can be missional communities whose identity is primarily in a local congregation. . . . A lot of the work of the local congregation instead of equipping the Saints for the works of service, really asks them just to take a slot on an organizational chart, which doesn't call forth missional living. So, one of the biggest challenges is not throwing total cold water and being judgmental to the local church but recognizing the system's challenges to a person's life that a local congregation can play. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Larry, a Faith in Action leader who is also a church pastor, described how his church maintains a missional culture.

We were advantaged in that the Lord really broke off of us that the church does not exist only to do programs and to do things and to get God to come and bless us. We are not perfect at it, but we ask, "Lord what are you doing, and how can we cooperate with you since you are head of the church?" (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

It is evident that some Christian churches have leadership, systems, and structures that disenable a missional church culture, while other churches are missional in nature. Missional living is the end goal for Faith in Action. Forming Christians who are mobilized to be the functioning Body of Christ in every sphere of influence is the primary goal of Faith in Action (Herrington et al., 2012). Faith in Action's second view of what it means to be fully human and fully alive reflects this.

The second view is Jesus' view of being fully human and fully alive. Jesus stands in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets who assert that we are designed to have stewardship over the earth. Ours is a call to a life of service on behalf of the common good. It is a life where I am responsible for myself and for my family. I am also responsible for loving my neighbor—for being my "Brother's Keeper." We often say that in contemporary society one clear way to say this is that Jesus calls us to live a life where we take responsibility for the systems and structures of the community we live in. The common good is our assignment, and it is when we take on that assignment that we experience the fully human, fully alive reality that Jesus says is possible. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 6)

Leaders assert that participants of Faith in Action will engage in an ongoing deconstruction of Western culture modeled upon Jesus' view of being fully human, fully alive.

In order for the Body of Christ in the neighborhood or workplace not to just become another tool for addressing the systemic loneliness that religious consumers experience on a daily basis, you [participants] will have to do battle with your own consumer lifestyle (James 4:7). We mobilize the Body in order for the Body to be salt and light. We don't mobilize it to serve ourselves (Galatians 5:13). (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 29)

Bob described his ongoing experience of deconstructing Western culture with the goal of living into Jesus' design of what it means to be fully human, fully alive.

It's a constant, constant, constant process. The detail thing for me was getting into relationship with others, walking with people, and really taking on that kind of mindset/mental model of living in a community, being authentic, and being on mission with others. That was really powerful stuff; it's stuff that Jesus calls us to do, but it's stuff you have to pursue. You can't just sit around and say, "I want to be transformed." You have to pursue it; you have to be open to it. (Bob, personal communication, March 18 2013)

Deconstructing Western culture is an ongoing process for every person who seeks to live a missional lifestyle. Deconstructing image management is another element of the deconstruction process.

Deconstructing image management. Based on the data from the participants in this study, deconstructing image management refers to the process of growing in integrity and transparency. John summarized the image management perspective well.

This isn't just church culture, it's culture—the whole "looking good and not looking bad." It's the way a lot of this is in Western culture—you don't tell the truth, you're not authentic, you try to look the best you possibly can at any cost, and you'll go into deep debt to look like you're financially successful because all that really matters is how people see you. That's not just the church world, that's really Western culture. (John, personal communication, March 16 2013)

Scott also described how image management occurs in church culture.

My experience with local congregations is we put on a face, we pretend to be something we're not. Faith in Action has exactly the opposite experience. I think it was John [participant in this study] who said, "You have to look bad in order to look good [in Faith in Action]." That's the kind of different way of being. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

John described the journey participants experience when deconstructing image management.

You [leaders] work with people on being authentic, telling the truth, and being transparent—they [participants] really see how countercultural that is. That's not counter cultural to the church, that's counter to Western culture. How people show up in life in hiding, the inability to tell the truth, and the inability to talk about their brokenness are all gigantic obstacles. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Sandra described her perspective as a leader who co-journeys with participants as they deconstruct image management.

That's the great joy to me, to see someone open up—I see how we hide things, I see it in other people too. Again, I'm not in their [participants'] heads, so I don't know specifically why or what, but we hide things just to present ourselves in the best light to the world. You can go through Faith in Action 101, and you're still going to go to somewhere new and put on a mask. You're not going to say, "This is exactly how I am." You want to get the lay of the land first; it's a natural reaction to things. Maybe you won't hide things as deeply as you did before in being inauthentic, but you still want to get the lay of the land and be cautious. Just to see people strip themselves in that way and be vulnerable before others is a joyous thing to me and I feel humbled and blessed by that experience. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Part of image management includes telling the truth. Integrity helps people tell the truth.

Faith in Action leaders believe that having integrity is necessary for the transformation journey.

People frequently do not do what they say they will do, which leads us to believe that people don't mean what they say. Not doing what we say we will do dishonors our word and creates a lack of integrity. To engage the journey of transformation, you must get very present to this idea of honoring your word. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 15)

Faith in Action leaders assert that a lack of integrity hurts the Christian witness.

We [Christians] are experiencing the consequences of being viewed as people whose behaviors are inconsistent with our beliefs, as those who lack the capacity to keep our word. Documented in multiple research findings, the un-churched world looks at us and says "they're just like us—just as likely to cheat on income taxes, just as likely to live lives of greed and lust, just as likely to live lives that are dominated by fear, just as likely to lie to advance our careers, etc. There is apparently no truth to their message that they believe their God has directions for living a deeply satisfying and significant life." As a result, the un-churched world sees the gap between our verbal allegiance to the teaching of the Lord in Scripture and our actual behavior—and they are staying away in droves! (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 21)

Integrity is about purpose, not morality. “Integrity is about function, living into our design, not morality. And, integrity is about growing and learning from failures to keep our word, not condemnation and guilt for not having done so” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 19). Faith in Action leaders believe that identity and integrity are deeply connected.

The context for our understanding of *integrity* is that of someone designed by God to join Him “on mission” in re-presenting Christ and His Kingdom. The promises we are to make and then do what we’ve promised are those whose fulfillment would fill up our relationships and circumstances with the love and presence of God. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 17)

Jennifer described the importance of integrity in the following way: “[Through] being in integrity; you [leaders] can’t be teaching a lesson on radical obedience if you’re not seeking to be radically obedient in your life. You have to really ‘be in’ integrity” (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013). Jennifer continued by explaining how Faith in Action leaders hold each other accountable to live in integrity.

Whoever is leading the 101 retreat will ask us [all leaders] before the weekend—he would say, “I’ll encourage you over the next couple of days to ask the Lord if there are any areas where you’re not in integrity with the content you will be teaching and try to get into integrity,” (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Jennifer continued by sharing a story about a time when she filled in an integrity gap as a leader.

I remember before one retreat there was something that came to mind and I said, “I really need to have this conversation with someone to confront the thing that has built something in my heart against that person.” So, I scheduled the appointment for the next week, I think accountability helps to keep us in integrity. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Bob also described the importance of leading from a posture of integrity.

Living in integrity with others and being really clear about that—when I’m out of integrity or not. So, telling the truth, which is that whole “secret self-becoming your private self” and your “private self-becoming your public self.” Bringing everything into the light. Constantly having that process of living in integrity and honoring your word. Whatever you committed to, honor it; come back and “clean up messes” if you’ve been out of integrity. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Faith in Action leaders note that living in integrity is not easy. “Getting to the place where you are your word in every area of your life won’t happen without struggle—at times intense struggle” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 17).

Deconstructing individual morality is another element of the deconstruction process.

Deconstructing individual morality. Based on data from the participants in this study, deconstructing individual morality refers to the process of unlearning an individualistic, moralistic perspective of faith. Faith in Action leaders assert that Faith in Action participants initially hear Jesus’ teachings through the filter of individual morality.

We hear Jesus’ teachings through the filter of individual morality. As we’ve already stated, in many circles the call to follow Christ has been reduced to a call to be a moral person who lives his/her faith life disconnected from and unaccountable to others in the body of Christ who are around us each day. We hear the gospel as a call to personal salvation only. We live in a culture that worships individualism and in some ways that has crept into the Church, even though both the Old and New Testament give clear witness to the deep interdependence that is in the design of the creation. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 27)

John shared his experience with deconstructing individual morality in his own life.

One of the biggest mental model shifts for me in Faith in Action was understanding that most of my Christian life was spent thinking that being a Christian was about being more moral, following the rules better, or living a cleaner life. I know what that produced in me. I know what it produced in all of the people around me. I’ve moved from that to a Kingdom perspective. Jesus talked regularly about the Kingdom of God at hand. What is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is not just getting to heaven; the Kingdom of God is establishing God’s Kingdom here on earth, healing all of the broken systems in our world. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Having a Kingdom perspective necessitates a communal approach to faith, as opposed to an individualistic approach. Bob described the Kingdom communal approach in this way.

Then, being on mission with others, really living the life that Jesus has called us to. So in that process, I think there’s this personal transformation journey. And, also this journey that continues as you take those personal transformation tools into your community of people and take that [mission] on together. We weren’t meant to be alone. I think it looks like that. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Faith in Action leaders guide participants through a process of deconstructing individual morality so that they can become catalysts for mission.

In Faith in Action it is our deep conviction that for the destructive trends [of ineffective Christian influence] of the past 50 years to be reversed, it is not primarily personal faith and evangelistic witnessing that is missing. What is missing is the living and unified *Church* that needs to be re-activated in the home, the neighborhood, the workplace, and the 3rd place. And for that to happen, we must learn to serve as catalysts who connect and mobilize other followers of Jesus in all the places where we do our life (Matthew 18:19-20). (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 24)

Faith in Action leaders continue by explaining how believers can be mobilized to be the functioning Body of Christ.

The end game is a small group of people who are authentically and intimately connected to one another and to God as they seek to embed and advance the Kingdom of God in a specifically identified target (home, neighborhood, workplace, 3rd place). (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 27)

Individual morality needs to be deconstructed in order for people to emerge as catalysts for their respective spheres of influence. Deconstructing intellectual processes is another element of the deconstruction process.

Deconstructing intellectual processes. Based on data from participants in this study, deconstructing intellectual processes refers to the process of unlearning and reordering perspectives about the roles of information and experience in spiritual formation.

Faith in Action leaders assert that information about God does not transform—experience with God transforms.

Abiding in Christ doesn't occur through increasing in knowledge about God. Abiding in Christ does not result from reading the Bible and memorizing its content. Abiding in Christ doesn't happen by mastering the "church speak" so that we can appear mature and like we belong with the rest of those who speak the heavenly lingo. All of these things depend on getting more information. But information about God does not transform (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). What transforms is experience with God. And God stands ready to help us move into realms of honesty with ourselves and with Him that usher us into such experiences. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 53)

Larry described his perspectives about information and experience in the transformation process in the following manner.

I think that in this culture we have an understanding of transformation that is information-based—it is not life-based. So, if I have outlined the New Testament, if I have taken notes on a sermon, then I’m changed. What we tell our people around here [in my church] is you can read all of the books on marriage you want to read, you can study about marriage all you want to, but until you’re married, you don’t know the half of it until you’ve experienced it. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Jesus modeled an experience-based transformative journey. Faith in Action leaders explain,

Jesus was the master disciple maker. He made disciples not by teaching formal classes or writing a book but by living with those he was discipling. It was as much an informal process as it was a formal one. What it meant to be His disciple was as much caught from being with Him in action and in relationships as it was taught by Him. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 33)

John described how growing in *wonderment* is also a component of deconstructing intellectual processes.

In our culture, you’re supposed to “know everything.” A whole lot of it is the modernity conversation—we’re raised that there is a right and wrong in everything. You better be right, you better know everything. So living in the world that invokes such a wonder . . . I don’t know anything and nobody else does either. I’m going to quit going around acting like I have all of the answers, or that I know anything. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

He continued by explaining how information and the need to be right can impede transformation.

You’ll experience very limited transformation if you think you know everything or if you think it’s even possible to know everything. Living in a sense of wonder and seeing God that way. Being in community, learning in wonderment and not right and wrong—those are very fundamental and important (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013).

Deconstructing compartmentalization is another element of the deconstruction process.

Deconstructing compartmentalization. Based on data from participants in this study, deconstructing compartmentalization refers to the unlearning and reordering processes people

experience as they integrate their Christian faith into their everyday, ongoing lives. Faith in Action leaders challenge dualistic thinking in regard to separating the sacred from the everyday.

First, consider that it is possible for more and more of your life to be integrated into one mission—no more compartmentalizing work here and faith there. A missional life is one in which your life is integrated into one coherent whole rather than segmented into disconnected, separated parts (Luke 9:57-62). So, you no longer have a set of rules for home and another for business – one set for your private life and another for your public life. A missional life requires that you make clear distinctions between God’s design for home, family, neighborhood and workplace and the world’s design for all of that. Further it requires that you tell the truth about places where you’ve given up God’s design in order to get along and be accepted in the world. Your life as a Christ-follower is integrated into one whole in order to bring your whole life—all of its energy and passion and resources—to bear on seeking and showing the Kingdom of God. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 25)

Scott described the experience some Faith in Action participants have with churches and compartmentalization.

