Curriculum Development for Christian Ministry

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Contents

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Use the left-hand contents menu to navigate, or the green bar at the bottom of the page to page forward and back.

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Introduction

Curriculum is a term with a variety of related but nuanced meanings. Some associate it with a specific course of study in a particular school, such as a plan or a document outlining a set of required classes. Many colleges and universities have a core curriculum, which includes a specific set of courses that all students will experience as part of their education. Major and minor courses of study have a separate curriculum with another layer of classes designed to prepare students within a specific discipline. Curriculum can also be understood as the totality of a student's teaching and learning experiences within a particular educational setting. This includes such components as prescribed classes and coursework, learning environments, teachers, students, interpersonal relationships, institutional values, and available resources. One of the most common ways to think of curriculum is the specific books or publications that serve as the content resources for a particular small group or individual class. When leaders purchase materials for a discipleship small group or recommend texts for a ministry class, they refer to them as the curriculum.

Understanding the origin of a word can bring clarity and continuity to the various ways we use the term. The English word curriculum comes from the Latin verb currere, which means "to run," and the noun *curriculum* can be verbally translated to mean "a racecourse."[1] The characteristics of a race or a racecourse are reflected in how we envision an educational curriculum or a curriculum plan. A formal race is set up with a start and finish line and boundaries that limit where the participants may run. It might cir-

1. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "curriculum," accessed July 14, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/curriculum.

cle a track or stretch across city blocks and run parallel to landmarks along the route. Sometimes races are open only to those who qualify. Others are for participants of a particular age, and some races welcome anyone and everyone to join their event. A race may include pitstops or sag wagons along the way. They may be timed or open-ended.

While races are planned and racecourses carefully constructed, not everyone who participates has the same experience or achieves the same outcome. Runners may be faster or slower; they may enjoy the community atmosphere or simply endure the event for the sake of exercise. The same is true for curriculum. It is purposely designed with consideration given to teaching and learning for a specified target audience. A curriculum plan attempts to include everything a person will intentionally encounter on a particular path that leads toward a defined educational destination. However, unplanned experiences are also part of the journey; not everyone learns the same things or in the same ways, even when participating in the same curriculum.

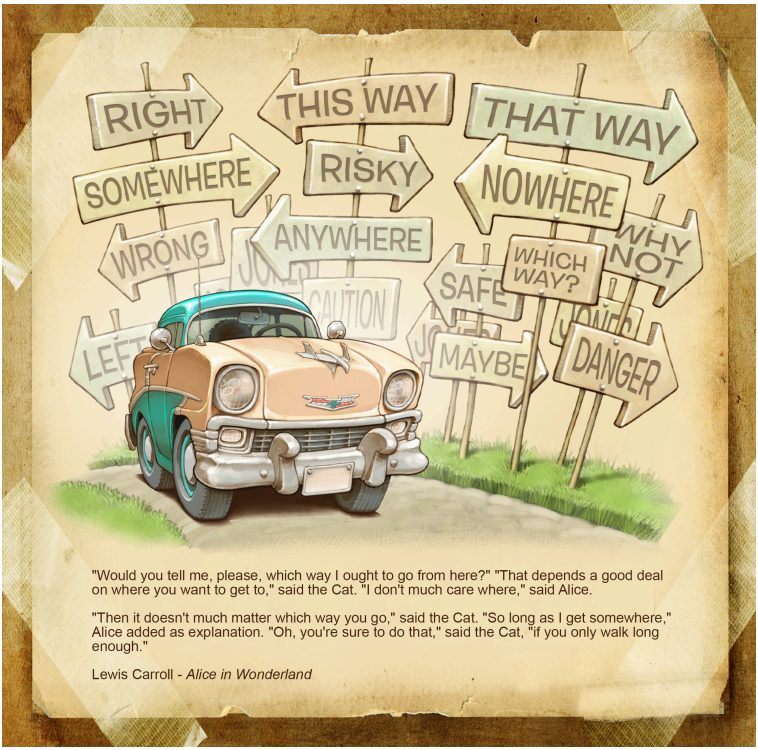
Curriculum design is given a lot of attention in education but is often overlooked in planning for Christian ministry. Strategic planning is often emphasized by ministry leadership, and while it has much in common with curriculum planning, it doesn't have the same precise meaning or intent. A strategy may include some of the same components as a curriculum plan, such as mission and vision statements, but it often has a broader focus, and a curriculum plan is typically one piece of an overall ministry strategy. It might be helpful to think of the curriculum plan as the road map a ministry should follow as it seeks to accomplish the overall strategy. The goal or mission of the curriculum plan and strategy should be identical.

The process of designing a curriculum is similar for education and ministry, but there are often outside governing agencies that mandate certain components to be included in a school's curriculum plan. These typically include the standards necessary for

an institution's accreditation. The process of curriculum planning as described in this book relates most specifically to Christian education, though the principles are the same.

Historically, the importance of curricular planning for Christian education has experienced cycles of emphasis and neglect. Curriculum resources are widely available and more accessible today than ever before due to technological advances. An internet search can yield a multitude of options that can be downloaded immediately, sometimes without a charge. However, an alarming number of these resources have no foundational design, and neither do many of the ministries that appropriate them for their discipleship efforts. This book is a response to these concerns, written to help ministry students and leaders understand the importance of curriculum planning and equip them to begin the process. It includes both theory and practice, building on biblical, philosophical, and theological foundations, and suggests a sound approach to developing a curriculum plan for a church or Christian ministry. Based on years of experience developing curriculum, writing curriculum resources, and teaching curriculum design, this book is written as a practical introductory text that provides a procedure for curriculum development. It isn't a theoretical textbook, and it isn't exhaustive or intended to be prescriptive in its use of terms. Each construct and concept should be considered integral to an effective plan, while the terminology and specific structure are open to contextualization. Consider it a guide, not a rulebook.

1. Establishing the Essentials



Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand the:

- Importance of curriculum for Christian education
- Necessity of an articulated mission statement
- Clarifying and motivational purpose of a ministry vision
- Accountability established by core values

***Be able to*:**

- Develop a mission statement for a particular ministry
- Craft a ministry vision
- Describe the core values that will guide your ministry

Many people have become frustrated to discover that one of their favorite bookstore hangouts is going out of business. Somewhere along the line, businesses that sold books eventually became ideal places to meet friends or spend some alone time with a warm beverage while reading a book or thumbing through a magazine. More and more bookstores began accommodating these experiences, but they were never the main purpose for the stores' existence. They were designed to get customers in the door and convince them to frequent their shops over those of the competition, but the ultimate goal was always to stay in business and make a profit by selling books. The innovative strategies to attract customers worked for a while, but then the ease of online shopping and

the rise of ebooks threatened their plans as sales declined. Amazon was often blamed for killing the bookstores, but even they eventually closed all of their physical retail bookstores.[1]

Customers may mourn the loss of a local bookstore that closes down, but if it can't fulfill its main objective of making a profit selling books, there is no longer a reason for it to exist. Store owners can find other ways to survive financially, but if they aren't selling books, then they can't stay true to their original purpose of being a profitable bookstore.

The Barnes & Noble chain closed over one hundred stores in a fifteen-year period, but then a shift occurred. The company found a way to recover and began successfully opening new stores again. The goal of making a profit in the bookselling industry didn't change, but the store design and retail strategy did. One key factor leading to the rebound was that individual store locations were given more freedom in which books they stocked for sale, providing them the opportunity to supply the books that their local readers wanted to buy.[2] Chain bookstores aren't the only ones to experience a comeback, as hundreds of bookstores have opened and been thriving in recent years.

People seem drawn to the community aspect of a local bookshop. They can talk with others about what they've read or gain firsthand recommendations. When they order something online, they generally search for something specific, but browsing in a shop allows readers to discover something new they didn't know existed,

1. Spencer Soper and Bloomberg, "Amazon, the Killer of Bookstores, Now Is Closing All Its Retail Book Locations," Fortune, March 3, 2022, https://fortune.com/2022/03/03/amazon-killer-book-stores-closing-retail-book-locations/.
2. Marisa Hillman, "Barnes & Noble Is Opening More Stores Than It Has in over a Decade," Reader's Digest, May 2, 2023, https://www.rd.com/article/is-barnes-and-noble-going-out-of-business/.

leading to increased sales. Regardless of the values or strategic changes made by store owners, their purpose remains the same. They exist to make a profit by providing readers with books.

The Church is not a business, but it also exists to fulfill a specific purpose. For Christians, the Church is the body of Christ, which includes all people who have accepted Christ's gift of salvation and are committed to following his teachings. The word church comes from the Greek ekklesia, which consists of kaleo (to call) and the prefix *ek* (out). The Christian Church is the group of people called out of the world to follow Christ. It was intentionally initiated as an institution by Jesus, designed to nurture and develop disciples as it grows through evangelism and thrives through worship and fellowship. Everything it does should honor and fulfill the divine purpose for which it was established (Matthew 28:18–20). A well-constructed curriculum plan is a means toward accomplishing that purpose.

As described in the introduction to this book, a curriculum is like a racecourse, a path, or a route leading to a particular destination. Developing a curriculum for Christian ministry must be focused on designing a plan to help people grow toward Christ's specific, unchangeable purpose for his Church. Humanity will continuously change in a variety of ways because we are all shaped by our cultural surroundings, and culture is never static. History (time), geography (place), and technology are some of the strongest influences on culture, and Christians cannot ignore their impact. Teaching methods, learning environments, and even subject content must adapt in consideration of these cultural shifts if the Church is to remain focused on realizing its ultimate purpose. In other words, the path may change, but the final destination will never change. The destination or purpose of the Church and its teaching ministry were mandated by God, who is immutable and not bound by time.

Christian Education/Discipleship

Christian ministries often use the terms *discipleship* or *spiritual formation* to describe the Church's focus on teaching and learning. However, for more than a century, *Christian education* was the predominant designation used by churches, Christian leaders, and higher education institutions to identify the specific educational programs designed to help Christians grow in their knowledge, understanding, and commitment to Jesus Christ. Christian education's emphasis was what we most commonly think of as discipleship. The following excerpts from twentieth-century definitions are representative of that understanding:

> Christian education is the process by which persons are confronted with and controlled by the Christian Gospel. It involves the efforts of the Christian community to guide both young and adult persons toward an ever-richer possession of the Christian heritage and a fuller participation in the life and work of the Christian fellowship.[3]
>
> Christian education is a means by which the church seeks to help persons respond to the Gospel (the message of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ) and to grow in their understanding of its promises and their acceptance of its claims.[4]
>
> It is education which has for its purpose, first, the gaining of personal religious faith...and, second, the development of that faith....One must also have a correct conception of the nature of Christianity. Christian education has no exis-

3. Paul Vieth, The Church and Christian Education (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1947), 52.
4. National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., The Objectives of Christian Education: A Study Document (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1958), 18.

> tence in its own right....Christian faith and Christian education are inseparable; where the first exists, the second is found.[5]

As these excerpts exemplify, according to its original meaning, the goal of Christian education is distinct from the traditional purposes of any other type of education. It is discipleship. It isn't simply teaching that acknowledges God or is focused on helping students learn facts about God, the Bible, or religion. It transcends human educational goals, which most often include such outcomes as gaining knowledge, becoming a better citizen, contributing to society, or providing what's necessary for a good life. All those objectives may be achieved through a solid Christian education curriculum, but they are characteristic outcomes or by-products of striving to accomplish Christ's mission for his disciples, the Church.

While the term Christian education may still be used and understood to describe the Church's teaching ministry, the meaning has shifted and expanded over time. In the twenty-first century, it most often evokes the idea of an educational institution affiliated with a church, denomination, or Christian tradition or a program of instruction that is taught from a Christian worldview. The Christian schools, colleges, and universities that serve as alternatives to public educational institutions are typically associated with the term *Christian education*. Their purpose is not the same as that of the Church's Christian educational mission. This shift in meaning is a key reason why discipleship may currently be a more appropriate term than *Christian education* to describe the educational programs and purposes within the Church.

A common way for people to think about discipleship is to associate it with religion in general and Christianity in particular. In its broadest sense, however, it is a process of intentionally learn-

5. C. B. Eavey, History of Christian Education (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 7–17.

ing from a master or teacher, and a disciple can be a student of any particular teacher or school. The Greek word for "disciple" is *mathetes*, which describes one who learns from another person, formally or informally. Christian discipleship occurs when one intentionally chooses to learn and grow from the teachings of Jesus. Mentors, pastors, or small group leaders may be the human teachers, but they are teaching God's Word from Scripture through the power and counsel of the Holy Spirit, most fully revealed by the life and teachings of Jesus. Christians often associate the term *disciples* with the original twelve men called by Jesus to follow him. The Bible uses the term *disciple* most often to describe anyone who has decided to follow Christ, not just the original twelve apostles. Today it is more common to use the word *Christians* to describe those who follow Christ, but that label wasn't used until after Christ's resurrection:

> Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11:25–26, NIV)

> Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or on the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous, and in fact they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever, and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ. With an abstract idea it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; but it can never be followed in personal obedience.

> Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.[6]

The Christians in the Early Church described in the Book of Acts were disciples and students of Jesus Christ, whose teachings were shared by prophets and teachers such as Barnabas, Saul, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen (Acts 13:1). Wherever we are in the world today, we have that same responsibility to teach and help others develop as disciples of Jesus.

Focus Activity

- The retail bookstore illustration was used to introduce and connect the reader with the basic idea of a curriculum. Based on what you read and understand, how does this illustration cause you to think about the way we practice disciple-making in the Church? What connections come to mind in terms of the purpose and the way it is accomplished?
- What other real-life illustration might you use to help others better understand the purpose or meaning of a curriculum plan?
- What term does your church use to describe the process by which people come to faith in Christ and grow in their knowledge and faith commitment? Regardless of the term, at its core, it is Christian edu-

6. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 63–64.

cation. How does your church provide this type of Christian education?

Mission

A curriculum plan for Christian ministry is a discipleship plan. Its purpose is to provide a guide for helping all persons develop as disciples of Jesus Christ. That is the mission of the Church, most clearly articulated in what is known as the *Great Commission*. The Church's mission and the mission of the curriculum plan are the same. Both are focused on discipleship:

> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20, ESV)

The one imperative in Jesus's instructions is to make disciples, with no one exempt and no people group overlooked. Making disciples includes baptizing new believers as a sign of their commitment to Christ and then teaching them to live out all of Jesus's teachings, everything he has taught and commanded. A curriculum plan is focused on fulfilling this imperative.

Jesus has given us a clear mission to guide the Church and, therefore, our curriculum journey. We know where we're headed—on the path of making disciples. Still, while the curricular destination is clear, it can be daunting to think about our responsibility to teach everything that Jesus taught. *He assured us that he'll*

be with us; we're not alone in our planning or teaching. But what if our plan omits something important that Jesus taught? We are limited in the time we have to teach, so how can we prioritize what we include in our curriculum? Jesus provided us guidance for this dilemma through what we call the *Great Commandment*. When one of the religious leaders tried to trick him into somehow devaluing the religious regulations of the day by asking him which of the laws he viewed as the most important, Jesus responded,

> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37–40, ESV)

Jesus's response didn't omit any of the scriptural teachings. In verse 40, we read Jesus's clarifying explanation that everything prescribed in the Law and Prophets is reflected in these two imperatives—love God and love others. Taken together, the Great Commission and the Great Commandment provide the heart of our mission, the directional focus for our discipleship curriculum. The target, the finish line of our racecourse, must always reflect these two mandates: ***to make disciples who love God with every part of their being and love and value others***.

Creating a Mission Statement

A curriculum plan begins with an understanding of the overall mission for which it is designed. Various terms have been used to describe this destination, such as an overall goal, objective, or purpose statement. Designating it as a mission statement aligns it most closely with Jesus's Great Commission. Christians are on a mission with God, a co-mission, to evangelize and develop disciples. This includes teaching them to love God with their hearts, souls, minds,

and strength and to love their neighbors the same way they love themselves (Mark 12:30–31). *The Message* expresses it this way: "'The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.'" (Mark 12:30–31, MSG).

- Two key passages, the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, should guide the mission statement for a Christian curriculum plan.
- A mission statement with this biblical foundation will provide a clarifying focus on why the ministry exists and what it seeks to accomplish.

These proclamations of Jesus have often been interpreted to express the key purposes of the Church as worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry or service. A church-based mission statement may include those purposes specifically, or they may be understood or suggested by the wording of the overall mission. Some Christian ministries and para-church organizations have a narrower focus in terms of their overall purpose or target audience. For instance, a ministry might understand its particular mission as developing young Christians to be leaders in their schools, an organization might have a missional focus of serving local immigrants in the name of Jesus, or a ministry might view world evangelism as its primary mission. These organizations still need to articulate a clear biblical mission that is connected to Christ's overall mission for his Church.

- A mission statement should include a reference to the intended target audience, such as a particular age group or unique population, if relevant.

Examples

> According to the National Council of Churches—Nepal, their mission is "*to unite the Christian community in Nepal, equip them spiritually; encourage them to be involved in social issues and work for the betterment of society.*"
>
> Freedom for Youth Ministries "*empowers youth across Iowa, through the love of Jesus Christ, to break out of bondage, discover their God-given talents, and lead transformed lives.*"
>
> The website for Christ's Church of the Valley (CCV) in Peoria, Arizona, says, "*Our mission has always been to reach the Valley for Christ.*" Their ministry focus is clearly on those who live in their geographical area, known as "the Valley." While this mission is geographically specific, the church also has a more formal mission statement reflective of the Great Commission and Great Commandment: "*At CCV, our mission is to WIN people to Christ, TRAIN believers to become disciples, and SEND disciples to impact the world.*"

- The most effective mission statements are clear and concise and most impactful when limited to one sentence. This makes them more memorable and increases the chance that those within the ministry will understand their overall purpose. Sometimes people speak of passing the T-shirt test to determine whether a mission statement is sufficiently succinct. If a mission statement can easily fit onto a T-shirt, it passes the test. They should be simple yet meaningful and use action-oriented words that clearly communicate.

Further Examples

> *Our mission is to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Christ.* (LifeChurch)
> *We exist to Reach Up, Reach Out, and Reach In.* (Fellowship Church)

- A mission statement provides a clear sense of direction for a ministry, which is necessary when designing a curriculum. If you don't know where you're headed, it is unlikely that you'll arrive at a desirable destination. Disciples don't develop just by spending time together in a small group. Disciples are learners who benefit and grow through intentional teaching that encompasses the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills of Jesus Christ.
- Mission statements are action-oriented and use verbs and phrases that reflect momentum and not passivity. Instead of saying, "We want to do something," a mission statement says, "We will do something, and this is what we will do." Examples of action verbs could be words such as *create*, *empower*, *equip*, *establish*, *provide*, or *share*.
- Committing to a common articulated mission can help leaders with decision-making related to curricular content, leading to unity within a ministry team. Diverse opinions may still arise on how to achieve a mission, but without agreement on that ultimate objective, any curriculum planning is doomed to fail.

Reflection Exercise

Select a ministry and write a mission statement that follows the guidelines from your reading. You may choose an existing ministry with which you have some familiarity, or you may envision a new ministry about which you have a passion. It may be helpful for you to do an internet search to discover various ways that churches and ministry organizations have articulated their mission. Don't fall into the trap of copying or paraphrasing what others have created. While the overall mission of the Church has already been established by Jesus, it is important to articulate that mission in a way that communicates clearly within your context. Refer to the previous examples to see how mission statements focus on a particular ministry goal for a specified audience within a particular area. Remember that the mission statement for the ministry is also the mission of the curriculum.

Vision

A *mission statement* describes what a curriculum is trying to achieve, while a *vision* paints a picture of what it will look like when the mission is accomplished. The distinction between mission and vision statements is often misunderstood, and sometimes they are reversed in the planning process or even in how they are identified. Vision statements help us see what the ministry's future can look like and inspire and motivate us to accomplish the mission. One helpful way to understand how they differ is to think of them in terms of a mountain climbing adventure. The mission is to reach the top of the mountain. That is a succinct and clear statement about what the group of climbers is going to accomplish together. The

vision describes what it will be like to stand on top of the mountain once that mission is completed. The vision communicates why people should want to climb the mountain and provides them with a glimpse of what it will take to get there. Trying to convince a group of people to commit to a long and arduous trek up a mountain might not be successful, especially if they only think of it as a physical feat that would consume time and energy. A vision is aimed at convincing them why the climb is worth the effort and paints a picture of what they will experience if they make the climb. They will see breathtaking views; breathe clean, crisp air; and gain a sense of personal accomplishment. The vision is a motivational piece, making it more likely that others will see the value and commit to the mission.

While mission statements are cognitive and informative, vision statements emphasize the affective learning domain and appeal to the heart. They clarify the mission, which is why they are typically longer than just a sentence. Since effective mission statements are concise, they can lend themselves to interpretation. Vision statements can assist in clearing up any confusion. Look back at some of the examples in the previous section and imagine the various ways they might be understood in different ministry contexts.

If you do a search for church mission statements, you will notice many similarities in their use of words. This is to be expected given our common biblical purpose as the Church. At the same time, each church and ministry is unique. Inspiring others to reach young people for Christ in one setting will not look the same in another location. The vision statement adds colorful details that explain the ministry's purpose in its unique context.

Mission statements are grounded in biblical truth and align with Jesus's teachings, so they are timeless. The language may be updated to reflect contemporary communication, but the focus should not change. Vision statements rely on a distinct setting and the needs, resources, and challenges of that one particular ministry. These characteristics may fluctuate over time because no church or

ministry is immune to change. This reality means that some vision statements may require occasional revisions to reflect the current realities.

Mission statements are more about doing, while vision statements are about inspiring and helping people glimpse a mental snapshot of future possibilities. They add details and rationale to the succinct mission statement that are motivational and help maintain a focus on the importance of the curriculum.

Focus Activity

- How might you describe the differences between mission and vision statements? Can you think of another illustration other than mountain climbing?
- If a ministry has a written mission statement, what is the value in also creating a vision statement?
- Can you identify the vision for your current church or ministry? If you aren't aware of a formal vision statement, how does the church or ministry inspire people to serve or participate?

Examples

The following examples are taken from ministry vision statements expressed by students from various countries. They are not complete, but as you read these excerpts, take note of the subtle contextual differences that are expressed. (*Note*: In

many of these examples, English is not a first language. While some of the phrasing may initially be confusing, I have chosen to include the words of the students.)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: It is evident that there are a lot of issues that aspire to be appealing to the attention of teenagers during this period of transition to adulthood. They start to experience different kinds of changes including physical, emotional, psychological and social. It is also a time where they start to look meaning to life independent from what they have been taught by parents or guardians. This pursuit of meaning exposes them to different kinds of thought systems, ideologies, philosophies and religions that are amply found in this diversified and fluctuating world. They begin to explore and even try out some of these beliefs that seem to give sense to their enthusiastic minds. This path of exploration has taken some to some cultic and evil ways and directed others to Christ. Most Christians testify that they came to the Lord during this time of adolescence. Therefore, this desire to find meaning by itself is not evil but it is important that we help these teens to draw the meaning they are looking for from the Word of God.

Hence, it is our vision to see our teenagers make the Word of God the center of their lives and the authority of their decisions.

Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia: My vision is for students to find meaning that is biblically based in order to shape their daily activities. The purpose or meaning that will give each student the reason to rise up early and goes to bed late without anxiety, fear, and hopelessness.

I dream for this generation to rise and take on responsibility in order to not become liability to families and extended relatives. Also, I envision inspiring students of the sense of responsibility or service in order to become independent adult tomorrow.

I envision students to find their identity, significance and morality in Christ. Since adolescents wrestles with "who am I," "what is my worth" and what behavior that will bring success in life, students must be inspired to resolved their identity, significance and morality in Christ so as to prevent being identified with wrong identity that will make their lives empty in adulthood.

Wisconsin, USA: We seek to help immigrants and refugees effectively integrate into the local church. We look to achieve this through disci-

pleship, radical hospitality, and contextualized worship. We desire for our international families to be grounded in Scripture and intimately connected to Christ and the body.

Our international/refugee families will be equipped and empowered, through the body, to share the love of Jesus to their families back home.

(Pt 2. Challenge) Our church must be unified in this mission. As we act in hospitality to the foreigner, we ought to become increasingly burdened with their burdens. Their people become our people. We, as one body, must walk hand in hand, in brotherly love, with our international and refugee families who are our key to reaching the rest of the world with the Gospel of Jesus.

Penang, Malaysia: XXX Church is located beside a college, an international school, 3–4 schools and a neighborhood who has people who really need to hear the Gospel of Christ. Hence, we aim to reach out to young people and adolescents who need God by bringing His truths to them. However, while doing this, we need to train our youths to be more committed to Christ and to know God's Word themselves.

The priority to train our own youths has to be placed in priority while not forgetting that our time to reach the lost is getting less and less. The youth members are majority Christians (have accepted Jesus as Savior) but lack biblical conviction in their lifestyles. Fun is still fun to enjoy. However, we need to teach and guide them to be more committed in their faith and to fulfill The Great Commission.

Indiana, USA: As college students, we recognize the importance of being disciples of Jesus even as we live our lives in the world. We wish to be a mature community of believers who, through intentional growth in our faith through the study of God's word and participation in our church body, are able to engage with the culture we come into contact with on our various local campuses and show the light of God's love to those around us. As disciples of Jesus, we recognize our call as God's people to be a light to the nations while also holding firm to our faith in the midst of the world. We wish to be a community of disciples grounded in the truth of Scripture, able to move out in love with grace and truth to those we walk with daily on our college campuses. A community that loves God and

brings His love to the world through service, intentional relationships, and the sharing of the Gospel which draws in those around us to form communities of faith multiplied from ours in the church onto the campuses where we live.