Most of the challenges for people in Faith in Action come from the systems and structures that people go back to. I’m resisting saying what I’m about to say. . . . The biggest obstacle we have is the traditional local church—that people live these compartmentalized lives with work over here and church over there. When they come to Faith in Action, we start saying to them, “We want you to begin integrating those.” They [participants] go back to their church and they actually can’t function if they integrate those [faith and life] because they [churches] depend on that compartmentalization—being able to get whatever number of hours they’ve compartmentalized. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Scott described that some Faith in Action participants actually decrease the number of hours they spend volunteering on the campus of their local church as a result of their journey with deconstructing compartmentalization.

I have a long list of guys and gals that as they’ve begun to live missionally, that’s where “church” was for them. They still love the Sunday morning worship, but they’re not near so likely to be involved in serving on the finance committee or parking cars or teaching a Sunday school class, because it’s just not as transformative as the experience they have here [living on mission]. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Scott shared another story about a man who integrated his faith into his everyday life as a result of deconstructing compartmentalization.

The man whose office we're sitting in [during the interview] was an elder at a Bible Church here in the city and got on mission—this is his mission here [his office]. It's amazing some stuff that's happened in this office as they [coworkers] discovered right across the freeway there's a network of homes for unwed mothers. That's become their mission. It's right in their neighborhood. What also happened was he quit being an elder in his church and quit teaching a Sunday school class in his church. Mostly he and his wife go to Sunday morning worship, but this [office and office neighborhood] is where their mission is. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Larry shared a story about how another Faith in Action participant deconstructed compartmentalization in his life.

When I was coaching people in 2011, I was coaching a guy who worked for a large oil company. Oh my goodness, this guy was living out his transformation with thousands of people. He always had an opportunity for transformation conversations. He had captive audiences because part of his responsibilities meant going off shore sometimes. As he rode with coworkers in the car to Louisiana to catch a helicopter, he's got a captive audience. So, they're listening to his stories in a very relational way. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Deconstruction involves unlearning and reordering in both cognitive and psychological perspectives. Scott believes that deconstructing and shifting mental models is a large part of discipleship.

What people will tell me is that they've learned that discipling people is actually about helping to shift their mental models. Once the mental model has been shifted... I had one lady say to me, "You have ruined me." She was being funny but what she said was, "You taught me to see relationships in a way that I can never not see them again." When you can shift the way that people see the world, I think that's at the deepest level. That's what brings about that type of deep transformation. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

The spiritual formation process that Faith in Action leaders employ is rooted in the discipleship mental model. A large part of the discipleship process includes deconstructing current mental models that impede discipleship. God's presence makes the entire spiritual formation process possible.

God's presence. Participants in this study described the role of God's presence in the spiritual formation process. Henry explained the connection between God's presence and learning in this way.

Another environmental factor is the rhythm. It's a rhythm of learning—there is a presentation with all of the concepts, then you [participants] go and process that in your time with the Lord. I think that is huge. You [participants] read again the core ideas of the presentations and you are with the Lord—that's who we trust. God is the strength—the Holy Spirit is the one that we want to show up, not the great presenter, great facilitator, or the great small group leader . . . but the Holy Spirit, in moments of solitude. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

John described the connection between God's presence and moments of solitude.

The spiritual disciplines and the work itself of getting your past out of your present and your future . . . and all of the work around that. Understanding your vow, and how that shows up in your life—how that is stopping you. To me, it's a combination of some really deep, hard, painful work in addition to the Spirit of God showing up and revealing things and motivating you, all that stuff. (John, personal communication, March 16 2013)

Jennifer described a reliance on God's presence to foster personal transformation.

We're going to show up and do the best we can to present the material. We're going to be the best presenters and do the best we can in small group to facilitate a good conversation in a safe environment, but ultimately we have to trust in the Lord and His timing in speaking to people. Some people, by the end of the retreat, are going to totally get their vow. Other people, it may take them months into Faith in Action 201. That's fine—it's completely fine. Letting go of that control and letting go of the desire to see the results now is the point. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Bob also described relying on God's presence in the transformation process.

You can't do it alone, recognizing that the Holy Spirit is deep at work within you. It's really fascinating to me because you kind of see these light bulbs, these breakthroughs happening—these people [participants] start experiencing [breakthroughs in] their own lives. I realize God really does care about me and He's deeply at work in my life. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013).

Henry encourages retreat participants to rely on God for transformation. He explained, “Living in the past is hard. I remind them [participants] again that this is a space where I [as the leader] don't have to fix anything, you don't have to fix anything—we trust the Lord to do it”

(Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013). Larry also described a reliance on God to foster transformation in participants.

For me, the joy is that, this [transformation] didn't originate with us. It was God—God has already taken the initiative in peoples' lives. We're helping them with skills to respond to what He's doing. We're helping them to develop skill sets to cooperate with God and get into what God is doing. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Kyle described how God's presence joins with human presence on the transformation journey.

There is this joining of God's Spirit and us in the work of being on mission, and I think that same thing occurs in us personally. So, I think there are some things that we can do just on our own, but there are things that we can't do until God's Spirit joins with us in that process. And, so for me, the journey of personal transformation is when I give enough time. . . . I've got enough information to learn the skills I need to learn, to ask the right questions that spurs my self-awareness. But, then, that is joined with God's Spirit of bringing things to light that maybe I haven't thought of in a long time. Or, maybe I'm even afraid to go think about. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Reliance on God's presence is central to the Faith in Action transformational journey.

Participants are encouraged to live by faith:

You are designed to be a Faithwalker. By definition that's ultimately what it means for you to be perfect, holy—whole and complete. You are designed to function as one who is walking by faith in Him, on His mission. Transformation requires intentionality on your part to embrace your design and join Him in advancing the Kingdom of God. It requires listening for God who is going to lead you to places that you know not of (Joshua 1:1-9). (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 18)

Learning is a deeply embedded component of the Faith in Action group culture.

Theme 2: Learning process. Based on the data from participants in this study, Faith in Action leaders value learning and operate from a learning community perspective. They continually challenge program assumptions, evaluate effectiveness, and experiment as a community of practice. The two aspects of this learning process that were described in detail were strengthening accountability through coaching and facilitating new habits and new mindsets.

Tray described the facets of Faith in Action's learning community in the following manner:

All of us who are the leaders of Faith in Action not only got involved in the conceptual framework [of the program], but we actually got involved in the implementation. So, that we continue the cycle where we ask questions, we arrive at our best thinking, we implement what we think is our best thinking to get to the results we are after. We test it, we evaluate it, and we make adjustments. So, all of that is a description of a learning community. You know, a kind of praxis, theory, praxis, adjustment, theory, praxis, theory, adjustment—that's from the beginning. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Kyle described the fields of study that influence the Faith in Action learning community.

One of the things that I think has been true for all of us [as leaders] is that we are life-long learners, and we are learners in a variety of venues. So, we don't just study church literature. We study literature from a variety of sources. Probably the ones that have influenced us the most are business leadership kinds of material and Bowen Family systems theory components. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Tammy works in the areas of program evaluation and leadership development with Faith in Action. She described how, as a learning community, they evaluate for effectiveness,

A lot of what I'm doing is working with our Faith in Action team to continue to evaluate the experience and to see if we're actually setting a table for transformation and are people able to come and experience that? What are we learning about what happens to them [participants] afterwards? Is there anything lasting that's happening? (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Faith in Action leaders foster transformational growth in participants by taking the content from the 101 retreat and offering a learning process focused on experiential education methodologies. Scott described what happens after the 101 retreat in this way.

In the second phase, what we call 201, there the content of the [101] weekend is translated into action. There are 12 sessions where there's a meeting every other week and you [participants] have homework to do. The homework is mostly not about getting more information. The homework is about practicing your relationship with God in a different kind of way or practicing being in relationship with people in a different kind of way. So, you [participants] are sent out to have "transformation conversations," you are sent out to work on a "spiritual workout" that includes the practice of the spiritual disciplines and you get a coach. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Scott explained the importance of both the learning process and also accountability through coaching, “The two most important things are this understanding of how learning takes place through information, practice, reflection—and then, coaches that are really well trained” (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013).

Kyle also described the learning process and accountability.

From the get-go we've been built on the learning cycle which is information, practice, reflection. Then, they [participants] need to be able to go and practice that information—live it out, try it on, put it on, do whatever. And, then they need time with a coach or someone helping them to reflect on how they are living it out. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Faith in Action offers participants accountability through the coaching process.

Accountability through coaching. The Faith in Action process provides a community of support to Faith in Action participants.

Our first belief is that it is essential for you [participants] to be in a *community of support* that regularly and persistently holds up Jesus’ countercultural view of what it means to be fully human. Some of you are in congregations where this happens, but some congregations are so focused on institutional success that the countercultural view of being fully human is rarely, if ever, held up. In saying that, we are not suggesting that you leave your congregation. In fact, if you stay in the Faith in Action journey you will hear a consistent and faithful message to stay engaged there in order to offer salt and light in that setting. To be sustained there, you will need another community of support—a community that is offered by Faith in Action. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 79)

The Faith in Action process also provides accountability through coaching for Faith in Action participants.

Our second belief is that accountability is essential for your journey of transformation to flourish. A significant reason that transformation initiatives die an early death is because at the end of the retreat that launches the initiative, there is no ongoing accountability. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 79)

Faith in Action provides accountability at three levels:

Level One

We offer a 24-week small group experience that we call Faith in Action 201. In this experience, you will meet with a small group of people who have completed Faith in

Action 101 and who meet every other week (12 sessions) over 24 weeks to continue the journey. Each session lasts for 1 hour and 15 minutes and includes homework outside of the class. The homework will generally take about one hour per day or less. All of the work you did in Faith in Action 101 will be reinforced and you will be given some new tools to help you in your personal transformation journey. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 79)

Level Two

When you start the small group experience, you will also be assigned a personal transformation coach. That coach will have a weekly conversation with you and one other Faith in Action participant on a conference call. The purpose of the coach is to provide encouragement, accountability, and outside resources to help you when you get stopped in the process. All personal transformation coaches have successfully completed Faith in Action 101 and 201 as well as a rigorous training process. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 79)

Level Three

At the conclusion of Faith in Action 201, you will be urged to either join an existing missional community or to launch a new one in the place that you spend most of your working day. That is accountability at the highest level – asking you to actually use and practice what you learned. And, as you do this, you will be assigned another coach – a missional community coach. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 80)

John described the uniqueness of Faith in Action's accountability through coaching in this way.

Something that is really important and critical in Faith in Action that is unique is the coaching process. So, having accountability, but it's accountability in a way that is non-legalistic. It's not about shame and guilt and making someone do something—it's about the integrity conversation. Having a coach, someone to hold up the mirror and help you have integrity around the work you're doing is really important, really critical. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Kyle described the coaching process that occurs in 201.

When you move into 201, you get a coach. You have coaching calls on a weekly basis, and that coach is simply asking questions and helping the individual live into what it is they are practicing. So, they've got a notebook, they've got information, they've been to the seminars. Part of the 201 is a classroom experience, once every other week, and then they go out and live it. They live out that homework, so they are going and practicing this thing. Then the coaching appointment is about, "Okay let's reflect on it." (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Scott explained how the 201 homework leads to deeper conversation in the coaching process.

You get this homework and you give your word to doing it. Nobody ever does all of the homework. If the homework was all about information, everybody would read and answer questions. We're asking them to step out of their habitual way of being in relationships, and those are just deeply held habits. In the coaching call, you get connected and you say, "Did you do all of your homework?" When the answer is no, I think this is important, in a real non-shaming, non-guilt based environment, the coach says, "Let's take a look at that—what happened? Where did you get stopped? What did you experience in being stopped? How could you have done that differently?" I could tell you a thousand stories of people who in that coaching, over time, begin to practice being different in their relationships. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Kyle explained that coaching calls offer participants an opportunity to "get unstuck" and return to movement on the transformational journey.

Part of the coaching appointments are also about "Tell me about what is going on. Did you experience a breakthrough? Or, are you stuck at a certain point?" We use that language a lot because it seems like people get stuck in a place and they can't get beyond it. So, we want to help them experience breakthrough through wherever those places are stuck. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013).

Kyle also described characteristics of a good coach in this way.

In the skill of coaching, a person needs to know how to really listen well and ask good questions that kind of hold the mirror up for people. A good coach has the capacity to challenge, without offending and stretch, without dictating. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Jennifer described how coaches challenge Faith in Action participants in a non-shaming way to stretch them outside of their comfort zones.

I think the aspect of challenge, in 101 and 201—we're challenged to go beyond . . . to go to the edge of our comfort zone and then go beyond it. I think that is really good because so often in Christianity, we are obtaining a lot of information and we gain all of this information but it's not transforming us. That's one big concept in Faith in Action, information doesn't transform, but obedience does. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Jennifer continued to explain how the coaching process aids participants in the 201 journey.

I think 201 really helps you with the obedience part because you're challenged to do things that feel uncomfortable; it's while you do them that transformation happens. Often times when you do the homework of sharing and having three transformational conversations with someone in the week, you know one of those conversations are going to bring up your anxiety or your vows in a way that if you hadn't had the conversations, it

wouldn't have come up. So, you have those conversations, your vows are triggered, so that's forcing you to go deeper. That aspect is really transforming. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Bob described how his personal experience with a coach helped him on his transformation journey.

I remember this one time, I was crying on the phone with my coach and I was like, "I'm done, I'm not going to do this anymore." I had such a great coach, he says, "Why?" "I just can't have this conversation—I'm done. I can't do it—I'm out. It's too hard." He said, "What do you think that's about?" It was so awesome that he didn't let me off of the hook. I think that's the point of transformation. It's when you're in your weakest moment and you get to see the growth and that corner turn for yourself—when you get to sit in the mess and be encouraged that there's this light, this movement. Whereas before you were in the mess and there's no movement. Now, you're in the mess and you're like, "There's movement; that's really different." (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Tray elaborated on the uniqueness of coaching as opposed to counseling.

We [leaders] are on the journey not as counselors but as people who provide accountability and encouragement. That is the dual role of a coach. You know there are skill sets to bring, but the purpose of coaching is to provide accountability so that people who give their word to pursuing transformation actually are 'in action' because we don't believe information transforms. It is 'being in action' when we are transformed. And the other is encouragement because without encouragement some of this stuff is really hard. I mean some of the places of healing that need to take place paralyze us, and without somebody in our corner who believes in us, and who keeps saying what we can hardly believe for our self . . . the power of God is available for you to step through to the other side. So, all of us do that. . . . And, the coaching is not limited for us to just set times. All of us respond to e-mails—all of us have extra phone calls. We are pretty clear about avoiding the role of counselor. We are not a counselor. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Bob described the importance of listening when coaching.

I think the leader needs to be a good listener, actively listening to others. A leader also doesn't need to fix it, just needs to foster an environment where people can have movement, where they can see things they're not able to see. You need to be able to ask questions in a way that you're not fixing it or being passive aggressive. You have to wonder with people. You have to allow people to make those decisions for themselves. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Henry also talked about the importance of coaches not trying to fix things with participants.

Don't fix them or counsel them, "Oh, let me tell you what you should do." No, don't rescue—let people be present to whatever they are feeling and whatever pain they're feeling. It is often that in those experiences that somebody comes to tears or a high emotion situation that many of us want to rescue and jump to say, "That's ok." (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Henry continued,

There is some value in letting that experience sink-in a little bit. Let that person really experience that pain without making that bad, or wrong, or immediately changing the tone. Allow the person to see through it and afterwards ask, "Well, what was that emotion behind it [the experience]?" (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Henry also described his great joy in coaching.

In my case, I feel like I'm called to be that brother who is there to walk with you without condemning you, with patience, and with love. When I see that the Lord has a richer place in your heart, there is no better place for me to be. I can't express it, that's my main joy. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

The Faith in Action process utilizes both individual and group coaching to facilitate accountability with participants. Kyle described the group coaching process in the following manner.

We have group coaching calls. What we've learned is, if I'm coaching one person, everybody else in the room learns from my coaching of that one person because they see themselves in the conversation. So, you can coach three or four people at once in an hour-long coaching call. Everybody gets 15 minutes around the circle, or 20, whatever it is, and all the others are learning, all the time. That is our process to this point, and it seems to work really well because there is some accountability there, they don't just drop off the radar—I don't just forget it. "Okay I had the great seminar three months ago, but now I've forgotten." It keeps it in front of us, and it keeps kind of a learning community going. So we are all learning together, and something maybe learned in a coaching call that comes back to the larger group, and we all learn from it. So, all of that is part of our learning process. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Henry also described the group coaching process.

The [group] coaching is a great element—to be able to see the learning of others. Learning in public . . . the public is not nice to many people. I have to admit, it [learning in public] was really hard for me. But, as we are coaching, you learn a lot by listening. As the other people are listening, you're just observing—there is no anxiety in you as you are able to just learn. That is hugely important I would say. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Scott shared a story from a group coaching call that illustrates the effectiveness of group coaching:

So we [group coaches] created a safe enough environment where he would tell us that [his story with habitual disobedience]. So, we let him say that [his story]—after he had taken about 15 minutes to tell his story both I and the other guy on the call expressed appreciation for him being so candid and so authentic. Then, I said, ‘So, there’s nothing wrong that you did that. You did exactly what you’re currently capable of doing.’ What I want to do is hold up a mirror and say, “What does it look like for you to keep growing in your capacity not to do that?” (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Scott continued by explaining the importance of not shaming during the coaching process.

That combination of a really safe, no shame, but challenge . . . that would be the word I’d say. In the authenticity there’s safety and challenge. In the Faith in Action coaches community we call that holding up a mirror. “Ok, here’s what you just said and what we saw. What kind of person do you want to be in the face of that?” A good coach will say, “Where do you see an opening to get into action?” Ultimately, action is what transforms. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

The coaching process offers encouragement and accountability for Faith in Action participants to get into action based on what they are learning. Action is what transforms. New habits are formed through actions, and new habits lead to new mindsets.

New habits and new mindsets. Based on the data from participants in this study, *new habits* refers to the behavioral breakthroughs that people experience on the way to establishing new mindsets; and, *new mindsets* refers to the convictional shift people experience as they live into Faith in Action’s discipleship mental model.

Faith in Action leaders are not guiding participants to *do more*. The leaders are guiding participants to *be different*.

This [transformation] is really hard stuff. Because it is so hard, we will all have to coach each other in fighting the belief that our disobedience can be addressed by changing our *doing*—by working harder at the things we’ve been doing. This is exactly what Jesus meant when He told his followers that their righteousness had to exceed that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees really were the most obedient guys in town; they really took the obedience thing seriously. They were all about doing the right thing . . . and that was the

problem. They were about *doing* the right thing. Jesus was far more interested in his followers *being* new people—that's transformation. (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 46)

Leader participants in this study described a distinction between the new habits and the new mindsets of Faith in Action participants. John described new habits as behavioral changes and new mindsets as a new way of being, "I would define breakthrough more as a moment, an individual circumstance, that you have the ability to behave differently than maybe you've been able to do for some time. Transformation is more like your way of being is different" (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013). He continued,

If you remember some of the work we do with "unconscious competence and conscious competence," breakthrough might be more "conscious competence," where you're starting to experience. . . . And, transformation [new mindset] is you're not having to think or work [unconsciously competent], it's becoming more who you are. For example, it will show up in conversation. I've never been able to talk about "this," whatever "this" is, in somebody's life. I've never been able to talk to my parents or family of origin about "this event" so I'm starting to talk about it [conscious competence]. I've moved from some breakthrough of being able to talk about it to I talk about it everywhere effortlessly [unconsciously competent]; it's part of who I am. To me that would be the difference in breakthrough and transformation the way you tell a story (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013).

Figure 5 depicts the competency spectrum for a transformed mindset.

New habits. Participants in this study described new habits as behavioral breakthroughs people experience on the way to establishing new mindsets. Tammy described *breakthrough* this way.

For me, breakthrough is about a change in behavior and an overriding of the autopilot. When that happens we can see that it's not just an emotional reaction to an emotional topic but there's actually been a breakthrough here. This person is able to do something different than what they would have done otherwise. When they do that and come back and share the stories, it touches me every time because they have had a conversation they have never had before. Of course, not all of them do that but when they do, that almost always is a breakthrough. Sometimes there's a lot of emotion around that, sometimes there's not. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

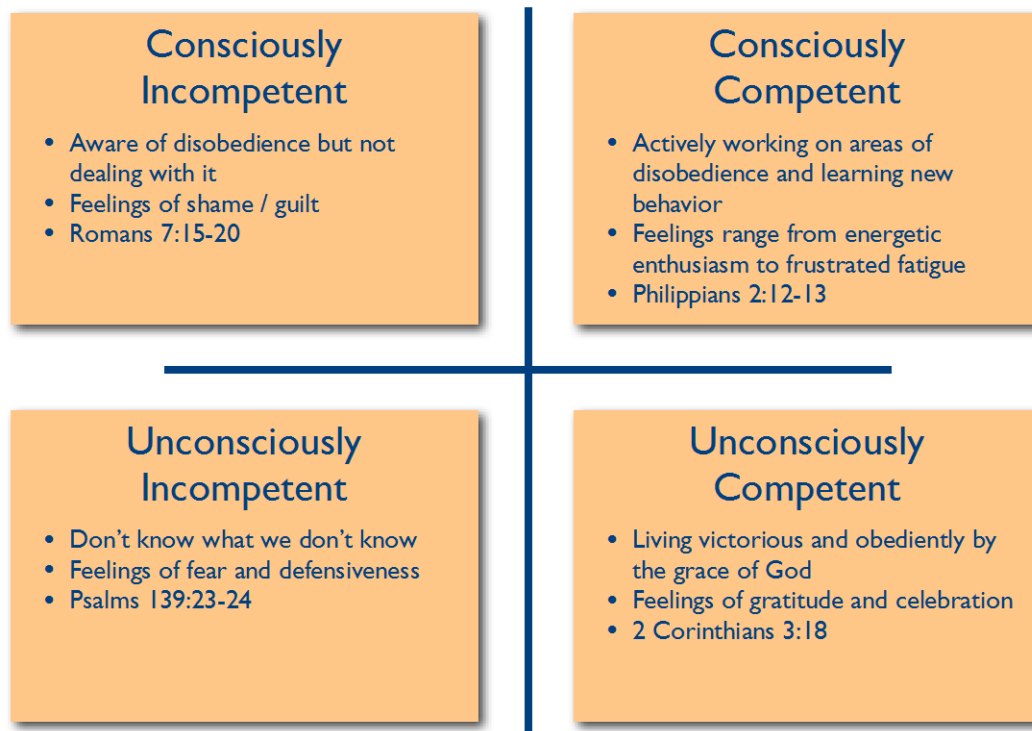


Figure 5. Competency spectrum for transformed mindset (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 40).

John also described a breakthrough in behavioral terms.

For me, I would classify a breakthrough as an area in my life where I have always been stuck and never seemed to be where I wanted to be or able to get past a certain point. I always break down at some level, and for me, I've lived long enough to go, "this is not possible." I guess that's probably the most dramatic form of breakthrough where you're getting past that [point of being stuck] and you're getting victory—you're living in a way you've never been able to live before. You're having conversations you didn't think were possible. It varies for each individual, of where they are stuck or where they need breakthrough. Breakthrough involves getting through some things that you've never been able to do before. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Sandra explained breakthrough in behavioral terms as well.

I'm sure that people in their [participants] lives, hopefully, will see it [breakthrough]. You have to be one way before and one way after, things will change in your life, hopefully, if you continue with the process; that's how it should be, otherwise why would you go to Faith in Action 101 if your life isn't in a place where it could be transformed? It should be tangible, something that is evidenced through things you're doing in your life, I would hope, otherwise you're stagnating. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Tammy explained that growing in transparency is a breakthrough for some people.

I think it's indicative of a breakthrough when someone is sharing at a deep level in a small group and that's not normal for them. Then, when we hear, down the road, we hear the stories, which we do; it's incredible to me how often we hear the stories. "I'm different as a parent, I'm different as a spouse, I'm different at work, I'm different in my relationship with God." "I see things differently, and I have more courage in this area." (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Tammy also explained that a participant's behavioral breakthrough is evident when it is reported by family and friends.

Then, when you get to hear it [stories of breakthrough] from their kid, their spouse, or their coworkers; and that happens more often than you'd think, that is clearly a sign that a breakthrough has happened. That happened because other people see the change. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Jennifer explained that one form of breakthrough occurs when participants get clarity about their vows.

Definitely when they're seeing something they haven't seen before. They're recognizing how that has affected their life up until then, or is currently affecting their life. When someone gets clarity on their vows, we're like, "Yes!" When they recognize not only how the vow is formed in their childhood, but how it is affecting them today and how it's keeping them from being fully who God wants them to be; walking fully in the design that God has for them. Recognizing habitual disobedience would be connected to that. I guess just any recognition of something that they hadn't seen before, but they recognize it's impacted them and they want to change and have hope for change. Hope is always a good thing, when you see that in someone, someone who didn't have hope, and now they have hope. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Henry also described the connection between vow clarity and breakthrough.