Vision statements should answer questions such as:

- Why is it important to accomplish our mission?
- What is currently keeping the mission from being accomplished?
- What will it take for the mission to succeed?
- What will it look like when we are accomplishing our mission?

*Remember that vision statements should inspire and attract others to follow the mission. They offer a rationale and provide hope for the future.

Focus Activity

- Carefully review each of the vision statements you just read. Summarize the driving motivation presented in each one. In other words, what is the key rationale each student articulated as to why it is imperative to accomplish the mission?
- What words or phrases are included in each of these vision statements that make them compelling?

Reflection Exercise

Using the mission statement you created for the previous exercise, craft a three- to five-paragraph vision statement that will inspire others to commit to your ministry's mission. The excerpts in the previous Example section are only partial examples of what a vision statement should include. As you consider the vision for your ministry, work to include all of the characteristics of a well-developed and motivational vision statement.

Core Values

If a mission statement communicates our ministry's purpose and a vision statement inspires us toward commitment, then *core values* are the key beliefs that motivate us and keep us focused. They are why we do what we do in ministry. If we refer to the previous example about mountain climbing, we might think of core values as the reasons why we're climbing or even the rules we'll follow as we climb. The mission is to get to the top, the vision motivates us to climb as we think about what it will be like when we reach the top, and the core values are the beliefs that motivate us to climb, the guidelines we will follow, or how we will conduct ourselves along the way. For instance, mountain climbing values may include physical fitness and exercise, respect for nature, adventure, looking out for one another, or a concern for safety.

Core values in a curriculum are the foundational biblical truths that compel us to fulfill our purpose. They are why we engage

in ministry. They are also the beliefs that shape what we do and how we do it. They define the ministry's character. While it isn't advisable, the reality is that a church or ministry can exist without ever giving thought to a mission or vision. Core values, however, are always in existence. They are operational, whether or not they are articulated. In other words, every church and organization holds specific values. They are the beliefs and commitments that drive ministry decisions. *Why does a church decide to include some ministry programs and not others? What influences its decisions about spending or scheduling? Why is it that fundraising is acceptable in some churches but not others?* These are matters of value. Even though those values may not be clearly communicated, their existence inevitably determines the ministry's actions. They are operant core values. Sometimes, the operant values are positive, but that isn't always the case. This is why it is imperative to carefully consider and identify a ministry's intended core values. Once they are identified, they then become articulated core values. Articulating a ministry's values provides a basis to evaluate whether it is genuinely acting in accordance with what it believes to be of utmost importance.

Sometimes, a church's core values are more clearly identified by an outsider than by those within the ministry. Experiencing how they are welcomed when they attend a service or event for the first time gives them a window into the value a church places on newcomers. One visit may not provide an accurate understanding, but if a pattern is discerned after a few visits, the church's value in reaching out to visitors is evident. Other value clues are the property's condition, how corporate worship services are organized, or the types of programs and events that are held. Looking at a flyer, bulletin, newsletter, website, or calendar also reveals what the church or ministry emphasizes or values. What is given the most attention or time is a strong indicator of values. *How much time is devoted to prayer or studying the Scripture during worship or in a small group? Are there opportunities for age group teaching and learning? Does the church engage in ministry within the community?*

Observations about such things are indications of the core values that guide a ministry. If the operant values aren't aligned with the agreed-upon articulated core values, that is a signal that changes are needed in the way a ministry carries out its mission.

Culture changes, but core values should not. As technology advances, it is necessary to think about how we teach and whether we need to alter our methods. Flannelgraphs, chalkboards, whiteboards, overhead projectors, PowerPoint, and online streaming represent technological changes in teaching over the past century, but they do not reflect a missional shift or a shift in core values. Even the content of our curriculum may change to address new cultural challenges. For example, teaching biblical truth about identity and sexuality today requires the Church to address many topics that would never have been imagined in past decades. To accomplish the mission and remain true to its core values, the curricular content must change. The changes a ministry makes in terms of methodology or content may reflect the importance a ministry places on keeping current, though "keeping current" would probably not be a core value of the ministry.

- Biblical truth does not change. The Church's mission does not change, and core values should also remain unchanged.

Core values are biblical commitments and guiding principles determined by strong convictions of belief. They aren't the same as doctrinal statements, even though some core values will be doctrinal in nature. Doctrinal statements are a comprehensive explanation of theological beliefs. While core values should align with biblical truth, they are not, for example, a list of what a ministry

believes about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, or end times. Core values will reflect doctrine but speak more to a church's beliefs, standards, or assumptions related to doctrine.[7]

Consider a commitment to the Bible as a core value. Such a value will reveal itself through the style of preaching, the selected teaching resources, the emphasis on the personal or communal reading of Scripture, and even the availability of Bibles within the church. *Are Bibles read by the members of a small group Bible study, or are they only read by the leader or found on a handout? Are the words from the biblical text projected on a screen during worship, or are people also encouraged to open a Bible? Are sermons and small groups focused on a study of Scripture or current topics with little to no reference to the Bible?* A commitment to the Bible as the authoritative and revealed Word of God is a theological doctrine about the nature and importance of Scripture, but identifying it as a core value should translate into the ways and rationale for how this belief is lived out in the life of a church or ministry.

Identifying core values can help a church or ministry more effectively accomplish its mission. As part of a curriculum plan, they are necessary to provide guidance for the content and the structure necessary for impactful discipleship. Sometimes, the core values operating within a ministry are contradictory and can impede the accomplishment of the mission. An example of this may be a ministry that values both tradition and reaching younger generations with the gospel. While these two values are not necessarily in opposition, if too much emphasis is placed on adhering to tradition, a ministry's approaches to teaching and learning may be ineffective in reaching or discipling a youth population.[8]

7. Aubrey Malphurs, Strategy 2000: Churches Making Disciples for the Next Millenium, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 1996), 20.
8. Malphurs, Strategy 2000, 34.

Within the context of a curriculum plan, it is vital to identify a small number of core values that will guide the discipleship experience. Not everything a ministry values can be a core value. If too many are designated as core, the likelihood that they will provide genuine guidance in decision-making is low. It is a good idea to think in terms of no more than five core values.

- Each value should be identified, explained, and supported by Scripture.

Focus Activity

- How might you compare and contrast doctrinal statements and core values?
- If a ministry identifies family as a core value, how would you expect this value to be evident? What would be included in terms of programs, policies, or resources? What would you expect the ministry to avoid if they truly value family?
- What core values characterize your church or a specific ministry in which you participate? Are they clearly stated as core values, or are they operant but not articulated?

Examples

The following examples are taken from curriculum plans created by students as part of a class assignment.

Sample A

1. Prayer
    a. One of the most important ways we engage with Christ and become Godly women is through individual and corporate prayer. We experience the love, healing, and freedom of Jesus Christ through prayer.
    b. James 5:13–16, Philippians 4:6–7, Ephesians 6:18
2. Scripture
    a. Scripture is the living and active word of God and is all truth. It brings life and equips us to fight battles against the enemy so we can do the good work of the Lord.
    b. 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Matthew 4:4, Hebrews 4:12
3. Showing compassion
    a. We want to show compassion and love to those different from us, just as

Jesus did. This means laying down our lives and loving them unconditionally by humbly serving them.

b.1 John 4:11–12, Matthew 20:26–28, 34, Romans 12:10

4.Holiness

a.We are made to be image-bearers and live pure and holy lives to reflect the light of Christ to the world. This means we are to be set apart from the world and show the world Christ through our humility and Christlike love.

b.Philippians 4:8–9, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 2:9, John 1:7

5.Fellowship

a.We believe we have been called to live life together. To live in unity and to encourage and build each other up in faith as each of us uses the gifts the Lord has given us.

b.Matthew 18:20, Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:24–25, Romans 12:4

Sample B

1.Putting others before self (servant love)

a.Part of the greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves, our youth group wants to take that to the next level by putting others before ourselves. This expresses our care for one another and will be representative of what Christ did while on this earth. We are called to follow in his footsteps, and was a servant even though he didn't need to be, that is what we are deciding to follow.

b.Matthew 25:40, Matthew 22:37–40

2.Being scripturally grounded and knowledgeable

a.This is important because if we do not know what Scripture says, how are we to know how to live our lives? Scripture is God breathed, coming by his own accord, if we are to truly be grounded in our faith we must also be grounded in his word.

b.2 Timothy 3:16, Psalm 119:105

3.Available for constant community

a.Accountability and community in the faith are vessels to help us stay rooted in

the right things. It is important to have interaction with others, going through life with others, able to learn, teach, and disciple one another. Students will be able to effectively talk within intergenerational settings, fostering growth from all people.

b.1 Thessalonians 5:11, Romans 12:4–5

4.Living evangelistically

a.Christ calls us to go throughout the world and preach the gospel. Making disciples and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. That is central to the Christian life and central to this ministry. We will equip the youth to feel comfortable in these types of situations, helping to show a life lived for kingdom growth.

b.Matthew 28:18–20

5.Experiencing time with Christ

a.In the Christian life, God is desiring a personal relationship with each and every one of us. Spending time with him is how we learn and mature in our faith the most. Whether it be through prayer, solitude and silence,

reading Scripture, etc. We believe that this is central part to the lives of Christian believers, and it is what we want to engrain into the kids of our youth ministry.

b.Mark 1:35, 1 Peter 2:2

Sample C

1.The authority of Scripture

a.Scripture grounds all that we do. We believe that the Bible is the inherent Word of God. God used men to write His words, but we believe and know that Scripture contains messages inspired by his Spirit. Scripture is the foundation that we will come back to for all things, rooting all that we do in that firm foundation.

b.2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20–21, Isaiah 40:8

2.The power of prayer and praise

a.Prayer and praise our essential elements that cannot be neglected. Prayer and praise go hand in hand to us. When we praise, worship, and exalt the Lord, our response should be communication with him through

prayer. We believe that prayer is fundamentally communication with God, which can take on forms like repentance, supplication, or intercession.

b.2 Chronicles 20:20–30, Acts 16:16–34, Matthew 21:22, 2 Chronicles 7:14

3.The guidance of the Spirit

a.We believe that walking in step with the Spirit is indispensable to our spiritual vitality and longevity. It is by the spirit that we can live lives that are above reproach; lives of upstanding, Christian character. Trusting the guidance of the Spirit means that we are also always willing to go where the Spirit leads, no matter what that looks like.

b.Galatians 5:22–23, Galatians 5:16, Romans 8:13

4.The necessity of community

a.We are meant to live in community with each other. Living in genuine community means we are willing and available to be there for our brothers and sisters no matter the cost. We believe that Christian community also

strives for unity, unity that comes through the Spirit of God.

b.Acts 2:42–47, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Galatians 6:2, Proverbs 27:17

5.The responsibility to share

a.We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not something that is supposed to be kept within ourselves or kept within the 4 walls of the church. We have the responsibility to share the Gospel and the love of Jesus to the world. This can take on many forms, from service projects to evangelism and outreach, in order to share the Gospel.

b.Matthew 28:18–20, Psalm 96:3, Romans 1:16

Reflection Exercise

- Using the mission and vision statements you created for the previous exercises, draft a list of five core values that will guide the decisions and direction of your ministry.
- Provide a brief description of each value in the con-

text of your ministry, then identify biblical support for the value. Be careful not to proof text your values. In other words, select core values, which are biblical values, then carefully provide the biblical foundations that show these values as a Christian priority. Avoid citing Scripture references that merely use the terms you have listed but don't offer a clear understanding of why they should be prioritized as values.

Significant Concepts

articulated values
Christian education
core values
disciple
discipleship
mission statement
operant values
vision statement

Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

Identify a specific church or ministry as a focus for creating a curriculum plan. You will use this ministry to complete each of the chapter assignments throughout the book. Using this ministry,

- Write a succinct mission statement.
- Craft a one-page vision statement.
- Identify five core values that will shape your ministry. Define the values and provide a biblical basis for each value.

You may use what you created for the Reflection Exercises for this assignment, revising and sharpening what you have already constructed.

2. Biblical and Theological Foundations

"Just to amuse myself, and keep the good people busy, I ordered them to build this City, and my palace; and they did it all willingly and well. Then I thought, as the country was so green and beautiful, I would call it the Emerald City, and to make the fame fit better I put green spectacles on all the people, so that everything they saw was green."

"But isn't everything here green?" asked Dorothy. "No more than in any other city," replied Oz; "but when you wear green spectacles, why of course everything you see looks green to you."