When a person is able to see him or herself in the context of their own vows, in normal life. . . . They say, "Yesterday that happened, and I can now see how my vow kicked in." I think that is the beginning of a breakthrough. Huge breakthroughs come when people are able to take the step beyond seeing the vow to then take responsibility to clean up a mess [that was created as a result of behavior from a vow]. "I decide to go and talk to my wife about this, and we start yelling." I then realize I reacted out of my anxiety, so I decide to listen and ask questions, to try to understand her. When you see things like that, people taking action to take responsibility for their own lives according to their values, their guiding principles that are usually Biblical, they are usually great. That is the way that I would say that breakthrough happens. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Bob explained that for some people having conversations about family of origin issues can be a breakthrough.

I feel like a breakthrough happens for people when they are able to talk openly and honestly about their upbringing, their background, or their family of origin, without feeling like they're "throwing their parents under the bus." They can just be honest about what impact their parents had on them along with what that means for them today. That's a huge breakthrough. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Kyle described how engaging in conversations can be a breakthrough for participants.

I think one of the ways I see it [breakthrough] in a group—is that we stay in the conversation even when it is hard, and it gets real hard at times. . . . So, being willing to keep coming back to that conversation to have smaller meetings where we "talk it out," "flesh it out" with people . . . to me, that's a huge sign of maturity and transformation. That we don't run from our disagreements and differences. You know the way family systems tell us that we typically deal with our reactivity and anxiety. It's conflict. It's distancing. It's over functioning or under functioning. It's triangulating. It's all those things. To me, the less that happens [anxiety, over-functioning, under-functioning, and triangulating] to people, the more we see they are experiencing real, genuine transformation in their life. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Scott described breakthrough as freedom from ingrained habitual behavior. He shared an example of this freedom from one of his coaching calls:

I think it's self-validating in the way that it [breakthrough] shows up in the coaching calls. . . . For example, in one of my coaching calls, how he [a participant] really was "defined but also able to be connected" [self-differentiation]. I said, "So, would you compare that [story he shared] to how you were with him a year ago." He teared up and said, "Oh, I'm fundamentally different." I think how you know you've gotten a breakthrough is when some deeply engrained habitual behavior you can see has been changed. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Tray explained that the Faith in Action process is set up to facilitate and report breakthroughs.

How will we know whether people are getting free from old patterns that they and others would claim were destructive? And, then set forth on developing new habits that are life-giving for them and for others? And, it's translating into benefit for their communities? So, we actually did come up with: "How are we going to know?" And, in the Faith in Action 201 we spell it out a little more clearly than anyplace else, but we basically say, "you'll report the progress that you're making, and there will be people who will support what you are claiming is happening in terms of a change for your life. You'll report

awareness of wounds, and you'll report awareness of the vows, whether they were vows that were made, that you can pinpoint the moment you took a vow, or you simply have the awareness.” So, increasing awareness—you'll do the self-reporting of that, but the way you deal with putting off that old vow and taking on new perspectives is on truth and new life giving patterns of life. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Larry described breakthrough as an unwillingness to remain stagnant.

I don't measure it [transformation] by the end product. I don't measure it by, “Is this life really transformed?” I'm measuring it by, “Are people unwilling to stay where they are?”” Everybody's vow gets into play, gets stuck, and stopped. You get resigned and cynical. To me, you know transformation is happening when I'm unwilling to stay where I am—whether that's the micro change or the macro change. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

In the transformation process, new habits culminate with transformed perspectives that lead into new mindsets.

New mindsets. Participants in this study described new mindsets as the convictional shift people experience as they live into Faith in Action's discipleship mental model. Tammy described the convictional shift of a new mindset in this way:

When the person has more capacity to override their autopilot, to be different and break old patterns. When that shows up in their relationships and their ability to live missionally. If it doesn't show up in one of those two places and they're basically being how they've always been, then they may have had a really meaningful experience, but I don't think they've made deep change. When their wife says, “What did you do to my husband?” When it's showing up in relationships. That's when we know it's real. Again, it may not be transformation of the whole person's whole entire life...What we're seeing is transformation where God has really had access to one place, one set of emotions or behaviors or patterns—those emotions, behaviors, or patterns are changing. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Scott explained that new mindsets persist even after the Faith in Action process ends. He stated, “My intuition tells me that [deep transformation] happens when new ways of thinking have been incorporated into habits of action that persist even after the class goes away, at the end of 201” (Scott, personal communication, February 2013).

Jennifer explained that new mindsets happen when a person lives missionally without thinking about living into that lifestyle.

Well, ultimately, the goal of Faith in Action is to not just be transformed in our character, but ultimately to move toward missional living. Some people that come into Faith in Action are already, in some capacity, living missionally, but maybe they're stuck in one way or another. Maybe they're struggling to get along relationally with the people they're on the team with or that they're working alongside. So, there is something that is blocking them from fully living that out. I guess the ultimate would be someone who recognizes that God has something bigger for them in this life than cultural Christianity and they go from the status quo Christian to really living missionally and doing well in that relationally. Really pursuing God passionately through that. (Jennifer, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Larry also talked about missional living as a marker of a new mindset.

Ultimately, for me, in the Faith in Action paradigm, it's about, "Am I joining Jesus in mission?" That's the thing, that's the component of Faith in Action that I really like. We're not experiencing personal transformation so we can be happy. We're not experiencing personal transformation so we can be a better church member. We're not experiencing personal transformation to be a better dad, a better mother, wife, or husband. I want to join Jesus on his mission. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Tray shared a few standards for a changed mindset.

We are frankly pretty sure we will know we are succeeding when people choose to keep reporting that they are investing in those areas [living into the discipleship mental model], and the evidence that they are investing in authentic community that develops around and sustains a shared vision of where to be on mission is—that they are doing it. And, that their missional community is reporting that they are still engaged. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Tammy explained that behavioral change happens and new mindsets emerge through Faith in Action. She described her journey with seeking to understand how the process of transformation manifests.

The other place of learning is the stories. I can't tell you why Faith in Action works. After every retreat I go home and tell my husband, "I don't get this. I don't understand why this works." I'm not sure if I showed up for a Faith in Action retreat if it would work for me, but it works every single time. I don't fully understand it. As we collect the stories, it's clear that it does, it's clear that it makes a real difference in people's lives and extends past the experience and that it happens pretty predictably. I don't have the

success rate in therapy that we have in Faith in Action in terms of people being able to, afterward being able to point to their lives a point that is significantly different than it was before. So, trying to collect the stories and figure out what it is it. Those are the different places I collect information from. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Personal transformation happens at different rates, through different circumstances, and in different settings. Transformation has organic, natural tendencies.

Theme 3: Organic growth. Based on the participant's data, *organic growth* refers to the natural tendencies a person experiences on the transformational journey. This organic growth was described by the participants as transformation happening through various stages of development. Henry used the metaphor of a developing baby to describe the organic nature of transformation. His statement describes that one cannot force transformation beyond its developmental appropriateness and that there is no predetermined timeline for transformation.

The challenge is the process, you cannot make a baby come earlier—you can, but it's not going to be good. You have to wait nine months. In the transformation process, I can't say how many months it will take. Some people have breakthroughs quickly; for other people it takes a long time. It doesn't mean one is better than the other. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

This organic growth theme included perspectives about the need for leaders to commit to the journey of self-transformation before attempting to help foster it in others. It continued with a description of the ongoing process of personal transformation. Lastly, the theme described how personal transformation ripples into the community and into all spheres of an individual's influence.

Starts with self. Faith in Action has been a community of practice since its inception.

Tray explained,

And so, we thought the only way to do [community of practice] was not to be people who only engaged in postulating a set of propositions, but we actually needed to walk ourselves through the [transformation] process and we needed to walk “with” others through the process. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Kyle explained the importance of leaders making the commitment to their own personal transformation.

I think the leader needs to have experienced it first. You can't take somebody to a place you haven't been, and key components of what we're doing include authenticity and transparency. So, if a leader doesn't model that authenticity and transparency . . . [Kyle sighed]. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Henry also elaborated on the importance of leaders committing to self-transformation before walking alongside others in their journey.

The most important thing for a leader is to have integrity in choosing this path for himself. Integrity is doing what we say that we will do and living according to our design. It's really hard for presenters to talk about the experience when they're not living it themselves. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Larry described the importance of leaders modeling a credible witness to the journey of personal transformation.

Leaders need to have an authentic experience. If you're being transformed, then you're not talking theory. This is not just textbook, it's not just information; this is having an impact in me. I think you have to be experiencing what you're talking about. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Larry also explained the importance of leaders modeling their experiences to those outside of the Faith in Action community.

I think for too many years the Body of Christ has talked about the Gospel, talked about Jesus; we've talked about things. Then, people look at our lives and say, "Where are the goods to back up your claims?" (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Scott expressed that Faith in Action leaders should embody what the community is practicing.

I'm not saying [embodying] anything perfectly, but they [leaders] have not just mastered this intellectually. They have real stories to tell of personal transformation, and they do that in a really authentic way. From the moment you come to a Faith in Action retreat, in the first presentation, whoever is presenting is kind of [metaphorically] getting naked with people, being really authentic and really vulnerable. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Faith in Action leaders give their word and are held accountable to continue their personal transformational journey through a coaching relationship.

You can't be a leader in Faith in Action without being coached. It's not as though you finish Faith in Action and then . . . I don't have to be coached any more. Everyone who is a leader in Faith in Action has an ongoing coaching relationship (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013).

Kyle used the metaphor of peeling an onion to describe the process of focusing on self-transformation.

I like to describe it this way—it's like peeling back layers of an onion. As you peel the layers of an onion, there is always a layer beneath. The bottom line is there are two things that occur when you peel an onion. You cry and it stinks. And so, I think that's the journey (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013).

Kyle continued by explaining the potential for growth.

The work of self-awareness is really hard, and it takes a lot of courage. And, it is just emotionally draining. I think it is a skill that you learn. I think the more practice in self-awareness and self-discovery, the easier it gets (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013).

Once leaders begin their own journeys, the transformation process is an ongoing one that never ends.

Ongoing process. Every participant described a need for leaders to commit to ongoing personal transformation if they desire to help foster it in Faith in Action participants. Kyle summarized this ongoing perspective well:

I am a firm believer that for the leader, transformation has to be ongoing. It can't be, oh yeah, I did Faith in Action three years ago, and I had this great experience, and you're always going back to three years ago. No, I want to know what's going on today. I want to know what's going on now. How are you continuing to live this? Because if you're going to coach others, I want to know that this is fresh, and so I think that personal experience kind of deal is a key thing. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Tammy described the ongoing process this way.

Absolutely, the facilitator needs to have his or her own transformational experience, both in the past and ongoing in the present. I think when that's missing we can fake it for a little while, but ultimately we lose power. If we're not personally being transformed and having current stories to tell, then everything else seems to fall apart at that point in time. I would say that's maybe the most important thing. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Kyle described his perspective about ongoing personal transformation for leaders. He stated, "The goal for my life is ongoing transformation. I don't think that we ever arrive" (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013). Tray provided biblical context for this ongoing perspective.

There is a sense in which you are never totally transformed. "Be ye transformed. . . ." In Paul's exhortation to the Romans it's an ongoing process that assumes God is always at work. So, we celebrate the reports from both the individual participants and those in their lives, and we keep reminding them the mental model we hold is that the consistent sustained investments in three particular arenas are the pathway to ongoing transformation. Which requires putting off the old and putting on the new, and God is going to be at work surfacing the places that will be breakdown points for us (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013).

Tray described the ongoing nature of "sustaining" personal transformation this way.

So, the evidence we measure is that people report that they are still making every day a radical commitment to obedience that leads to an orientation to living missionally, instead of being a consumer. People report they're still engaging the spiritual disciplines and not as a checklist, but they are doing it by bringing the whole of themselves and they are regularly encountering the person and voice of God for direction. And, they are giving their word to what they think God is saying, and they're regularly doing so in the midst of a community of people who are called to the same place. That's the evidence that they're sustaining the journey of transformation. But, the word sustaining, is the place of our caution. (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Scott described the ongoing pathway that a person engages in to continue to learn and apply the mental model of discipleship fostered through Faith in Action.

In the 101 retreat we talk about a process of unconscious incompetence [of the discipleship mental model], to conscious incompetence, to conscious competence. By the time they get to The Leadership Course, they should be at conscious competence [the last stage of the process]. What we're moving them toward and what we want is for them to have demonstrated growth and movement toward unconscious competence. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Unconscious competence describes the ingrained knowledge and everyday implementation of the discipleship mental model that results from ongoing practice in community. Bob described his journey towards unconscious competence in this manner.