L. Frank Baum - *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand:

- The Bible as God's special revelation
- Why the Bible is foundational for Christian discipleship
- The relationship between the Bible and theology
- The foundational role of theology in a Christian discipleship curriculum

Be able to:

- Create theological responses to cultural concerns
- Articulate a personal position on the role of Scripture and theology in curriculum development

M. Night Shyamalan's blockbuster 2002 movie *Signs* stars Mel Gibson as a former Episcopal priest, Graham Hess, who lives on a farm in rural Pennsylvania with his two children. Hess abandoned the Church in a crisis of faith after his wife died in a car accident. When Hess begins discovering crop circles in his fields, he initially dismisses them as the work of vandals. Then the crop circles begin appearing all over the world, and the movie develops into a tale of an alien invasion.[1]

Shyamalan's tale of crop circles and extraterrestrials isn't an idea he invented, but it has a basis in reality. Crop circles have appeared all over the world, and many people believe these agricul-

1. Scott Orris, "The Iconography of Fear: M. Night Shyamalan's Signs," Cinemablography, accessed November 16, 2023, http://www.cinemablography.org/signs.html.

tural creations are the work of aliens brought to Earth by unidentified flying objects. One of the earliest historical references to this strange phenomenon is found in a book from 1678 called *The Mowing Devil*. The book includes a tale about a farmer who refused to pay a worker for cutting his oats. As the story goes, the devil cut round circles into the farmer's oat fields overnight. Even though the oats weren't merely flattened into crop circles but were mowed flat, the fable contributes to the belief that crop circles have been around for centuries.[2]

Why do people hundreds of years later still associate flattened circles of agricultural crops with aliens and UFOs? It is because of a hoax carried out in the 1970s by two friends in England, Doug Bower and Dave Chorley. As the two men sat together in a pub, laughing and talking about the UFO craze sweeping the world and fueled by stories of Roswell, New Mexico, the friends decided to create their own fake UFO landing site. Using boards, rope, and wire attached to the brim of a baseball hat to create their patterns, Bower and Chorley went into a grain field to create their crop circle masterpieces. To their dismay, no one even noticed what they had done, so they continued taking circle-making trips into the countryside over the next few years until the global media finally took notice. Soon, UFO enthusiasts began showing up to marvel at these creations.[3] Crop circle experts emerged, known as *cereologists*, and they began making a living writing and lecturing about this strange phenomenon, often insisting that aliens were trying to communicate with us through cryptic codes. This all changed when Bower and Chorley revealed their hoax to journalists in 1991. They demonstrated how simple it was to create crop circles by putting on a demonstration for the TV cameras. The whole thing took only a few

2. Stephanie Pappas, "Crop Circles: Myth, Theories and History," LiveScience, November 15, 2022, https://www.livescience.com/26540-crop-circles.html.
3. Pappas, "Crop Circles."

minutes. Until 1987, when others began catching on and joining in on the hoax, it is believed that all of the crop circles had been created by this same pair of English friends.[4]

Even though the hoax was revealed and Bower and Chorley admitted to their mischief-making, many still insist that crop circles are a form of communication from beyond this world. What causes people to see these agricultural circles as messages from aliens even though their origin was exposed? It is their deep commitment to the paranormal. They view the world through that lens, and their foundational beliefs color their perceptions. In the opening quote from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the Wizard confessed that he had given everyone glasses with green lenses. This caused all the people in the Emerald City to view everything in Oz as green. In the same way, these UFO enthusiasts look at the world and interpret it through a set of paranormal glasses, or a paranormal lens. They may even accept hoaxes as evidence of unexplained powers because they look beyond simple explanations and hold on to their worldview. From their perspective, authentic crop circles do exist, created by aliens as a form of cryptic code.[5]

Everyone looks at the world through a set of glasses, a particular lens. Ways of seeing are sometimes known as paradigms or frameworks for understanding reality. Stephen Covey explains it as "the way we 'see' the world—not in terms of our visual sense of sight,

4. Khalid Elhassan, "Space Aliens Were Sending Us Coded Messages by Flattening Our Crops," History Collection, March 2, 2018, https://historycollection.com/10-truly-bizarre-beliefs-history-will-keep-laughing-night/.
5. Rob Irving and Peter Brookesmith, "Crop Circles: The Art of the Hoax: They May Not Be Evidence of UFOs, Ancient Spirits or Secret Weapons, but There Is Something Magical in Their Allure," Smithsonian Magazine, December 15, 2009, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/crop-circles-the-art-of-the-hoax-2524283.

but in terms of perceiving, understanding, interpreting."[6] A more common way of describing this perspective-taking is as a worldview. Worldviews determine our understanding of how culture and society operate, how we interpret life and world events, how we interact with others and our surroundings, and how we make decisions. A biblical foundation for understanding the world is often referred to as a Christian worldview. It is a perspective on reality founded on the truth of Jesus Christ as encountered in the Bible. Experiences and encounters are interpreted in light of this biblical reality. While cultural practices and accepted norms shift over time, impacting what many people believe and how they respond to the world, biblical foundations remain solid and unwavering. Relying on this foundation allows Christians to see the world as it is and to respond appropriately.

Biblical Foundations

Growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ requires learning from him and about him and becoming spiritually transformed as we follow him in obedience. Scripture is our primary source for knowing what it means to live as a disciple, so the Bible must be the foundation of a curriculum plan for Christian ministry. While Christians may also place a high value on tradition, reason, and personal experience, it is important to realize that each of these means of understanding God also relies on his revelation through Jesus Christ as recorded in Scripture.

6. Stephen Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 32.

The importance of a biblical foundation for discipleship may seem self-evident, but many churches and ministries build their discipleship programs around events, small groups, or Christian resources with weak connections to Scripture. During a visit to a church in another state, I read a descriptive list of upcoming opportunities described as discipleship small groups. Among the choices were noodle-making, powderpuff mechanics, and a reading group focused on a recent publication about social media. While those options might be excellent opportunities for outreach or fellowship, it is difficult to imagine that anything about them could be described as authentic discipleship. What is most troubling is not that churches would offer these opportunities but that Christians might mistakenly believe their participation in such groups was discipleship and never realize their need for in-depth biblical studies and practices that would lead to genuine spiritual growth. As stated in chapter 1, discipleship is about growth toward Christlikeness and developing a love for God and others.

Christian authors have produced some valuable resources to help Christians know God more fully, rely on him through life's circumstances, and gain biblical perspectives on thinking about cultural change through the lens of faith. These publications can be instrumental in helping one grow as a disciple, but they cannot serve as a substitute for studying Scripture within a Christian curriculum. Knowing and following God requires reading and understanding what the Bible says about Christ and committing to living accordingly. We cannot develop as disciples without it. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, the only authoritative text for learning and growing toward Christlikeness.

Focus Activity

As you read each of the following Scriptures, write down a short phrase that reflects the symbolism used in the passage to describe the purpose or value of God's Word. Then explain the meaning of that phrase as it relates to growing as a disciple.

- Psalm 12:6
- Psalm 19:7–9
- Psalm 119:105, 130, 160
- Proverbs 30:5
- Jeremiah 15:16
- Jeremiah 23:29
- Isaiah 40:8
- Isaiah 55:10–11
- Luke 8:11
- James 1:22–24
- Hebrews 4:12
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17
- 2 Peter 1:19

The Bible and Discipleship

All humans are created in the image of God, yet God is distinctly different from his creation. The only way to know God is for him to reveal himself to us. The magnificence of creation cries out that God exists and can even provide us with insights into the character and creativity of God. We call this *general revelation* or *natural revelation*, but we cannot know God on a personal level through nature. He is not contained within us or just the moral conscience that

guides most humans. Neither is he one with the trees and animals, a life spirit that is part of nature. God exists apart from his creation and is "totally other." This reality is known as the *transcendence view* of God. No amount of human research can allow us to discover God or unveil a miraculous formula to understand his mysteries. The only way we can know God is by his *special revelation.* It is a revelation that he has chosen to give us; most significantly, this revelation came to us through Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human. Jesus's closest disciples did not understand this:

> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."
>
> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."
>
> Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves."
>
> John 14:6–11, NIV

God revealed himself through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those historical and supernatural acts took place at a certain point in time yet have impacted all of history. Knowledge of those events and their significance is possible because they are revealed in Scripture. God authored the Bible as the Holy Spirit spoke through men who were faithful to record his revelation. These men didn't write their own thoughts about God or

their experiences; they didn't merely journal about historical events in their region; God gave them the words through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

> For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.
>
> We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
>
> 2 Peter 1:16–21, NIV

Jesus's life and teachings show that he valued Scripture and considered what we know as portions of the Old Testament to be God's Word. He relied on it to defeat Satan's temptations as he prepared to begin his earthly ministry (Matthew 4:1–11). When pointing out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Jesus reminded them that though they knew the Law, they didn't practice it, and when they questioned his actions, he referred them to the words of the prophets (Matthew 23:1–7; 9:10–13). He used the prophets' writings to reveal his true identity (Luke 4:16–20). When he spoke the Great Commandment, he said it was a summary of all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:37–40).

The Bible isn't just an account of how God worked in the past or what he communicated in the past, but it is the living revelation of God today. The Bible isn't the only way God communicates with his creation; he continues to speak and reveal himself through the text as we read and study his Word. The Bible isn't just a body of literature or a collection of principles or facts about God. It doesn't just become the Word of God if we can connect our life experiences with a particular passage or biblical event. While each of those conditions may be true, the Bible is much more than that. It is God's present revelation; the Holy Spirit continues to speak through the Scriptures today. As theologian Michael Bird explains, "*When we hear the gospel proclaimed or when Scripture is read, we are not only hearing facts about God, but we are genuinely encountering God.*"[7] The ultimate purpose of Scripture is to make God known to us.

To be a disciple is to know God and choose to follow him, which is possible because of God's continued revelation through the Bible. This requires more than reading or memorization. A church or ministry may say it embraces a high view of Scripture, but if the curriculum it develops and follows doesn't lead to changed lives, then the Bible as the Living Word isn't foundational. As God's special revelation, the Bible leads disciples to know God, not just know *about* him. Andrew Murray described this significant reality in his classic work *The Spirit of Christ*: "*Spiritual knowledge is not deep thought, but living contact, entering into and being united to the truth as it is in Jesus, a spiritual reality, a substantial substance.*"[8]

> I may have in God's book all His precious promises most clear and full; I may have learnt perfectly to understand how I have but to trust the promise to have it fulfilled; and yet utterly fail to find the longed for blessing. The faith that

7. Michael F. Bird, Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 202.
8. Andrew Murray, The Spirit of Christ (London: Nisbet, 1888), 228.

enters on the inheritance is the attitude of soul which waits for *God Himself*, first to speak His word to me, and then to do the thing He hath spoken.[9]

Focus Activity

- As you think about your various experiences in church and Christian ministries, how would you describe their commitment to the Bible as the foundation for discipleship?
- How is that commitment to the Bible evident through their programs and practices?
- What role has the Bible played in your own spiritual growth?

Reflection Exercise

Planning and structure are sometimes interpreted as unspiritual or showing a lack of trust in God's provision. A careful study of God's work throughout the biblical narrative contradicts these perspectives. Read each of the fol-

9. Murray, Spirit of Christ, 266.

lowing passages, looking for how strategic planning is demonstrated. Next to each biblical reference, describe how planning and strategizing are evident.

- Deuteronomy 20
- Exodus 18
- Numbers 13
- Joshua 6:1–6, 8:3–23, and 10:6–9
- Luke 5:1–11
- Luke 9:1–6
- Acts 19:1–10

Theological Foundations

Theology is a term that isn't often used outside of academic environments, and even mentioning the subject can be intimidating to those who don't understand what it means. The word *theology* comes from two Greek words, theos, meaning "God," and *logos*, meaning "word." Theology can be defined as words about God, talking about God, or the study of God. This includes God's relationship to the world, his character, and his actions throughout history. Any disciple who wants to deepen his relationship with God studies the Bible, and anyone who seeks to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ could be called a theologian.

Whenever we read and interpret Scripture, we are engaging in theology. Whatever we have been taught about God, Jesus Christ, baptism, the Church, sin, or salvation is all theology. When we ask or

answer questions about our faith, we are engaging in theology. The imperative to fulfill God's commission to make disciples of all nations is a call to be a theologian.