Walking into the tools of that transformation. There's a process, if you stay committed to the process, it will work. I think that sometimes because we live in a fast food society, a fast paced world, we want to see change quickly. It doesn't. We have to be willing to toe the line for the long haul; this is a lifelong journey. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Henry described the leader's intentional ongoing transformational process with the term *mastery*.

We call it mastery; we use it in the sense of martial arts mastery. This is nothing weird or anything. We like the idea that you keep practicing, and you keep practicing, and you keep practicing. When you make a mess, you clean up your mess, and you keep practicing, learning, and receiving coaching—you are part of the process. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Henry continued, "Leaders have chosen and given their word to walk in the path of growing into this. We have to internalize this process of Faith in Action in our own lives" (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013).

Tray described his perspective of the organic, ongoing nature of personal transformation. He stated, "Frankly, every time that I blow it really big time I wonder if I'm on the road to transformation. There is a healthy sense of caution about arriving" (Tray, personal communication, February 14, 2013). This perspective reflects the reality that personal transformation is not a linear process.

Sandra explained that ongoing personal transformation should not be forced.

I know we all bring our baggage to things, and again, transformation is an ongoing process. I said this to one of my small group participants at Faith in Action: "It's not like there's some magic wand, all of a sudden I got this and God did this. He might have healed you in the future, but right now, you still have to go through the process." So, I feel like people should just be allowed to explore it and feel comfortable exploring it, not

feel pushed by somebody to explore it in a way that they think I should or the way they did. (Sandra, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

In spite of supportive leaders who co-journey with participants, many participants will still experience resistance. Bob described resistance in the process this way.

Resistance can tend to be a factor [in the transformation process] because you're thinking, "This is really getting deep, and I have a decision now. Oh man, this is getting deep, this is causing an earthquake in my soul." Like I was telling you, my personal experience with: "I can't do this anymore, I'm exhausted." There's some resistance that starts to play in because you're getting to a place you know you can't turn back from. You're weighing your options right there at that moment. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Henry shared about his resistance on his own personal transformation journey.

I can tell you that I resisted so much in my own Faith in Action journey. My process took me at least two or three years until the point when I really wanted to confront some things. It took a lot of love, lots of love from people around me, my coaches, Scott and Tray. They saw me, I'm working here [Mission City] for this thing and still resisting. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

Kyle explained the connection between resistance and fear.

I think one of the greatest challenges is just people's fear. You know when you start talking about authenticity and transparency and family of origin kinds of things, people don't want to go there. I think they get afraid of it. I think that's one of the challenges. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Since there is an ongoing perspective to transformation, a person must continue to give attention to the process. Bob explained the need for ongoing attention. He stated, "Transformation has a half-life, so you have to participate in it all the time or else it goes away over time. It's not done alone; it's done in community" (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013). Kyle also described the need for ongoing attention, "A person might experience some components of transformation and get some peace from their past, but if they don't continue living into those practices, it [transformation] quits" (Kyle, personal communication, February

16, 2013). Scott encourages each group of 201 participants to continue their transformational journey.

When I'm leading 201 I always say, 'For half a year, Faith in Action has provided a set of systems and structures that have kept these new mental models and these practices alive for you. If you don't take responsibility for creating some systems and structures to keep giving life to this, pretty quickly you'll go back to the systems and structures that you're currently part of. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Larry described how he continually encourages former Faith in Action participants from his local church to keep their transformation alive.

I think you need a system to stay fully engaged to live it out. I encouraged several people from my church to become Faith in Action coaches because I saw that they were in danger of losing what they experienced in 101 and 201. I encouraged people to become a coach, where you've got to relook at the material and stay in the material. It's not just informational, it's actually being lived out. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

In addition to encouraging others, Larry keeps transformation alive for himself by teaching it and living it. Larry described his process this way.

In Faith in Action, if you're going to be a facilitator, a coach, a leader, it has to be real in you. One of the reasons I teach my Wednesday Night class is because it makes me work, it makes me keep alive what I'm learning. I had to put it in my own words. I'm teaching it, I'm living it. It's keeping it alive and fresh. It's becoming more of who you are the more time you spend in it. (Larry, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Participants explained that people grow in emotional maturity as they commit to their ongoing personal transformation. Kyle summarized this perspective well as he described the concept, self-differentiation.

I think you see ongoing transformation in a person's life. They become healthier. I think as a person's emotional maturity increases, you know it. They are more calm. They are less reactive. They have the capacity to really articulate who they are and what they believe without being intimidated by others or without having to dominate others and have their way. (Kyle, personal communication, February 16, 2013)

Tammy defined *self-differentiation* as "to be able to stay connected to other people and at the same time stay connected to our own self and our own values and be able to communicate

that well” (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013). She also described why self-differentiation is crucial for leaders who foster personal transformation in others.

Leaders need a certain amount of emotional intelligence, a certain amount of an ability to be able to be present with other people and communicate well—to be able to stay connected even in the face of a certain amount of anxiety. Transformation stirs up anxiety, it just does. If we, as leaders can’t handle that, if we can’t contain that, if we can’t stay in touch with our own values and at the same time be able to stay connected with a person who is acting out in whatever anxious way, we lose credibility. We can’t guide the process, and the other participants see that and lose a certain amount of confidence. (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Bob described his journey with self-differentiation by stating, “One thing I saw, for me, in my own personal journey and continuum, things don’t change around me unless I change. If I want to see transformation around me, I need to pursue that for myself” (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013). He explained how he grew into this understanding.

It really clicked for me when somebody in the Faith in Action community said, ‘Transformation begins to happen when you stop looking at how everyone else impacts you and you start seeing how you impact everyone else. That’s when transformation happens.’ (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob also shared some challenges he experienced in regard to growing in self-differentiation.

So, I began to ask that question as I was coaching, “What is the impact that I’m having on you?” That’s hard. I see myself doing the blame game all of the time, it’s because of them, that’s why this is; they don’t really care. (Bob, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Bob shared another example of self-differentiation.

I can go to my small group and be really pissed, but it’s not from anything that happened in there [small group]. But, that’s because of me. How can I play different? Sometimes transformation happens again because you’re different and you can see where that difference can happen. (Bob, personal communication, February 2013)

Self-differentiation leads to emotional maturity. Emotional maturity and the power of God enable a person to live out transformed perspectives in all arenas of life. This can lead to a ripple effect of transformation.

Ripple effect. Study participants described the role that leaders play in helping Faith in Action participants *ripple*, or share, their personal transformation into other communities of influence. Henry summarized this perspective well:

It's amazing, I love that Faith in Action is a process that is free. I love that it is a process that is driven by volunteers that are committing a lot of time to work. They'll be with you in that conference call every week and they're going to listen to you. They promise they're going to love you well. How much do they pay for that? It's free; it's given for free. The Gospel is in us—this is our freedom that comes rippling out to communities, to families, to relationships, and eventually you see their stories. Two years later, three years later, this person grows and opens that door to start a missional community. You see amazing stories of people doing things that are awe-inspiring. (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013)

The goal of Faith in Action reinforces what participants described regarding the intention of sharing personal transformation with others. Faith in Action leaders describe the goal of Faith in Action as “the multiplication of transformed and transforming leaders who are leading missional communities in families, neighborhoods, communities, work places, and third spaces of our city” (Herrington et al., 2012, p. 24).

Scott described how Faith in Action participants ripple, or share, their transformation with their respective missional communities.

There are so many faces who have shown up and are now out there teaching this in their missional communities where nobody in their missional communities has ever come to Faith in Action, but they're having conversations about chronic anxiety. They're having conversations about vows. They're having conversations about integrity. That's becoming part of the culture of their world and the systems they're a part of. When you begin to see that, you can know that it's taken root in a deep kind of way. (Scott, personal communication, February 18, 2013)

Henry also affirmed ripple effect perspective by stating, “When I see people becoming a catalyst in their own relationships, I would say transformation is very, very deep. It is the deepest part—when you see their relationships are being transformed” (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2013).

Transformation also has a ripple effect upon future Faith in Action participants. Henry explained,

One of the beautiful things about Faith in Action is that many males and females come to the retreat. We ask them why they chose to attend. One woman said, ‘I saw the change that was so deep in my husband [who participated] that I said I wanted to go.’ We had a son participant say, “I saw my dad change in such a deep way, whatever he’s going through I want to go through because it’s inspiring.” That is deep transformation when you are not only being transformed and experiencing freedom but you become a catalyst for transformation in others. (Henry, personal communication, February 17 2013)

Tammy also explained how the ripple effect contributes to future Faith in Action participants. Tammy believes transformation, in many cases, has already begun even before an individual even shows up for a Faith in Action retreat because the individual was likely invited by someone else to attend (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013). She described,

Chances are, they’ve [new attendees] been invited by someone else—they’ve seen something in that person’s life that is compelling enough; rarely do people show up and say, “I’m looking for a new program—I needed something to do this weekend.’ What’s happened is people [in the Faith and Action community] have seen something in someone else’s life and they have said, ‘I think you should go to Faith in Action.’” (Tammy, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

John also explained how current and former participants invite future Faith in Action participants.

You invite in a way that is compelling and motivates other people, and then other people go, “Wow, how do you go to one of those things?” That’s really how it happens. It happens person by person, generally speaking, and it’s through people talking about what they’re experiencing, what they’re learning that motivates other people to do it. (John, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

The transformational journey develops organically at different paces in each individual. As individuals experience transformed mindsets, they are able to naturally live into the discipleship mental model with a ripple effect and become catalysts for the greater good, influencing their home, work, and places of play.

Summary of the Findings

The participants in this study described fostering personal transformation with Faith in Action participants as a non-linear, process-oriented journey that incorporates interplay and playback between Faith in Action leaders and participants.

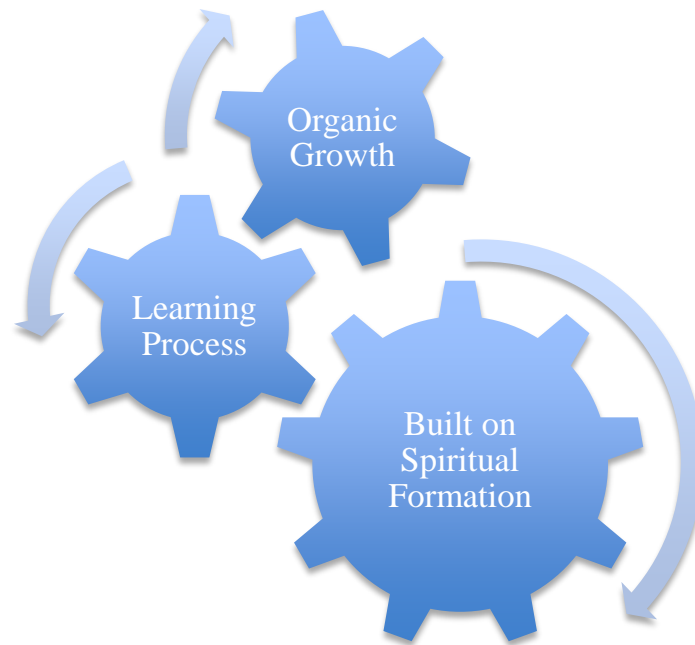


Figure 6. Faith in Action process.

Spiritual formation, the lifelong spiritual journey that people experience as God forms them into disciples of Jesus Christ, is the foundation of the Faith in Action process. Faith in Action puts forth a discipleship mental model that seeks to empower missional living as it represents a way of thinking about disciples of Jesus who experience and influence others to experience transformation. The discipleship mental model is a pathway to a specific way of

thinking, being, and acting; therefore, deconstruction of current mental models is a part of the Faith in Action process. Deconstruction refers to the process of cognitive and psychological unlearning and reordering people experience as they seek to live into Faith in Action's discipleship mental model. God's presence is central to spiritual formation.

Faith in Action leaders value the process of learning. Leaders operate as a learning community, and they believe that an intentional, experience-based learning process is necessary for personal transformation. Two unique aspects of the Faith in Action program include (a) the learning process of information, practice, and reflection and, (b) the use of well-trained coaches who offer encouragement and accountability to participants. Through the process, new habits and new mindsets emerge for participants as they engage the cognitive content through experience by trying on new roles and seeking life-giving behavior that leads to transformed mindsets. Coaches offer encouragement and accountability along the way.

Personal transformation happens through an organic process. A leader cannot force transformation in a participant, and there is no predetermined timeline for personal transformation to manifest. Faith in Action leaders give their word to ongoing personal transformation in their own lives as they walk alongside Faith in Action participants in their respective journeys. As Faith in Action participants experience transformed mindsets, they share their journey with the people they encounter in their daily life rhythms at home, work, and places of play. The Faith in Action community seeks transformed mindsets as they together live missionally, mobilizing with other Christians to be the functioning Body of Christ wherever they go.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter will focus on several important outcomes of the study. First, a summary of the findings will be presented. A discussion of several main points will then link the study to current literature and also to its implications for faith leaders. Finally, suggestions for further research will be offered.

The main research question of this study asked: “How do leaders of Mission City foster personal transformation in participants of the Faith in Action program?” The sub questions for this study are listed below:

1. How do you describe personal transformation?
2. What are the outcomes of personal transformation?
3. What is needed in the learning process to foster transformation?
4. How do you perceive the Faith in Action program fostering personal transformation in participants?

The findings of this study show that the research questions were answered in a comprehensive manner. Faith in Action leaders foster personal transformation in the program’s participants in a dynamic fashion through a process that is built on spiritual formation and connected to a learning process that results in organic growth patterns.

First and foremost, the Faith in Action process involves a personal transformation journey rooted in spiritual formation. The spiritual formation process connects participants with God so that God can bring about the transformation that leads to missional living. God’s presence coupled with transformed perspectives enables participants to become catalysts who mobilize Christians to become the functioning Body of Christ in their homes, neighborhoods,

workplaces, and third spaces to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need. Personal transformation is connected with community transformation through the Faith in Action process.

To frame the personal transformation journey, Faith in Action leaders help participants live into a particular mental model of discipleship that is comprised of three interactive pieces: radical obedience, a reflective life, and authentic community. The discipleship mental model represents a way of thinking about disciples of Jesus who experience and influence others to experience transformation. Transformed perspectives enable participants to live into the discipleship mental model as a way of life.

This study showed that deconstructing mental models that impede the discipleship mental model is a large part of the personal transformation process. The deconstruction process, according to the Faith in Action study participants, is described in six aspects: deconstructing the false self, deconstructing Western culture, deconstructing image management, deconstructing individual morality, deconstructing intellectual processes, and deconstructing compartmentalization. God's presence is central to the Faith in Action transformational journey.

Based on the data from participants in this study, Faith in Action leaders value learning and operate from a learning community perspective. Faith in Action leaders continually challenge assumptions, evaluate effectiveness, and experiment as a community of practice. Two aspects of this learning process that were described in detail were strengthening accountability through coaching and facilitating new habits and new mindsets.

The third study theme, organic growth, included perspectives about the need for Faith in Action leaders to commit to the journey of self-transformation before attempting to help foster it in others. The theme continued with a description of the ongoing process of personal

transformation. Lastly, the organic growth theme described how personal transformation ripples into the community into all spheres of an individual's influence.

There is a transformative process happening with the Faith in Action program from the perspective of its leaders. The findings are well documented, comprehensively described, and they add to the literature on transformative learning.

Discussion and Implications

On the basis of this study, there are three important concepts that church leaders should consider when fostering personal transformation rooted in discipleship. For the purposes of this discussion, the term *transformational discipleship* will be used to describe this personal transformation process. Figure 7 depicts the funneling, or integrating, of three concepts that can lead to transformational discipleship: addressing discipleship deficiencies, fostering a process-oriented worldview, and leading as cultural architects.

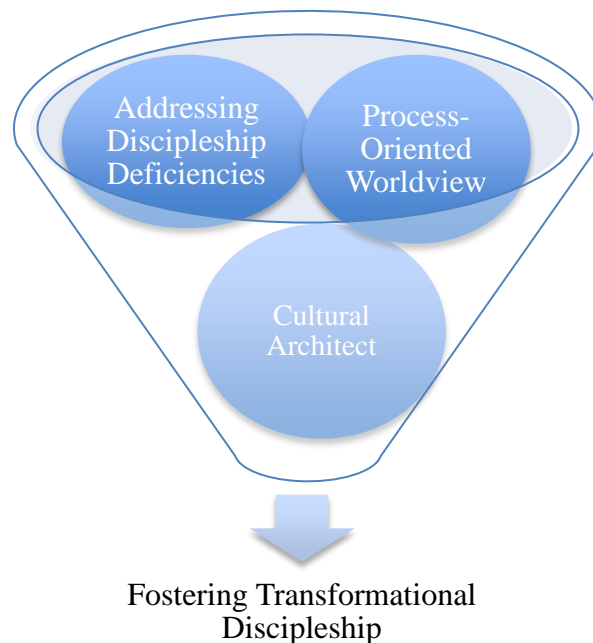


Figure 7. Fostering transformational discipleship.

Addressing Discipleship Deficiencies

This study demonstrates that deconstructing the mental models that impede discipleship is a significant part of transformational discipleship. Unlearning mental models that impede discipleship is a challenge when church leaders do not focus on the mental models that currently hold their learning in place. Therefore, church leaders need to reflect on their current discipleship efforts, challenge assumptions about discipleship processes, and address discipleship deficiencies. Church leaders need to address discipleship deficiencies in the following three areas if they seek to foster transformational discipleship: discipleship is more than information transmission, discipleship is more than behavior modification, and transformational discipleship involves a divine-human engagement with God.

The findings from this study show that for Faith in Action leaders transformation is the bottom-line result of true discipleship. Facilitating transformed mindsets with the discipleship mental model is Faith in Action's central focus. Making disciples should also be the central focus that guides every Christian church's actions. After Jesus' death and resurrection, He gave a clear command to His first disciples:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

The fundamental reason a church exists is to make disciples. Therefore, church leaders should ask the following questions: What does a disciple of Jesus Christ look like? How is a disciple made? Are disciples being made as a result of our church's ministry efforts?

Geiger et al. (2012) assert that Christ-centered discipleship results in transformation, but most churches are deficient in discipleship. They describe the different areas where many churches put their focus.

We have learned to do many things as church leaders and members. We build buildings. We design programs. We staff our churches. We put on events. We rally people around new initiatives. . . . But are we making disciples? Have we become proficient in many things while simultaneously becoming deficient in the one thing that matters most, discipleship? (Geiger et al., 2012, p. 11)

In 2010, Geiger et al. (2012) conducted a research project called *Transformational Discipleship* where they sought to uncover what kind of discipleship is truly transformational. They found that, among the various church members and church leaders who were surveyed, *discipleship* as a word and concept is used to describe a multitude of things that may or may not have anything to do with transformation (Geiger et al., 2012). They explain that faulty thinking about transformational discipleship has huge implications for discipleship deficiencies.

Perhaps the deficiency flows from a faulty understanding of discipleship. If a church or an individual has an inaccurate view of discipleship, the resulting impact is horrifyingly huge. We have observed two common yet flawed views that unfortunately impact a church's likelihood to make disciples that are transformed: equating information with discipleship and viewing discipleship merely as behavior modification. (p. 18)

Therefore, if church leaders seek to foster transformational discipleship, they will need to challenge their personal assumptions about equating information transmission with discipleship and also about viewing discipleship merely as behavior modification.

Discipleship is more than information transmission. The Faith in Action leaders in this study overwhelmingly explained that information about God does not bring transformation, but experience with God and living missionally do bring transformation. The leaders in this study utilize a learning process of information, practice, and reflection supported by encouragement and accountability through coaching. To them, discipleship is more than information transmission, and their teaching processes and leadership approaches reflect their philosophy.

Since many churches currently equate discipleship with cognitive knowledge, these church leaders operate largely from an “information transmission mindset” when engaging in

discipleship processes (Geiger et al., 2012). An information transmission mindset wrongly assumes that more information about God will bring transformation. Consequently, many church members may be informed, but they may never transformed or acquire a disciple mindset. This information transmission mindset is a discipleship deficiency. Church leaders need to challenge assumptions about which educational processes facilitate long-term transformation rather than short-term behavior modification or passivity. In order to do this, church leaders might need to grow in the depth of their adult education perspectives.

Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) offers a theoretical framework for creating processes, environments, and learning objectives that focus on psychological, behavioral, and convictional outcomes. While behavioral outcomes flow out of transformative learning theory, the primary focus is on a changed mindset (convictional shift), with behavior shifting as a natural out-flowing of transformed perspectives.

Discipleship is more than behavior modification. Another inaccurate view that many churches hold is that discipleship is about behavior modification (Geiger et al., 2012). Viewing discipleship as behavior modification is another discipleship deficiency.

Faith in Action leaders in this study described transformed mindsets as the convictional shift that people experience as they live into Faith in Action's discipleship mental model. The discipleship mental model does not call for the behavioral modification of living better by *doing more*. Instead, the discipleship mental model invites people to *be different* from a worldview perspective. Benner (2012) states that he prefers to use the term, *Christ-consciousness*, as opposed to *Christ-likeness* when talking about the "changed being." He explains,

Too easily *becoming like Christ* gets reduced to changed behavior. Genuine transformation involves something much deeper: changed being. It is taking on the mind and heart of Christ and consequently living with the awareness that we participate in the life of God without any loss of our uniqueness. This is the destiny of all humans. It is the

Word of God made flesh and enlightening everyone who comes into the world (John 1:9). (Benner, 2012, p. 69)

Church leaders need to challenge their assumptions about what discipleship involves if they seek to foster transformational discipleship in others.

Fostering transformational discipleship is about co-journeying with God's people as they grow in their understanding of the invitation to be different through their God-given identity. God invites His people to be different. As God's people, identity matters deeply, because of the life, ministry, and reconciliation of Jesus Christ. As followers of Jesus further understand their identity, they are impacted in their thinking, being, and acting. Through our identity, God justifies us by making us right with Him through the divine connection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Our identity is sealed because of Jesus Christ, and through this identity God also invites us to be sanctified on a life-long journey of joy, pain, and growth as He shapes us. God fosters a journey of allowing His people to become who they already are in His eyes. This is the transformational discipleship journey.

Church leaders ought to encourage and train people to live in response to their God-given identity this side of heaven. Wegner and Magruder (2012) write about the need for church leaders to have an expanded understanding, communication, and embodiment of the gospel through "expanding the Gospel from a message of *saved souls* to one of *saved wholes*" (p. 26). This charge is not meant to undermine the perfect saving work of Jesus Christ. Instead, it is an invitation to stretch a worldview about how Jesus' perfect saving work affects believers in their daily life rhythms. The "saved wholes" perspective is concerned with both heaven and earth. Heaven and earth are both part of our identity, since God will culminate our story with the merging of heaven and earth. God does not need our help to bring restoration to the world, but

God does invite us to join Him in a divine-human engagement through transformational discipleship.

Transformational discipleship involves a divine-human engagement. God has declared that believers are redeemed through Jesus Christ (justification), and believers are also invited to explore how this identity declaration impacts their daily lives (sanctification). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christians are able to live into their identity in Jesus Christ. The problem is that the self-help movement has scared some church leaders away from talking about sanctification. Geiger et al. (2012) explain, “Many leaders have overreacted to the narcissism of the Christianized self-help section of Barnes and Noble by refusing to touch the identity lens. Sadly, the result is that many Christians fail to realize the greatness of their identity” (p. 98). As a result, some church leaders assume a role of passivity in their approach to transformational discipleship. Geiger et al. (2012) explain, “Some leaders and Christians drift toward passivity in their approach to spiritual transformation. They rightly believe that God is the one who transforms, but they wrongly assume zero responsibility for their maturation” (p. 56).

These particular church leaders who are operating from a passive perspective might also have a fear about works-righteousness theology. They rightly want believers to understand that God does the saving (justification), but they wrongly dismiss focusing on the transformative process God brings to individuals and communities (sanctification). Their fear of works-righteousness theology metaphorically paralyzes them in their abilities to seek how God can and will continue to transform His people this side of heaven. Consequently, these church leaders place an unhealthy burden on themselves because of their fear of works-righteousness. They then minister from a protectionist posture.

The opposite extreme of passivity is performance.

Other leaders and Christians drift to performance in their view of discipleship, as if we are the ones who transform ourselves. These leaders trade in their freedom in Christ for an updated version of the law filled with human regulations and legislated self-righteousness. (Geiger et al., 2012, p. 57)

Instead of staying caught in passivity or performance, church leaders should approach transformational discipleship as a connection with God through a mysterious divine-human engagement. Figure 8 displays the divine-human spectrum of transformational discipleship.



Figure 8. Divine-human spectrum of transformational discipleship. Adapted from *Transformational discipleship: How people really grow*, by E. Geiger, M. Kelley, and P. Nation, 2012, Nashville, TN: B & H., pp.55-58. Copyright 2012 by Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation.

Passivity and performance are two discipleship deficiencies that many church leaders assume. Another discipleship deficiency occurs if leaders do not understand that transformational discipleship involves a divine-human engagement. Geiger et al. (2012) use the metaphor of *posture* in talking about the divine-human engagement with God. They state, “God is the one enabling His people to mature and grow while His people are invited to place themselves in the right posture” (p. 57). Church leaders need to teach reliance upon God while encouraging

Christians to humbly place themselves in the right posture to experience transformation since ultimately, God does the transforming. Furthermore, church leaders need to focus on creating environments for the Holy Spirit to bring transformation to the lives of His people. In this study, Tammy described her role as one who sets a metaphorical table for God to bring transformation.