In its purest form, all theology relies on the authority of Scripture to know God and live according to his guidance. However, some theologies place a greater emphasis on philosophy, experience, tradition, or reason to shape their understanding of who God is and what he expects. This doesn't invalidate them, but it is important to understand that theology is always an interpretation of Scripture and not infallible. It is constructed by men and women who hold their own biases and perspectives shaped by personal experience. While humans construct theology and often rely on reason or Church traditions to make sense of the biblical text, theology is still helpful and even necessary for our growth as disciples. For example, while tradition can be misused and destructive, it is important to recognize that Church tradition is what allowed us to receive the Bible we have today. Our canon of Scripture was not authorized until the fourth century. However, faithful Christians prior to that time followed a regula fidei, Latin for "rule of faith." The rule of faith was a summary of the biblical story, and it was as powerful and authoritative in the lives of the early Christians as the Bible is for disciples today. Those who didn't have written copies of the rule of faith learned and taught others through the oral tradition, like their ancestors before them. This tradition—the acts of the Church to write, preserve, preach, and faithfully interpret the gospel throughout the ages—brought us the Bible.[10]

Those who primarily teach or write about theology and who see themselves as theologians have devoted themselves to theological study and are often considered experts. While all theological experts attempt to make sense of the biblical text, they may adopt various ways of organizing their understanding. Biblical theologians often use the major events and themes found in Scripture

10. Bird, Evangelical Theology, 66.

to structure their thoughts about God, his work, and his character. Historical theologians emphasize changes that have shaped the religious views held by the Church throughout the centuries, and systematic theologians attempt to organize the entire teaching of the Bible into themes or topics. Systematic theology may be the most commonly used organizational form for developing a curriculum plan, though any theological framework may be used. There are more than a dozen additional theological variations, each organizing and interpreting Scripture from a particular perspective.

Focus Activity

- How would you explain theology to a Christian who doesn't understand the need to study theology?
- You have read a positive use of tradition in shaping theology. Can you think of an example where tradition could lead to a theological perspective that might contradict or distort biblical teachings?

Theology's Significance

Why should theology serve as a foundation for helping us grow as disciples? Isn't it sufficient to read and study the Bible as it is written and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us? Doesn't theology cause confusion and division among Christians? These are all worthy questions, but they overlook the reality of the meaning of theology. Biblical study and a careful interpretation of a passage are primary, but theology allows us to accurately and consistently interpret each por-

tion of Scripture in light of the entire biblical text. Have you ever read various passages of Scripture that seemed to be contradictory? For instance, why does Malachi 2:16 say that God hates divorce, but 1 Corinthians 7 provides guidelines for those who divorce? In that same chapter in 1 Corinthians, Paul says it is better to remain single than be married, yet in Genesis 2, God declared that it wasn't good for man to be alone, and Hebrews 13 says that marriage should be honored. How can we make sense of God's view of marriage without a collective study of the entire biblical narrative that helps us reconcile what, on the surface, might appear to be contradictory thoughts? Instead of reading and interpreting passages of Scripture in isolation and attempting to draw conclusions based on those interpretations, theology is a means of bringing together the entire message of the Bible, harmonizing the narrative, and providing a comprehensive and consistent interpretation of God's Word. It provides clarity and unity to the biblical narrative.

Christians don't always agree on specific doctrines, which are basic beliefs they hold from their interpretation of Scripture. Theology helps us understand which doctrines are worth protecting and when we can allow for differences. It allows us to discern which biblical teachings are essential to the Christian faith and which are less important. If that statement makes you uncomfortable, consider this advice to the Roman Christians:

> Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

> One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.
>
> Romans 4:1–6, NIV

There is room for some diversity in theological understandings, but the truth of the gospel cannot be compromised if Scripture is its primary source. Throughout his ministry, the Apostle Paul constantly reminded Christians about the centrality of Christ and the importance of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 15, he writes, "*Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain*" (1 Corinthians 15:1–2, NIV).

Theological study enables disciples to discern false teachings and respond appropriately. Throughout the New Testament, Christians were commanded to teach and to make sure that they were teaching accurately. After Paul was released from his imprisonment in Rome, he wrote to Titus, who was in Crete. False teaching was a growing problem within many churches, and from Paul's letter to Titus, it appears this was especially true in the region of Crete. In his writing, he not only reminds Titus what to teach to various groups but also gives him instructions about how to conduct himself as a teacher: "*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us*" (Titus 2:7–8, ESV).

Sound theology equips us to understand and defend the gospel to both unbelievers and those within the Church who might be tempted to twist biblical truth. Throughout the history of the Church, Christians have strayed from the truth of Scripture, adding

to or detracting from the biblical narrative. Theologians committed to a faithful and thorough study of the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit have been God's instruments in restoring orthodoxy (sound or correct thought) and orthopraxy (sound or correct practice) to Christianity.

Theological disputes over the nature of Jesus Christ were especially pervasive in the first few centuries of the Church's existence. Arius, a priest in Alexandria during the fourth century AD, taught that Jesus was not God but was created by God. This heretical teaching began to spread, prompting the emperor Constantine to bring together a council of bishops to construct a theological doctrine that would end the controversy. Their work resulted in the *Nicene Creed of AD 325*, which another council of bishops later expanded in AD 381. This creed is a theological work that has defined orthodox Christianity for more than 1,600 years. It is the rule of faith that lays out the boundaries of Christian belief for all three branches of the Christian Church: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism.[11]

Nicene Creed

> We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
>
> We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from

11. Peter Scazzero, Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 234–35.

heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Reformation is another significant example of how theologians brought about change in the Church when its practices deviated from biblical teaching. Martin Luther is a prominent example of this type of reforming theologian, most often identified with the Protestant Reformation. After carefully reading and studying Scripture, Luther became troubled by the practices of the Church that didn't align with what he found in the Bible, such as selling indulgences, which allowed people to pay for their sins to be forgiven. That teaching cannot be found in the biblical text, yet this type of corruption was possible because only the priests were allowed to read and interpret the Scripture. Luther called the Church back to an emphasis on salvation by faith alone, possible because of God's grace and not through any additional man-initiated requirements. His main theological teachings are often expressed by the Latin *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura*, meaning by grace, faith, and Scripture alone. Growing as a disciple

requires both orthodoxy and orthopraxy that come through a commitment to the Bible and a willingness to boldly speak out and take a stand when theological teaching distorts biblical truth.

The twenty-first-century world is quite different from the fourth-century world when the Bible was canonized. Regardless of where one lives, it is hard to imagine a culture that isn't radically different today than in centuries past. Even the most remote parts of the globe have been altered to some degree by the proliferation of technology and globalization. It would be tempting to think that Scripture is no longer a relevant source of truth or guidance, since no passages directly speak to some of our contemporary cultural concerns. The Bible doesn't contain terms such as *artificial intelligence*, *cybercrime*, *in vitro fertilization*, *gender identity*, *recreational drugs*, *global warming*, or *geopolitical warfare*. But don't fall into the trap of faulty thinking that dismisses the Bible as culturally irrelevant and outdated. Remember these two important axioms: *Human nature hasn't changed since the beginning of time, and neither has God*. Spiritual discernment on any issue, both now and in the future, can be found by a study of God's truth. He still speaks through his Word just as he has through centuries of human progress and destruction, growth and decline, poverty and prosperity. Theology is how we can recognize and respond to his voice in ways that are biblically faithful.

One of the most significant and invaluable tasks of the theologian is to address contemporary cultural concerns in light of the full counsel of organized biblical truth. John Kilner, a leading Christian bioethicist, has written extensively on how a theological understanding of the Imago Dei has been instrumental in bringing about social change and liberation at various points in history. In his book *Why People Matter*, Kilner documents how reminding Christians in North and Latin America that persons in poverty are also made in God's image mobilized the Church to seek ways to alleviate the problem of injustice. This theological truth also propelled Christians to respond compassionately to those with disabilities and those with HIV/AIDS. It has led people to stand up against the oppression

of various groups within the United States, such as Native Americans, the enslaved, and women. This theological reality that all persons are created in the image of God was a motivational force behind the Declaration of Independence and the abolishment of slavery in the United States.[12] Theology provides us with overarching constructs to guide human thought and action in accordance with God's purposes, regardless of the concern or the century.

Focus Activity

- How would you respond to someone who asks, "Isn't it sufficient to read and study the Bible as it is written and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us? Why do we need theology?"
- How can the Bible remain relevant throughout history when so many cultural changes have occurred?

Reflection Exercise

12. John F. Kilner, "Special Connection and Intended Reflection," in Why People Matter, ed. John F. Kilner (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 135–60.

Identify a contemporary cultural issue about which Christians are divided in their views on how to respond. Think about the issue in light of the entire biblical narrative. What does Scripture teach us about God and his character that could help us think about the issue in a biblically faithful way? What are the overarching and timeless principles or topics this cultural concern introduces? Create a list of relevant key passages or biblical principles that could be useful in knowing how to think about the issue.

Curriculum Development as Biblical and Theological

The purpose of a ministry curriculum plan is to provide a logical and consistent teaching and learning strategy to help persons grow as disciples. While personal spiritual formation depends on more than extrinsic experiences and courses of study, those who commit to follow such a discipleship pathway are choosing to grow. This intentionality in following Jesus makes them more likely to develop into mature disciples than those who commit to follow but never take the initiative to develop. In this sense, a curriculum plan is consistent with biblical teaching on the importance of spiritual growth and maturity. Further support for a curriculum plan is warranted when the plan is based on a biblical and theological framework, and the content and direction of the curriculum is derived from a sound interpretation of Scripture.

While few would argue against the importance of sound biblical and theological content in a curriculum plan, not everyone would agree that the process of curriculum development is neces-

sary or even biblical. Some churches still approach discipleship as a regular biblical study that systematically covers the entire text or at least the "most significant" books. Their focus is on instilling biblical knowledge and developing informed Christians. The biblical narrative is often reduced to a history book or collection of moral teachings instead of a way to know God more fully. The value and practice of application and theology are often overlooked or left up to the individual. Other churches follow a topical approach to discipleship, using the Bible to support "Christian" perspectives on how to live, often drawn from resources other than Scripture. Another popular strategy is to provide a warm community through small groups that help Christians feel a sense of belonging and a willingness to share life together. Activity characterizes the discipleship approach in some Christian communities, with participants primarily engaging in service projects to alleviate needs or eradicate social problems. Their motivation may stem from a humanitarian commitment more than obedience to Christ's imperative to love and serve others. Outreach and evangelistic programs designed to share the gospel might be evident in some churches, with few teaching or growth opportunities provided to help new believers develop as disciples. Each of these alternatives can contribute to spiritual growth, but none of them are sufficient strategies on their own to help people grow toward spiritual maturity. Developing and following a curriculum plan reflects a ministry's desire to encourage and nurture holistic spiritual growth that recognizes the significance of teaching and preparation for spiritual maturity grounded in biblical and theological truth:

> He also gave apostles, prophets, missionaries, as well as pastors and teachers as gifts to his church. Their purpose is to prepare God's people to serve and to build up the body of Christ. This is to continue until all of us are united in our faith and in our knowledge about God's Son, until we become mature, until we measure up to Christ, who is the standard. Then we will no longer be little children,

tossed and carried about by all kinds of teachings that change like the wind. We will no longer be influenced by people who use cunning and clever strategies to lead us astray. Instead, as we lovingly speak the truth, we will grow up completely in our relationship to Christ, who is the head.

Ephesians 4:11–15, GWT

Significant Concepts

doctrine
general revelation
orthodoxy
orthopraxy
regula fidei
special revelation
theology
transcendence view of God

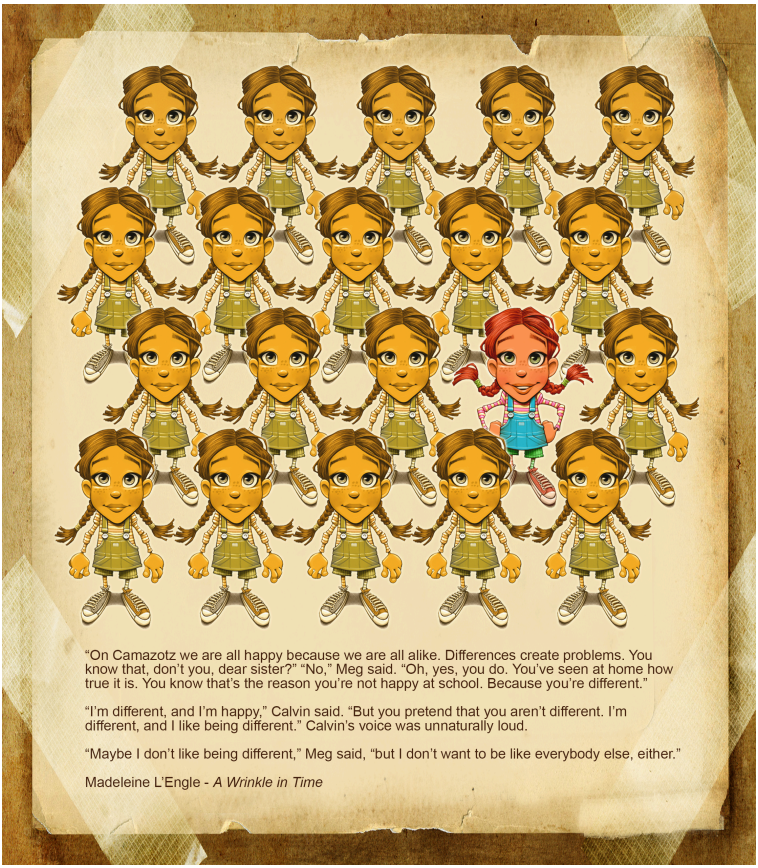
Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

- Craft a one- to two-page paper that explains your understanding of the importance of both the Bible

and theology as foundational elements of a curriculum plan. Address the significance of special revelation and the relationship between the Bible and theology.

- Review the curriculum plan you began for chapter 1. In light of what you have learned about the role of biblical and theological foundations, revise your plan to reflect what you have learned. Ask yourself, Do my values indicate a commitment to the Bible as the foundation for discipleship? Does my vision show a reliance on both orthodoxy and orthopraxy?
- Begin compiling a list of key theological concepts you want to include in your curriculum plan. Are there specific content areas you want to include? Connect them to biblical principles and theological ideas. This list will help you in the weeks ahead when you begin developing specific themes and topics that will form the content for your plan.

3. Considering the Audience



Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand:

- The importance of knowing the target audience for your curriculum plan
- How culture influences teaching and learning
- Developmental differences and their significance for teaching and learning

Be able to:

- Engage in a cultural study of a specific target audience
- Identify developmental characteristics and their implications for teaching and learning

Sheep are misunderstood animals, often described as easily frightened, dumb animals. That's not an accurate description, but it is easy to categorize and label both animals and people based on outward appearances or misinformation. Those who have taken the time to research sheep and their behaviors tell us that sheep have excellent memories. To humans, they may all look fairly similar, but sheep can recognize more than fifty distinct sheep faces and remember them for up to two years.[1] They're also able to problem-solve. Farmers have observed sheep overcoming cattle guards designed to contain them in a specific area or keep them from devouring a garden. Many sheep have learned to lie down on their

1. Susan Schnoenian, "Follow the Leader," Sheep 101.info, May 26, 2012, http://www.sheep101.info/stupidsheep.html.

sides and backs and roll all the way over the metal rails of a cattle guard in order to get to the food they crave in a seemingly protected garden.[2]

If you've ever observed sheep in a field, you might think they keep their heads down and eat, oblivious to the other sheep surrounding them. Actually, sheep are also very social animals and need to see other sheep when they are grazing in a pasture. Maintaining visual contact reduces their stress levels, and they will become highly agitated if they are separated from the other sheep in their flock. You're probably aware that sheep follow a shepherd, unlike cattle that have to be driven. Their following instinct is strong because of their need to stay together with other sheep in the flock. It is something they learn from the time they are born. When sheep become frightened, they will band even closer together for safety. This banding together is their only real protection from danger, except for a watchful shepherd or protective sheepdog. When they close ranks and gather into a tight group, it is harder for a wolf or other predator to harm them. As you can imagine, it would be much more difficult to pick a sheep out of a group than it would be to go after a lone stray.[3]

The sheep's strong flocking instinct that provides protection from danger can also lead to disaster. The desire for community means that when one sheep moves, the rest of the herd will follow, even if it is a bad idea. In 2005, in the countryside in Turkey, one lone sheep decided to jump off a cliff, and the entire flock of approximately 1,500 followed. All the shepherds could do was watch. Nearly 450 sheep died as a result of that one sheep's actions. Those who survived did so only because they were cushioned by the bodies

2. "Crafty Sheep Conquer Cattle Grids," BBC News, July 30, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3938591.stm.
3. Schnoenian, "Follow the Leader."

of the sheep who jumped first.[4] This isn't an isolated incident, and if you heard a similar account, it is understandable that you might shake your head and think about the stupidity of sheep. But knowing what you now know about sheep's intelligence and social nature, your perspective on such a tragedy would probably be different. You might wonder what made the first sheep jump, but you wouldn't assume that the rest of the flock did so out of ignorance.

Humans are also intelligent social animals with individual characteristics that make them distinguishable from every other human. Even though everyone is unique, all persons share at least one commonality: Everyone is created in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 tells us that "*God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*" Galatians 3:28 reminds us, "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" All people from every corner of the world and economic status have worth and value, but no one is exactly the same as anyone else. While every person is created in God's image with the capacity to know God personally, each individual possesses different abilities, gifts, personalities, and strengths. Even identical twins born from the same fertilized egg, who share the same DNA, are slightly different in appearance and aren't always the same in height, physical makeup, or resistance to illness and disease. Some differences between twins are related to lifestyle choices, but scientists are also

4. Luke Dawson, "In 2005 in Turkey, a Suicide Sheep Jumped off a Cliff and 1500 Sheep Followed the First One," Factual Facts, February 11, 2013, http://factualfacts.com/animal-facts/in-2005-in-turkey-a-suicide-sheep-jumped-off-a-cliff-and-1500-sheep-followed-the-first-one/.

learning that DNA sequences change slightly over time after birth, contributing to the twins' distinctness.[5] Even when people seem the same as others, there are always differences.

When observing a group of people in a public setting, it is easy to notice both their differences and their commonalities. If you hang out at a coffee shop, you'll see people of all shapes, sizes, and dispositions ordering their brews in as many different varieties as their hair colors. Yet a coffee shop crowd in the US would be easily distinguishable from the customers in a coffee shop in Cuba, not because of their outward appearances, but by how they want their coffee prepared. The general Cuban preference is for dark, strong, concentrated coffee, and never decaffeinated. Both groups are coffee drinkers, but their culture has shaped their preference for how it is served. While this might seem like a minor, inconsequential issue, it points to a much more significant principle that must be considered when developing a curriculum. The Christian educator is teaching people, not lessons, and all people are shaped by culture. Cultural preferences impact not only beverage choices but, more significantly, how people interact, grow, learn, and respond.

Focus Activity

- In the opening quote of this chapter, Meg expresses a seemingly contradictory opinion. She doesn't want to be different, yet she doesn't want to be like every-

5. Junko Kanoh, "Why Are There Differences Between Identical Twins?," UTokyo, March 10, 2023, https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/focus/en/features/z1304_00241.html#content.

one else. In what areas of your life do you find the most commonalities with your peers? How do you want to distinguish yourself from your peer group? Which of these perspectives is most important to you, fitting in or being recognized as unique?

- When you meet new people, which do you notice first, the ways in which you are alike or your differences? How might your view impact your growth as a disciple or your ability to disciple others?
- Can you think of cultural differences you have observed when traveling to a new region in your own or another country?

Culture and Curriculum

Everyone is a unique creation, but groups within specific cultural settings have more in common with one another than with those in other cultural groups. That may seem like common sense if you only associate culture with a specific ethnicity, such as African, American, Asian, European, or Latin. However, that understanding of a cultural group is both too broad and too narrow to be useful in curricular planning. There are currently fifty-four countries in Africa alone, so assuming they all share the same cultural views would be naive at best. The word *culture* has at least a hundred meanings, but a simple way to understand it is as one's total socially defined life context. Family structure, sports teams, denominations, and schools are some examples of contexts that are socially defined. While it isn't generally contemplated or recognized in day-to-day

living, everything a person does occurs within a cultural context that is powerful in its ability to shape attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, and values.

Layers and levels of culture impact standards of appropriateness for all aspects of life. Where one is located geographically matters, from nation, region, state, city, and neighborhood. For example, while both locations are in the state of Pennsylvania, urban life in Philadelphia is significantly different from life in Lancaster. Families, schools, businesses, and individual churches reflect varying cultural expectations even within a specific neighborhood. One of the largest multisite, nondenominational Evangelical churches in the United States is in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and their church culture is quite different from the many Amish churches that meet in homes in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

> Curricular activities in which children engage in solving real-life problems are often different in different regions, communities, and neighborhoods where children live. Among the influences on curricular activities are geography and natural resources, industry, history, ancestry and culture, wealth or income level, social status, race, and communities' attitudes and folkways. Some of the influences are characteristic of large regions. Others are simple ways of living that may be found in one city or county and not in another.[6]

Generations and age groups are additional cultural subgroups coexisting within the same family or church, reflecting diverse perspectives on cultural categories such as dress, music, language, artistic expression, entertainment, and interpersonal interactions. These are some of the categories representing the unique ways groups define themselves and the distinctive characteristics of a specific group's way of life.

6. Effie G. Bathurst, Where Children Live Affects Curriculum (Washington, DC: Office of Education, 1950), 4.

The introduction to this book noted that a discipleship curriculum is like a racecourse intentionally designed to lead students on the path to spiritual maturity. While a plan attempts to organize the journey in a systematic way, the travelers (students) won't all have the same experience or realize the same outcomes. One of the main reasons this is true is because culture has shaped the ways in which they will encounter and interpret the preconstructed road map. These interpretations lead to unplanned learning and become part of the curriculum.

Focus Activity

- Identify at least three cultural contexts from your own life. What are the generally accepted expectations or values of each group? How would participation in that group be recognized by members or those outside the group? What is it that makes one a member of that group?
- What are some cultural groups in your area that are different from your own? What are the distinctives that make them different?
- How might preferences for artistic expression or entertainment impact a curriculum plan for discipleship?

Cross-Cultural Ministry

Our goal is to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ effectively within the context of a specific culture. To create a curriculum plan that will maximize the potential for the spiritual growth of a particular target audience, it is imperative to invest time in studying the surrounding culture of that specific group of people. Researching the cultural context to determine how best to frame a curriculum plan might come across as too scientific or sterile, but that is not the intent, nor would it be an accurate understanding. Stereotyping can lead to prejudging others' abilities, interests, or character based on what we've previously experienced, heard, or observed. It would be wrong to assume that everyone within a particular context is the same as the other people in that context. However, attempting to understand and generalize the characteristics of a particular group of people is a helpful means of understanding how to teach and disciple them toward spiritual maturity most effectively. James Plueddemann, a well-respected leader in teaching and cross-cultural ministry, suggests that effective teachers must not only master the content they are teaching but also "*appreciate the cultural values, needs, and context*" of the learners and be able to help learners make connections between their context and the content.[7]

Where a curriculum takes place matters. Christians collectively form the Church, the bride of Christ, and are shaped and formed in communion with other believers, most often those living and worshipping in their communities. The local surroundings—the homes, schools, places of employment, and local policies and political systems—shape those who live there. They impact educational goals and abilities, attitudes toward authority, the environment,

7. James E. Plueddemann, Teaching Across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 2.

community leadership, future outlook and aspirations, and family and personal values. The content and structure of a curriculum plan will lead toward spiritual growth in proportion to how much consideration is given to the culture in which the target audience lives and works.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted the inadequacy of associating culture only with ethnicity. While it is true that culture is much more complex than one's nationality or ancestral heritage, there are important, though sometimes subtle, contrasts between people groups that must be considered for effective discipleship. When I was teaching in China, my students listened without asking questions and were hesitant to engage in my attempts at discussion. Where I teach in Indiana, when a class is over, many of my Midwestern college students hang around for a conversation, and others are eager to leave the classroom and get on with their lives. The first time I taught a seminary class in California with mostly Korean students, I was shocked and pleasantly surprised when the class broke out in applause when the class ended. In a seminary class in Romania, my students questioned everything I tried to teach them, and some days, I left feeling like a failure. When I first taught in Cuba, I was astonished to discover that my students were working late into the evenings studying and working on their assignments. Nothing was ever submitted late. In some countries where I've taught, many of the students have emailed their assignments nine months to a year past the deadlines, hoping to have them accepted. I have encountered situations where entire groups of students worked together and submitted the same work, refusing to understand how that constituted plagiarism. Each of these experiences exemplifies how students have been enculturated as learners within a particular context. They reflect culturally normative views on the role of both teacher and student as well as values about time and integrity.

Several years ago, I completed a research project in which I surveyed five distinct groups of teenagers from three countries on issues that were considered common concerns for all young people. The students were Caucasian American, Asian American,

Cuban, German, and Russian German. I was interested in whether their survey responses would be similar across groups, indicating a strong affiliation with global youth culture, or whether the results would indicate significant differences between the groups, suggesting that their national and ethnic cultural identities would be more influential. There were marked differences between the groups on many of the survey items. For instance, when faced with problems, Cuban students overwhelmingly indicated they would seek God's help first, but that was the lowest-ranking response for Caucasian American students, who said their first source of help would be their friends. Asian American students favored their parents when seeking help with a problem, with Russian German students ranking parents lower on their list of preferences than any other group in the study. The greatest area of consensus was that none of the groups identified pastors or youth ministers as a preferred source of help with their problems. In fact, three of the five cultural groups ranked them as their last choice. Research such as this could be considered useless trivia unless time is taken to understand why various student groups responded the way they did to each question in the survey. It could be invaluable to those designing a curriculum plan for any one of these student groups.

Cultural studies are helpful in developing a curriculum's content as well as the ways in which that content will be taught. They can offer insights into what needs the most emphasis, where teaching should take place, preferred leadership structures, effective teaching methods, and even illustrations that would be most impactful for learning. Cross-cultural missionaries are most successful when they take time to learn from and interact with those they will be serving through listening, observing, and questioning. In a very real sense, all discipleship strategies involve cross-cultural ministry. Adults facilitate discipleship groups for students, single people may teach those who are married or divorced, and individuals who have grown up in a community often lead others who have

moved into the area from another city, state, or country. In each instance, teachers must cross cultures as they engage in discipleship ministry.