Faith in Action leaders in this study unanimously explained that God's presence is central to transformational discipleship and that without God transformation is not possible. Geiger et al. (2012) caution church leaders not to assume too much responsibility in the transformation process,

As a church leader your role is not to transform people. You cannot, and it is offensive to God if you believe you can. Your role is to place people in the pathway of God's transforming power. Your leadership, preaching, teaching, investing, and counseling are to be instruments God uses for His holy endeavors to transform people. (p. 58)

There is not a prescriptive process for how discipleship processes should develop in each individual church. Church leaders need to move away from searching for the silver bullet to solve "the discipleship problem." Church leaders also need to challenge linear-mechanistic worldviews for life, mission, and ministry. Church leaders need to see discipleship as a life-long journey and embrace a process-oriented worldview.

Fostering a Process-Oriented Worldview

Transformational discipleship involves a developmental journey that does not unfold in a linear, mechanistic way. Therefore, fostering transformational discipleship necessitates a process-oriented worldview. Benner (2012) explains how faith involves openness to God that is rooted in a process-oriented worldview.

God comes to us disguised as our life, and if we fail to be open to the flow of our life and the gifts it brings us, we cannot be genuinely open to God. If we are open to our life, God will introduce into it the grace that we need to grow up into the fullness of our true self-in-Christ. (p. 64)

While a person may not always be open to the discomfort and uncertainty associated with transformative growth, this philosophy of life as a gift from God necessitates a process-oriented worldview that invites openness to God.

Before church leaders seek to foster transformational discipleship in others, they need to ask themselves if they truly see their personal faith-development as a process unfolding throughout their lifespan. While church leaders can affirm that God has secured a saving faith for them through Jesus Christ, they also ought to challenge their own assumptions about their mindsets related to the process-oriented nature of life and faith development.

Faith development. James Fowler (1995) mapped a comprehensive framework for understanding faith development. Benner (2012) cites Fowler's research in his work about spiritual transformation through human development. Benner notes that faith developmental theory (Fowler, 1995) distinguishes belief from faith. In my experience as a church-based educational leader, church leaders tend to confuse the concepts of belief and faith. Many church leaders can have a tendency to teach for cognitive belief alone, as opposed to fostering an environment for a faith development journey. Both belief and faith are important. Benner (2012) explains the distinction between belief and faith in this way.

Fowler begins by making an important distinction between faith and belief. Belief on the one hand, he argues, involves intellectual assent to concepts or propositions as set forth in religious doctrines and creeds. Faith, on the other hand, is the orientation of the total person that defines one's way of relating to that which is universal and considered to be ultimate. Faith, in Fowler's view, gives purpose and direction to life, shaping one's hopes, strivings, thoughts, and actions. (pp. 42-43)

From this view, faith is expressed in how a person lives her life. Faith is a part of a person's being and doing. Benner (2012) explains the connection between being and doing.

Faith is more of a verb than a noun. It is our way of being in the world, our way of relating to life. If we are open to life, this way of being will evolve and change. Apart from this we cannot maintain integrity because being at one within one's self requires

adjusting how we believe and how we live in ways that correspond to the changes in who we become as we grow and mature. (p. 43)

Faith development theory requires a process-oriented worldview, since the focus is on *becoming* through the lifespan. Faith calls for people to be open to God as He brings transformation to their lives.

Openness to God invites an individual to relinquish control over his life. Giving up control is at the heart of living by faith and trusting God. “Recall the words of Jesus: ‘We must lose our life before we can truly find it.’ We must let go of our life and feel the fear of free fall before we can know our self to be truly held” (Benner, 2012, p. 66). The free fall of life might seem chaotic to an individual, but chaos is at the heart of becoming.

Embracing chaos. A process-oriented worldview embraces chaos. Keel (2007) describes the tension between chaos and openness to God.

When we try prematurely to regain control of something chaotic there is a good chance we could undercut the very thing God is doing among us, if only we had the eyes to see the emerging order that, while alien to our sensibilities, is nevertheless present. (p. 239)

Keel (2007) describes his personal journey with living into a process-oriented worldview and embracing the chaos of life and ministry.

I remember meeting with my spiritual director and friend, Benedictine Monk Father Adam Ryan, at a particularly chaotic time in my life. Father Adam pointed me to the creation account of the Genesis 1 narrative in which we discover the Spirit of God hovering over the chaos and out of the chaos calling forth life. He told me that chaos is often a prerequisite to new creation in Scripture. This discovery helped me to reinterpret and re-narrate times in my life and ministry that, in a setting of control, had seemed confusing and frightening. Through this different paradigm I began to see chaos as an opportunity for transformation and hope. (Keel, 2007, pp. 238-39)

Church leaders should strive to embrace the chaos of life and faith development in themselves, in individuals, and in communities instead of seeking to gain control over what God is doing in the process. Embracing chaos is a challenge for church leaders, because the human

inclination is to seek control and stability. Being present through the discomfort is generally not desirable. Western thinkers have a tendency to want to fix things. Shame and vulnerability researcher Brene Brown utilizes a metaphor to describe how humans desire control by numbing pain instead of being present to the pain (Work of the People, 2013). Brown suggests that the church should be more like a midwife rather than like an epidural. She explains that many times church leaders seek to numb the pain and fix the problems of their church members instead of being present with them as they experience pain and growth (Work of the People, 2013). It is normal to desire stability, but the process of becoming requires stages of instability and chaos that lead to transformation. Church leaders ought to practice their way into a process-oriented worldview.

Keel (2007) offers a series of questions that are important for leaders to consider when regarding a process-oriented worldview.

What if leaders and communities resisted the impulses to assert and gain control over their environment when it begins to get a little funky and disruptive? What if leaders sought to stay present in the midst of chaos in order to discern the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit hovering in love and creativity over a new act of creation? What if leaders so postured would actually begin to work in concert with God's Spirit rather than in opposition to it? What if the description that Jesus gave to Nicodemus of the Holy Spirit as an unpredictable wind caused communities to surrender to this Holy Wind the way a ship raises its sail and runs? (Keel, 2007, p. 240)

This series of questions from Keel (2007) points to a need for a ministry of presence as church leaders co-journey with God's people. The problem is that many church leaders operate from leadership perspectives that compete with this co-journey philosophy of ministry.

Furthermore, church leaders may operate from systems and structures in their local church that impede transformational discipleship processes. It is for those reasons that church leaders need to invest their time and energies into leading as cultural architects.

Leading as Cultural Architects

Church leaders should address discipleship deficiencies, strive to live into a process-oriented worldview, and they must also realize that they have the capacity to create and change congregational culture as cultural architects for transformational discipleship. Organizational culture specialist Edgar Schein states, “If one wishes to distinguish leadership from management or administration, one can argue that leaders create and change culture, while management and administration act within culture” (2004, p. 11).

Schein (2010) defines *culture* as follows:

The culture of a group can be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

Culture is an abstract concept, but culture is observable in organizations. Schein (2010) notes that, “habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms are an example of one model that refers to a wide range of observable events and underlying forces within culture” (p. 14). Schein (2010) defines this model by stating,

Habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms are the shared cognitive frames that guide the perceptions, thoughts, and language used by the members of a group and are taught to new members in the early socialization process. (p. 15)

This study addressed habits of thinking and mental models within the Faith in Action process, as leaders facilitate a process of helping participants unlearn mental models that impede transformational discipleship and then learn and live into the discipleship mental model. Faith in Action leaders are cultural architects for transformational discipleship.

This study showed how Faith in Action leaders create a culture that helps foster transformational discipleship. As cultural architects, Faith in Action leaders are adaptive and

collaborative; they constantly challenge assumptions; they are open to learning as a learning community; and they hold tightly to the group culture of authenticity, integrity, discipleship and missional living. Every Faith in Action leader in this study could describe the group culture and how he or she lives into the culture. Church leaders need to have a growing awareness of what culture is and how it is shaped because church culture greatly impacts transformational discipleship. Church leaders seeking transformational discipleship will need to create a church culture that supports and encourages the dynamics of discipleship.

Cultural architects also explore what is happening in the larger culture (macro-culture) of society so that they can discern how the larger cultural frontier impacts their church's mission. The literature in this study showed that changes in our larger culture require a change in church leadership approaches. Gibbs (2005) explains the challenges associated with deconstructing mental models for current leadership approaches.

Yesterday's solutions and procedures may not provide an adequate or appropriate response to the present challenges. Hence, the biggest hurdles facing long-time leaders may not be in learning new insights and skills, but in unlearning what they consider to be tried and true and what thus provides them with a false sense of security. (p. 35)

As cultural architects, church leaders might need to deconstruct current mental models about leadership approaches in order to create new leadership approaches that foster transformational discipleship.

Church leadership approaches greatly impact local churches. Woodward (2012) explains that the culture at large affects church culture and, in particular, church leadership approaches. He asserts that in today's culture, leadership approaches ought to be collaborative and participatory. He explains the need for collaboration based on the connection between the media of our day and our culture, "New media creates new kinds of people. Print media causes humans to become more detached and logical, while the Internet causes people to become more involved

and participatory” (p. 67). Miller (2004) also explains how the medium of the day affects social change,

When the primary means of storing and distributing information changes, our worldview changes. Here’s how this works. When our means of storing and distributing information change, our perceptions change. Changed perceptions create changed understandings and even changed psychology. Changed identity affects relationships. Changed relationships affect the traditions and institutions that support those relationships. (p.114)

Therefore, Miller (2004) and Woodward (2012) assert that since the Internet has changed the identity and relationships of our culture at large, then those relationships will also affect institutions, including the church. Through the Internet, our larger culture is being shaped to be collaborative and participatory. The Internet serves as an equalizer that networks and connects individuals and groups to collaborate and participate with local and global causes. Social media is also influencing the collaborative and participatory worldview.

Collaboration is the native language of today’s digital culture. Many churches are not speaking that language. These churches operate only from an information-driven, overemphasis on programs and buildings. This philosophy does not speak to the cultural natives of this new day. The literature in this study showed that many church leaders are in denial about the sweeping social changes that are taking shape in our culture at large. Church leaders can no longer deny the large-scale changes. More of the same leadership approaches will not work. A transformation in leadership approaches is needed.

Woodward (2012) contends that large-scale cultural changes reach a critical mass and ignite a battle between old and new worldviews. Leadership approaches emerge from a person’s worldview. Table 8 summarizes Woodward’s (2012) perspectives on the leadership approaches of the old worldview (broadcast age) and the new worldview (digital age).

Table 8

Leadership Viewed Through the Millennium Matrix

	Broadcast Age 1950-2010	Digital Age 2010-
Kinds of Leaders	Motivational Leaders	Impartational Leaders
Kinds of Structures	Purpose driven, empowerment, information driven, buildings and programs; maintain cohesion through psychological stimulation and sense of mission	Collaborative, grass roots oriented, roving leadership, open-source approach, dispersed authority; maintain cohesion through relationships and collaboration
Focus of Leadership	Life motivational speakers, they seek to harness the potential of the organization around the mission; they teach by exhortation	Life gardeners, they cultivate a collaborative approach to current conditions, opportunities and challenges; they teach by example
Nature of Relationships with others	Appointment oriented; relationships often become a functional way to complete objectives	Unscripted, personal, familial; people use organizations to fulfill their missions for mutual benefit
Approach to Discipleship	Takes place in the sanctuary; programmatic, seminar oriented	Takes place in the living room and streets; relational, interactive, mentorship
Qualities and Skills Needed	Communication, persuasive, high profile image, innovative, interpersonal skills, novelty, ability to think on one's feet and utilize the big event	Approachable, agile, networker, touchable, accessible, missional, transparent, advocate, sustainability, resilient, collective achievement, storytelling

Note. Adapted from *Creating a missional culture: Equipping the church for the sake of the world*, by J. Woodward, 2012, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, p. 68. Copyright 2012 by JR Woodward.

Cultural architects seek to understand the culture of the day. They seek understanding not just to be relevant; instead, they seek understanding so that they can embed Jesus in the culture at large. The message of Jesus' love and salvation has not changed and does not change. However,

the medium (digital age) for the message of Jesus has changed and consequently has transformed our culture.

The church is called to live into the culture at large in a sent manner that incarnates Jesus in the living rooms and streets in relational, interactive, and natural ways. In order for this to happen, church leadership approaches need to be collaborative in nature.