Living within a community allows cross-cultural missionaries to observe life firsthand and gain a richer and more accurate understanding of those in another environment, acquiring invaluable insights into less tangible aspects of a particular culture known as the *ethos*. The type of information collected to understand a group's ethos is often referred to as psychographics. It is the same type of information that marketers often gather when trying to understand consumer groups. The focus is on understanding the shared values, assumptions, lifestyles, and personality traits of a particular group in order to reach them most effectively. It isn't the type of information you can easily count and measure, but it requires spending time in observation and communication. In sociology and related fields of study, this type of cultural study is often referred to as ethnography, and it typically involves a study of a year or more in a particular context. These same ethnographic principles can be used when developing a curriculum plan for a local ministry, but it requires intentional observation of the culture or community.

Focus Activity

- Describe some of the psychographics for your church or ministry. It may be helpful to ask specific questions, such as who makes key decisions, how well people know one another, how various age groups interact, or what programs or activities are most valued. How is your church or ministry viewed by outsiders?

- How would you describe the target audience or majority population in your church or ministry? Are there groups of people who are overlooked, either intentionally or unintentionally?
- Think of ways in which cross-cultural ministry is practiced within your church or ministry.

Biblical Examples

Christ's sacrifice was necessary for our salvation, and so was his humanity. The *Heidelberg Catechism* includes this significant truth, found in question 16: "Q: *Why must he be a true and righteous man?* A: *He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin. He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner cannot pay for others*."[8] The incarnation was an act of grace, making salvation possible, and also an act of cross-cultural ministry. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, crossed the boundaries between heaven and earth, entering the world as a helpless baby and learning the language and customs of his cultural surroundings.

Jesus honored others' cultures in his teaching and ministry. His parables and teaching methods show his desire to communicate spiritual truths in a language that would resonate with his audience. He crossed cultural barriers to share hope and truth. In John 4, we

8. Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, Heidelberg Catechism (Palatinate, Germany, 1563), Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, https://www.heidelberg-catechism.com/en/lords-days/6.html.

read about Jesus's trip from Judaea to Galilee. He traveled through Samaria, an uncommon practice for Jews who looked down on the Samaritans for their cultural and religious practices. Samaritans were part Jew and part Gentile, practicing elements of Judaism but also worshipping pagan gods. On his trip, Jesus encountered a woman drawing water from a well during the hottest part of the day, when most people would have been resting. This Samaritan woman had been married five times and was currently living with another man who wasn't her husband, so she probably went for water at this time to avoid having to face the other women who would have looked down on her immorality. When Jesus spoke with her, he intentionally crossed various cultural barriers, including ethnicity, religion, social class, and gender. This encounter with the woman at the well wasn't just a passing conversation but Jesus's longest personal interaction recorded in John.

Paul understood the importance of culture and that not all differences matter regarding the truth of the gospel:

> Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.
>
> 1 Corinthians 10:32–33, NIV

He tailored his ministry and teaching to those he was trying to reach, which required an understanding of cultural differences. Here are two examples:

> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak

I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

1 Corinthians 9:20–22, NIV

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God.

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against

Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

1 Corinthians 8:1–13, NIV

Focus Activity

- What other biblical examples can you identify that teach us the importance of understanding culture?
- What are some specific areas in your own church or ministry where these biblical examples are being followed or should be followed?
- Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 8:1–13 address a specific concern related to whether it was appropriate to eat meat sacrificed to idols. Consider a current cultural issue that causes divisions among Christians. Write your own modern version of Paul's speech, substituting the cultural concern you identified.

Using Demographics

Psychographic cultural information most effectively derived from ethnographic research is one means of understanding the context of where a discipleship curriculum will be implemented. It is the most time-consuming approach to gaining the insights needed for effective curriculum planning, but it isn't the only strategy necessary. It is also important to gather demographic data about a target audience. Demographics refers to quantitative data, the numbers

and percentages most often found in charts, graphs, or tables. Technology makes this much easier to attain than in previous decades. Demographic data includes information about such things as age distributions, marital status, income, gender, educational levels, religious preferences, housing situations, crime levels, and occupations. Depending on where you live, you can search a variety of government and nonprofit research sites to gather this data. There are databases that contain collections of worldwide data, such as Statista (https://www.statista.com/), Our World in Data (https://ourworldindata.org/), World Health Organization (https://www.who.int/), and WorldData (https://www.world-data.info/).

The most useful and detailed information can be found on sites that are country or region specific. Within the United States, searching data by zip code can be the most efficient. A number of databases allow this type of search. Among some of the most useful are the US Census Bureau (https://www.census.gov/data.html), City-Data (https://www.city-data.com/), Homefacts (https://www.homefacts.com/), and Pew Research Center (https://www.pewresearch.org/data-sources-for-demographic-research/). Many states, cities, or municipalities host their own websites or have public offices that may have the most up-to-date information, as national sites often rely on government census data or other studies that aren't conducted annually.

Regardless of where or how demographic data is collected, it is only useful to the extent that it is interpreted the same way as psychographic information. A list of facts and numbers is meaningless unless effort is given to how the data has impacted, does impact, or should impact a church or ministry's curriculum plan. It is helpful to bring together a team to analyze what has been discovered about a particular community or target audience. *What does the data say? What does it mean? How might this inform a curriculum plan?*

Examples

The following section includes samples of psychographic and demographic data submitted by former students, including some information on how they have interpreted the data as a means of informing curriculum. These are not exhaustive studies but bits and pieces extracted from larger plans. (As with previous examples, these are from students living in various contexts. Most of them also included charts or graphs displaying demographics, but those are not included. I am only sharing a few of their general summaries and reflections, largely unedited.)

Harleysville, Pennsylvania, USA

Harleysville was originally settled by the Pennsylvania Dutch in the 18th century. There is no data on the religious affiliations of persons living within Harleysville, but Figure 1 at the end of this document speaks to the religious affiliations of all persons living in Montgomery County, of which Harleysville is a part. This image demonstrates that the largest religion in Montgomery County is Catholicism, with persons claiming no religion coming in a close second. The churches found in Harleysville, however, don't seem to demonstrate this high concentration of Catholicism, as most of the churches are affiliated with either the Mennonite or Brethren denominations. It seems that students attending youth group will likely have many classmates who have not been exposed to

Christianity or who are Catholic. With this in mind, the youth group should have a variety of outreach events planned to reach these students. It also seems likely that a portion of the students attending youth group will not have grown up within the Church. Therefore, the curriculum created should cover crucial aspects of Christianity, such as God's character, who Jesus was, and what Christian life looks like.

Brewerville City, Montserrado, Liberia

Brewerville was historically occupied by the Dei, Gola, and Vai people, but the land was eventually given to settlers who were the Americo-Liberians, those who returned to Liberia as freed slaves. After the civil war in 1990 other groups and tribal people from Bomi, Cape Mount, and Lofa Counties settled in some communities within Brewerville. There are now residents from everywhere. This has affected crime, marriages, illegal sale of land and drugs just to name a few. Brewerville City has its share of crime ranging from petty to serious. To mitigate the crime rate, the police and the citizens of Brewerville and its environs set up a watch team. The city suffers issues like street and home robbery, stealing of anything that is forgotten outside, harassment for phones, bags, money, etc. Ninety percent of these crimes is done by gangs and drugs groups within Brewerville. Many young persons have given in to drugs and substance abuse and steals from others to be able to support their habits. They will uproot plants from the back of someone's yard to sell and use the money to

> buy drugs. Some of them have left home and are dwelling in grave yards and along the streets. They will harass and victimize anyone they can. They can steal things from their own homes without regrets....The majority of the population of Brewerville professes to be Christians. However, it is funny how this works here. A person is a Christian simply because they are not Muslims, even if they are not practicing Christians or accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Some of the issues that have risen is the robbery being targeted mostly at the descendants of the settlers. The settlers too look down on the others and do not see them as of the same class. It is only of recent that intermarriages and the likes have not been a major problem although there are still some families who will never allow such. Furthermore, even in the churches there are similar problems. The mainline churches are mostly descendants of the settlers while the newly established ones are mainly natives. There is divide and issues of belongingness and acceptance.

Given all of the circumstances around the city of Brewerville, there is a need for this ministry for a greater influence and impact towards godliness. This generation needs a change so that they can influence the next generation. Like Paul says to the Jewish and Gentile believers in Ephesians, the city needs to understand that it is no longer natives nor settlers but rather citizens of Brewerville. In addition, the young people must be rescued from the influence of drugs, robbery, and immorality. It is not only affecting the children of the natives but also of the settlers.

> Overall, the potential to start a good college ministry in the Fort Wayne area is good. There are six colleges in the city with a total of just under 25,000 full-time students combined. The campuses vary in size and population, with the largest having around 10,000 students and the smallest around 1,000. I would imagine having a small number of students from each campus in the church would be conducive to reaching them. A good way to engage with these students on the campuses would be to start small group meetings hosted by volunteers working alongside students from the church on each of their campuses. These meetings would be held on a weekly basis to encourage community building among the students already in CCFW, as well as provide a space for inviting other students on the campus (both Christian and Non). There would also be a larger monthly meeting for the whole ministry, in which students from each separate campus would be invited to fellowship as a larger group in the church.

Between Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox, Christians make up around 53% of the population in Fort Wayne. This leaves a combined 47% of people in Fort Wayne who are either Non-Christian Religious or Non-Religious (the latter being the larger group). If these stats are reflected on college campuses, then there are a large number of college students who could benefit from growing in their relationship with Christ through the ministry as well as a large number who could come to encounter Christ. In light of this, I would say the weekly meetings would be more of a discipleship opportunity (most of the time) for committed

Christians in the ministry, while outreach events and service projects could be conducted within the campus communities to reach students who do not know Christ.

Diah Town, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia

> The County is sparsely populated with concentrations in commercial, mining and fishing areas. Three ethnic groups: Mande, Gola and Vai occupy this county. But the majority is Vai. Most of them speak the Vai dialect. It is estimated that 91% of the population is a Muslim. Some of them are orthodox Muslims. They have studied the Quran and are eager to practice rule that is spelled out in the Islamic law. However, others are nominal Muslims; that is, they carry the name but do not practice the religious rituals and practices. The Muslim parents send their children to attend the Islamic school and later become teacher to teach others. The Vai people give their daughters early in marriage. They do not believe in girl child education.

Since the Muslims of the Vai ethnic group are not much interested in the English education as compare to the Arabic education, most of what will be discussed will be in the Arabic translation of the Bible. The Vai ethnic group are good story tellers. They learn best through storytelling. Most of the history about their origins came down through story. At night children sit by the fire and the elders explain to them their beliefs and values through storytelling. Sometimes there are story surrounding a well-known person whom the learners can want to identify with. Sometimes they even go as far as adopting the name of the hero

involved. They are very keen at listening to stories. While it is true that reading will be done, those who cannot read will benefit a lot through listening to the reading done by others.

Irving, Texas, USA

Fifty-eight and a half percent of people living in this area are Asian. Furthermore, 17.8% of people are white, 13.1% of people are Black or African American, 7.2% of people are Hispanic, 2.6% of people are two or more races, 0.4% of people are American Indian, and 0.3% are of some other race. When it comes to having multiple ethnicities in one area, the one thing that needs to happen is for this ministry to be a safe place for everyone to come together as one body in unity to worship the Lord regardless of ethnicity or background. There should be youth leaders from every ethnicity, not just white males and females. One way to connect youth is through eating different kinds of food from each ethnic background. Another way to unite the body as one is by having other groups of similar ages be together regardless of their ethnicity because each of the different ethnicities has and will experience different things in their lifetime. The students will be able to learn from each other by being in groups that are similar in age and gender but have a combination of ethnicities.

Jackson, Michigan, USA

> According to census.gov, the percentage of people graduating high school from ages 25+ was 87.1%, but the percentage of people obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher ages 25+ was 15.2%. These education statistics show that most of the workforce will have more manufacturing jobs or administrative jobs, which is what the employment statistics show above. This is very important for ministry opportunities because there will be lots of young adults in Jackson who aren't going to college. This can cause loneliness, and even insecurity among young adults. It will be important to reach out to young adults and extend an invitation, so they can have a community surrounding them.