Collaborative leadership. Collaborative learning and collaborative leadership are needed to foster transformational discipleship. Brookfield (2000) encourages adult educators to suspend the role of educator and take on the role of collaborative learner in the process of fostering transformative learning with adult participants. This study with Faith in Action leaders involved a dynamic interplay between leaders and participants through the transformation process. The findings show that Faith in Action leaders are collaborative learners with the participants. A church leader's approach to ministry is vital if he seeks to foster transformational discipleship. Church leaders might need to challenge their assumptions about teaching and leadership philosophies in order to foster transformational discipleship.

The majority of Christian churches have a hierarchical structure comprised of a senior pastor, maybe an associate pastor, possibly other staff, and church members who volunteer their time. I believe that church leaders should examine how structures either enable or disable transformational discipleship from taking shape. I am not asserting that hierarchy is inherently bad and that every church should abandon a hierarchical structure. Instead, I am suggesting that church leaders need to challenge their assumptions about church structures. Woodward (2012) asserts that the majority of people believe that structures are neutral. He explains why he does not believe neutrality in structures exists,

The longer I live, the more I realize that we shape structures and then the structures reshape us. I've known too many godly people who seemed to have unknowingly or

unwittingly become more corrupt because of the system and structure of ministry. We are to live by the power of the Spirit as a community of believers, seeking to wash feet [as Jesus did] so that power doesn't do its subversive work in us. (Woodward, 2012, p. 93)

For transformational discipleship to occur, cultural architects will need to create structures that reflect the theological intent of God's people being sent on mission, outside the church walls. Collaborative leadership processes will then need to embed the structure to equip God's people to be catalysts for Kingdom good in their daily life rhythms.

In conclusion, fostering transformational discipleship will require church leaders to engage in a comprehensive overhaul of their current discipleship practices; challenge their teaching and leadership assumptions; and inventory their worldview, examine their leadership approaches, and create systems and structures that enable collaborative leadership.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study with Faith in Action leaders revealed findings about fostering the process of transformational discipleship. Implications from this study are significant for any leader who seeks to foster transformational discipleship. Based on the findings, recommendations for further study include the following:

- Exploring the impact of church systems and structures on transformational discipleship;
- Exploring processes for lay leaders to be mobilized for Kingdom impact;
- Creating learning experiences that focus on the psychological, convictional, and behavioral outcomes that lead to a disciple mindset;
- Creating authentic community in a fast-paced, highly individualized culture;
- Creating environments that invite vulnerability without breeding shame and guilt;

- Fostering transformational discipleship using bivocational church workers. How could bivocational church workers live, model, and equip church members to be everyday disciples who are also everyday missionaries?

Closing Reflections

I took a personal retreat in September 2013 at the Benedictine Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska, to finish writing my dissertation. As God would have it, He orchestrated a divine conversation between another solo retreator and me. Little did I know that when this gentleman asked me about the topic of my dissertation that my answer would speak to his heart and life circumstance.

In response to his question, I talked about my dissertation topic, the study findings, and the applications I made. Surprisingly, his eyes began to tear a little as I spoke. Later, as I listened to his personal story, I was incredibly moved when I realized that much of what he told me was straight from my dissertation. He spoke about a unique mission frontier that the church is invited to engage. He talked about how at times church structures can disenable Kingdom movement from happening. He spoke about the discipleship processes he had invested in during the past four years with a church plant in a large Midwestern city. He described how the processes were bearing fruit since they were centered on the spiritual disciplines and rooted in community. He talked about the Kingdom impact these discipleship efforts were having in his local community. He described the “long haul” that is necessary for the discipleship journey. He spoke about how initially his church staff was “on board” and excited about investing in this type of deeply impactful ministry. He then shared that over time the church staff reverted back to their “previous scorecard” of measuring effectiveness in ministry by counting numerical growth alone. Ultimately, he and his church staff agreed to disagree about mission and ministry philosophy. He

then stepped away from ministry at this church plant. He was on a personal retreat to process, reflect, and pray about this transitional time in his life, while I was on my own personal retreat to complete my dissertation.

This gentleman was not bitter as he shared his story with me. He talked about his own personal transformation journey and also about his trust in God that He would work things out for good. He then told me that, in general, Western-thinking people have a really tough time with life transitions, because they don't create space to allow for growth through the discomfort of transitional times. I could tell that this gentleman lives into a process-oriented worldview, based on how he talked along with his decision to create a personal solo retreat. I could also tell that this gentleman relies on God to bring transformation in his life by putting himself in the right posture for God. I wished him well on his personal retreat and life journey. In that moment, I realized that this completed dissertation is not *just* an academic endeavor for me to become Dr. Vanessa Seifert. Instead, I realized that this dissertation topic and study has large implications for Christians, church leaders, ministry-training professors, and regional and national church leaders. Discipleship is not something that is an add-on to a church's ministry—Discipleship is central to what it means to be a Christian. Therefore, fostering a disciple-mindset is crucial.

This dissertation has truly transformed me. Benner (2012) states, "Genuine transformation involves a reorganization and realignment of personality that results in a changed way of being in the world" (p. 59). He continues,

The result of this movement [transformation] is a larger and truer self, which will be reflected in more authenticity and vitality, increased wholeness and integration, larger horizons, an expanded sense of identity, and a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life. (Benner, 2012, p. 60)

This dissertation has systematically changed my way of being in the world through transformed perspectives about discipleship, spiritual formation, and church leadership

approaches. The dissertation process has stretched my worldview in ways I could not have imagined when I first began my PhD program in 2007.

I believe it is impossible to study about personal transformation and not be affected by it. As Quinn (1996) states, a person either commits to deep transformation or to a slow death in a lifetime. This study has enlivened me to commit to deep transformation as an individual, as a church educational leader, and as a catalyst for Kingdom good with fellow Christians in my local community. It has shaped me to be an advocate for creating systems and structures that will enable God's people to experience transformative discipleship and share that journey with the world. This dissertation has formed life-long research interests that will inform my various vocations as a scholar-practitioner.

In conclusion, people might argue with what I say and write about regarding church leadership perspectives, but they cannot argue with me about the ways that I choose to live my life. I choose to live my life on a co-journey with a group of people who I trust and can be vulnerable with as I receive encouragement and accountability to radiate Christ's love in my daily life rhythms in my house, in my places of work, and wherever else I may go so that together we can be catalysts for Kingdom good. With God's help, I choose to see every moment of life as a sacred journey. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ.

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Appendix A

Letter to Potential Participants for a Study of Missional Living as a Catalyst to Personal

Transformation in the Christian Church

University of Incarnate Word

LETTER TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS FOR A STUDY OF:
MISSIONAL LIVING AS A CATALYST TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION
IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

University of the Incarnate Word

To Potential Study Participant:

My name is Vanessa Seifert. I am a doctoral student in Organizational Leadership at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) in San Antonio, Texas. My dissertation research will explore the process of how the leaders of Mission City foster personal transformation in participants of the Faith in Action program.

I would like to invite you to participate as a participant in this research. You will be invited to participate in a face-to-face interview at one of Mission City's satellite locations. The interview will take approximately 60-120 minutes of your time. Your time and effort for participating in this study are highly appreciated. Additionally, the researcher would like to participate in participant observations for Faith in Action 101, 201, and 301.

Although aggregated results will be reported in the dissertation, individual identity and data will remain confidential, and only the principal researcher will have access to all the information gathered. Anonymity in this research is guaranteed. The data will be destroyed upon completion of this study. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any penalty. If you have any concerns or would like to have more information about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my study further with you.

Thank you very much for participation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Seifert

Email: dcevanessa@gmail.com

Telephone: 402-580-1015

Appendix B

Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study of Missional Living as a

Catalyst to Personal Transformation in the Christian Church

University of Incarnate Word—Interview and Observation Consent Form

**SUBJECT CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A STUDY OF:
MISSIONAL LIVING AS A CATALYST TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION
IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

University of the Incarnate Word - Interview and Observation Consent Form

Project Title : Missional Living as a Catalyst to Personal Transformation in the Christian Church

Purpose of Study : To explore the process of how the leaders of Mission City, a religious organization in the Southwestern part of the United States, foster personal transformation in participants of the Faith in Action Program.

Principal Investigator : Vanessa Seifert - Organizational Leadership in Dreeben School of Education, University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX 78209

Phone : 402-580-1015

Email : dcevanessa@gmail.com

You are being asked to take part in a research study of missional living as a catalyst to personal transformation in the Christian Church. The researcher wants to learn about the process of fostering personal transformation. You are being asked to take part in this study because you have a leadership role with Mission City in helping to foster personal transformation in the participants of the Faith in Action Program. If you decide to take part, the researcher will connect with you for either/or both interviews and observations. Your time and assistance are highly appreciated. The interview time will range from 60-120 minutes in duration. During the interview the researcher will audio record the questions and responses – data will be stored on cassette tapes that will be destroyed after the study is completed. Observations will take place with Mission City's schedule of 101, 201, and 301 events. Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions and agree to participate in this research.

- Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty, and it will not affect your future status at Mission City. The researcher does not guarantee that participants will benefit from taking part in this study.
- Participants are not expected to encounter any risk, and confidentiality of participation in this research is guaranteed by using a pseudonym for anonymity. Everything the researcher learns from you in this study will be confidential and cannot be identified with you. If the study results are published, your real name will not be identified in any way.
- Please contact the researcher by telephone or email, listed above, if there are any questions concerning your participation in this study.
- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of the Incarnate Word has reviewed this study and permitted its developments. For further questions about the rights of any research subject, please contact the IRB chairman, Dr. Absael Antelo. (Email: antelo@uiwtx.edu or telephone: 210-832-3215.
- You will be given a copy of this letter to keep. Continuing with the interview and observations indicates your consent to participate in this research project.

Thank you very much for your help.

I have read the information provided and agree to participate in the study.

Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Appendix C
Instruments for Data Collection

Instruments for Data Collection

Interview Guide

These are the guiding questions that the researcher will explore:

1. What motivated you to become a leader who helps foster personal transformation in others?
2. Can you tell me in detail about the kinds of things that you have done to foster personal transformation in others?
3. Where do you find information about how to foster personal transformation in others?
4. What is needed in the learning environment for personal transformation to occur?
5. What facilitation roles are needed to foster personal transformation in participants?
6. What kinds of challenges do you experience with fostering personal transformation in others?
7. What kinds of joys do you experience with fostering personal transformation in others?

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Approval

Institutional Review Board Approval



UNIVERSITY OF THE
INCARNATE WORD

2/12/2013

Dear Ms. Seifert:

Your request to conduct the study titled *Missional Living as a Catalyst to Personal Transformation in the Christian Church* is approved as an expedited study. Your IRB number is 13-02-001 and was approved on 2/8/2013. Attached is a copy of your scanned IRB. The file includes the application with IRB number and the stamped IRB consent form. Please use copies of these stamped documents when you communicate with or consent your subjects. Electronic surveys or electronic consent forms, or other material delivered electronically to subjects must have the IRB approval number inserted into the survey or documents before they are used.

Please keep in mind these additional IRB requirements:

- This approval is for one year from the date of the IRB approval.
- Request for continuing review must be completed for projects extending past one year. Use the **IRB Continuation/Completion form**.
- Prompt reporting to the UIW IRB of any proposed changes to the approved research activity.
- Any change in proposal procedures must be promptly reported to the UIW IRB prior to implementing any changes except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Use the **Protocol Revision and Amendment form**.
- Prompt reporting to the UIW IRB of any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.
- IRBs are filed by their number. Please refer to this number when communicating about the IRB.

Suspension or termination of approval may be done if there is evidence of any serious or continuing noncompliance with Federal Regulations or any aberrations from the original application.

Congratulations and best wishes for successful completion of your research. If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school. You will be receiving a copy of this letter in the mail at the address indicated on the IRB application.

Sincerely,

[Dr. Helen Smith](#)

Dr. Helen Smith
Chair, University of the Incarnate Word IRB

Appendix E

Permission to Use Mission City Figures

Permission to Use Mission City Figures

The following memo was received from Jim Herrington, jimherrington@faithwalking.us on Wednesday, September 25 at 3:46 pm via e-mail.

Hi Vanessa:

I am Jim Herrington, the Team Leader for the Faithwalking enterprise and the primary author of the Faithwalking 101 content. By means of this email I grant you permission to use any and all figure that appear in the 101 resource.

The mental model of discipleship and the diagram that describes the development of the false self are original with us. The Johari's window is not ours. It is an adaptation from the original work that was done by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingram back in 1955. (Luft, J.; Ingham, H. (1955). "The Johari window, a graphic model of interpersonal awareness". *Proceedings of the western training laboratory in group development*(Los Angeles: UCLA).)

I am really grateful for your work and am eager to see the final product.

Blessings,

Jim Herrington

281-451-0335

<http://www.faithwalking.us>

<http://www.faithwalking.blogspot.com>