According to City-Data, there are 32,647 households in Jackson. 5,585 of these householders are male and 2,301 of these males are living alone. There are 7,625 female householders and 3,027 of these women are living alone. One of the most important facts is that there are 4,752 single-parent households (1,135 men and 3,617 women). According to mdch.state.mi.us, there were 430 divorces in Jackson 2021, with a rate of 5.4. This is very important information to know because a lot of my students may be missing father or mother figure in the home. Based off the data, it seems the most common prediction is an absence of a father. A strategy in my ministry would be to emphasize that God is our loving Father when we accept Christ into our hearts. Also, another important thing to do is get the parents involved in our church. Yes, make sure the students feel welcome, but also make sure the adults are invited as well. Secondly, many students could be impacted by divorce and broken families. In my ministry, this would impact how I talk about relationships between the two-sexes. I would emphasize the impor-

tance of honoring men and women and sex. Lastly, there will be many students coming from 2 parent households, but because Jackson has around 30% of the population identifying as religious, I will not assume their families are at all spiritual. This is an awareness the ministry must have towards the students that come in.

Focus Activity

- What information in the previous examples reflects psychographics, and what are some examples of demographic data?
- As you read through these samples, what additional implications or curriculum suggestions would you offer based on the information provided?

Reflection Exercise

Begin researching the cultural context associated with your curriculum project. Begin compiling a list of psychographic and demographic information you discover. Include the sources for all the information you collect.

Developmental Characteristics

The most obvious way to think about the distinct audiences served by a curriculum is to consider age groupings or levels of development. It is common to find plans and resources specifically designed for preschool, children, youth, or adults. While most publishers consider developmental characteristics when determining the content or the overall approach to teaching and learning, not all available resources reflect a clear vision for fostering spiritual growth.

Developmental theorists generally focus on one particular aspect of development and often organize these characteristics into systems or taxonomies reflecting changes corresponding to age. Three of the most helpful in understanding the target audience for a curriculum are Jean Piaget, Robert J. Havighurst, and Erik Erikson. Piaget described ways in which cognitive abilities developed throughout life into adolescence, shaping the way various ages think and learn, from symbolic to concrete to abstract. His work provides insight into both appropriate content and methodology for various age groups.

Havighurst's work, published in *Human Development and Education*, described six life stages and their associated tasks. He theorized that when a person completes these tasks within their corresponding time frame, they will be fulfilled and accepted by society. Developmental characteristics contribute to the possibility that the task can be achieved. He referred to this as a teachable moment, stating that if the timing wasn't right, learning would not occur. To overcome this challenge, Havighurst recommended repetition so as to eventually connect with a student's teachable moment. He also recognized that one's culture influences the accomplishment of each task.[9]

9. Robert J. Havighurst, Human Development and Education (New York: David McKay, 1953).

Erikson emphasized psychosocial development, dividing the human lifespan into eight distinct stages. He proposed that a specific crisis corresponds to each of the eight stages, and if the crisis weren't resolved positively, it would impede development:

> For example, the person who does not develop a sense of trust (Erikson's first stage) may find it challenging as an adult to form a positive intimate relationship (Erikson's sixth stage). Or an individual who does not develop a clear sense of purpose and identity (Erikson's fifth stage) may become self-absorbed and stagnate rather than work toward the betterment of others (Erikson's seventh stage).[10]

Erikson's work has been criticized, most often for the dramatic use of the term *crisis* to describe developmental tasks. However, understanding how various inner motivational factors across the lifespan can lead to maturity can be invaluable when thinking about a curriculum's content and construction. D. Campbell Wyckoff reminds us that "*the ages and stages merge into one another rather imperceptibly*" and "*individual consciousness takes precedence over the idea of ages and stages*," so Christian education curriculum should not be too closely focused on a general understanding of age-level characteristics.[11]

After Havighurst published his book on education and human development, he wrote a paper on how his ideas were applicable to Christian education. This led to the idea that there are specific processes that allow learning to take place at every stage of the lifespan. These include the exploration stage, when people seek to understand themselves and their surroundings. This is followed

10. Martha Lally and Suzanne Valentine-French, Lifespan Development: A Psychological Perspective, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike, 2019), 18, https://dept.clcillinois.edu/psy/LifespanDevelopment.pdf.
11. D. Campbell Wyckoff, Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 106–7.

by the discovery phase, in which a person finds meaning and value in both self and whatever is being explored. The final stage is the act of appropriation, when a person personally embraces the new idea and assumes corresponding personal and social responsibility.[12]

It is important to understand cognitive, emotional, social, and physical abilities throughout each stage of the lifespan, and that information is readily available from a number of sources. Most of it could be considered common knowledge, but knowing something is not the same as appropriating that knowledge in ways that impact learning and foster spiritual transformation. Just as with a cultural study, it is imperative to reflect on developmental differences and ask, *What is this saying, and what does it mean? How might this impact spiritual growth? How should this inform the experiences, structure, and methods in a curriculum plan for this age group?*

The most helpful resources for understanding how to create specialized curricula for distinct age groups explain both developmental characteristics and how those should inform teaching. An older but valuable resource for this purpose is *Exploring Christian Education* by A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper. It includes chapters focused on understanding basic developmental characteristics and their curricular implications for preschoolers, children, youth, and adults. The following is an example of how this resource describes preschool characteristics and some ideas on how they should be taught based on those characteristics.

The motor development of preschool children allows them to transition from total dependence on a caregiver to the relative freedom of exploring their world as they become more mobile. This independence also brings greater pressure on the child to conform, as parents and other adults set limits to protect them from environmental dangers. Language acquisition and understanding opens the

12. Howard P. Colson and Raymond M. Rigdon, Understanding Your Church's Curriculum, rev. ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 53–54.

world of communication, allowing expression of ideas and feelings. Preschoolers can understand more than they can express but cannot grasp abstract ideas. Children at this age prefer parallel play, in proximity with others, but not fully interacting. Their attention span is short, and for most tasks, girls have a longer attention span than boys. Preschoolers need to play, engage in a variety of activities, and be mobile. They are curious and enjoy creating, but their fine motor skills limit what they can produce.

Those who teach preschoolers should be creative, spontaneous, and joyful. Limits must be imposed but done so in a kind yet firm manner. Teachers should communicate clearly and precisely, using words a young child can understand. When storytelling, they should exhibit feeling and excitement. An educational space should be large enough to allow exploration, full of interesting things to discover, and free from safety hazards. Young children should not be expected to sit still for long periods of time, participate in group activities except on occasion, or engage in group games or activities.[13]

Reflection Exercise

The following list, though not comprehensive, includes specific developmental characteristics related to teaching and learning for several age groups. As you read the following statements, reflect on how each could and should inform a curriculum plan. Jot down two or three thoughts for each set of age group characteristics.

13. A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper, eds., Exploring Christian Education (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 223–31.

1st–2nd Grade

- Have lots of energy but tire easily
- Mental growth varies; some read and others don't
- Like to think and be challenged but are easily frustrated if they can't do something
- Are sensitive and easily embarrassed
- Need adult approval and praise
- Spiritual development related to a sense of justice and fairness; concerned with right and wrong
- Are concrete and literal in their thinking
- Have an inborn sense of the divine and a natural interest in God

3rd–4th Grade

- Enjoy sports, interactive games, and club activities
- Still like to learn; can understand chronology, geography, and time-space concepts
- Prefer same-sex friendships
- Are sensitive to criticism but generally self-confident
- Spiritually believe God can hear and answer prayers; increasingly understand the need for salvation

Teenagers

- Capable of abstract thinking, and they learn
    - from adult role models,
    - when there is an atmosphere of love, trust, and acceptance,
    - when they make discoveries for themselves,

- when they are actively involved in learning,
- when they explore biblical truths with their peers,
- when the lesson relates to their needs and interests,
- when the activities reflect their abilities,
- when the learning has an identifiable goal,
- when a variety of learning methods are used, and
- when they are provided with opportunities to take positive action regarding the lesson.

Adults

- Are self-directed learners, self-disciplined, and experienced
- Are focused on relevance and learn best when content relates to their life transitions, family, or vocation
- Are excellent contributors to a learning situation, but need a safe environment; many are insecure learners
- Need emotional engagement with the content and to feel they have successfully met a challenge
- Require time for reflection
- Want to be stretched

Significant Concepts

cross-cultural

culture

demographics

developmental differences

ethnography

ethos

psychographics

Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

- Using the curriculum plan you began in chapter 1 and revised for chapter 2, create a new section called "Curriculum Context." Research the area where your ministry will take place, then collect both psychographic and demographic information about the surrounding culture. Organize the information into a summary document of three to four pages. Make sure to include curricular implications for all of the data in your description.
- Then write a two- to three-page overview of the developmental characteristics of your specific target audience. Utilize resources that will allow you to focus holistically, including cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual characteristics. For each category, discuss relevant implications for curricular

planning and spiritual growth.

4. Content and Structure

"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh," said Piglet at last, "what's the first thing you say to yourself?" "What's for breakfast?" said Pooh.

"What do you say, Piglet?" "I say, I wonder what's going to happen exciting to-day?" said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully. "It's the same thing," he said.

A. A. Milne - *Winnie-the-Pooh*

Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand:

- The terms *scope* and *sequence*
- What should be included in the scope of a disciple-

ship curriculum
- The importance of flexibility in sequencing

Be able to:

- Develop an appropriate curricular scope for a specific target audience
- Organize curriculum content into relevant themes and topics

Every profession is associated with a specific body of knowledge, what one has to understand, value, or be able to do to hold that position. Airline pilots only have to be seventeen to get a private pilot certificate, but to fly for an airline, they must be high school graduates or have completed a GED, though most airlines prefer a four-year college degree. A pilot has to be proficient in reading, writing, speaking, and understanding English. Pilots must also be in good health and obtain a Federal Aviation Administration medical certificate. They must have strong spatial awareness and coordination. Regarding emotional stability and personality traits, pilots need to possess excellent communication skills, be able to work with a team, demonstrate leadership, be decisive and quick-thinking, and demonstrate self-confidence.[1] Those are the personal qualifications, but that doesn't include everything a pilot has to learn. That's a more complicated list.

Pilots have to become familiar with the aircraft and the parts of the plane they'll fly. This includes external components like

1. "Requirements and Qualifications to Become a Pilot," L3 Harris Flight Academy, February 2024, https://l3harrisairlineacademy.com/en-us/how-to-become-a-pilot-in-the-usa/qualifications-to-become-a-pilot-usa/.

the wings and ailerons and also the cockpit instruments, including the navigation and communication systems. The fuel system, oil, and electrical systems also have to be understood, as well as the aircraft engine. A pilot has to be able to compare and contrast the performance of different aircraft using charts and understand how to file accurate flight logs and communicate with maintenance personnel.

Pilots also learn applied physics by studying aircraft maneuvers and investigating the different forces at work, such as Bernoulli's principle, which explains how various air pressures flowing over and under an airplane wing generate lift. Additionally, pilots need to understand how to keep an aircraft balanced in flight by understanding how the weight of cargo, passengers, and fuel impacts its performance. A pilot's training includes a study of aeromedicine, focused on how flight affects the human body. A pilot must understand how atmospheric pressure and other aerodynamic forces can impact the passengers and crew. Pilots must be able to react effectively when medical emergencies take place on their aircraft. Besides understanding the aircraft and how it functions and how to care for those within the plane, a commercial pilot also has to have an understanding of weather conditions that impact flying. They must study weather phenomena, such as cloud formations, fronts and air masses, humidity and temperature, wind changes, and weather hazards, including thunderstorms and various types of precipitation.

The list of what a pilot needs to be, understand, and do is already quite long, but there is more. Flying the aircraft requires learning to navigate—plan, control, and record an aircraft's movement from one destination to another. Pilots must follow the visual flight rules, which include using visual cues, magnetic compass readings, and dead reckoning (the process of determining your position based on the last known position). Using radio navigation, air traffic control radar, and flight computers is also part of the process. Commercial pilots must also be competent in instrument flight rules to fly when they can't use visual cues. They must learn

how to use GPS systems, nondirectional beacons, and VHF omnidirectional range radio transmitters to position their aircraft to stay on course. They must learn what to do in emergencies if all navigation and communications systems fail.

Finally, learning to fly an aircraft requires learning how to prepare, including preplanning a route and doing system checks. Other necessary skills include learning how to taxi, take off, and land with the wind or in a crosswind; how to follow airport traffic patterns when entering or departing; how to fly straight and level and make level turns; how to make climbing turns; and how to avoid collisions, wind shear, and wake turbulence. Additional necessary skills include descending the aircraft, including with turns or high and low drag configurations; flying at different speeds; handling stalled engines and other equipment malfunctions; proceeding in an emergency; and performing forward slips and sideslips. Knowledge of high-altitude operations, postflight procedures, and night flying experience are also essential.[2]

As you read over this extensive list of what it takes to be a pilot, you might have been overwhelmed, or you might have been grateful to realize that the person who flies your commercial airplane has such an extensive amount of tested knowledge and experience! This list represents a significant part of a curriculum, the planned content of the journey toward becoming a commercial pilot. This body of knowledge is referred to as scope. As you can imagine, there is also a structure or order to the way this content is taught and learned. A pilot doesn't learn how to take off before learning how to taxi, and those lessons don't take place until a pilot understands the aircraft's engine and instruments. This structure and order of a curriculum plan is known as sequence.

2. "What Will I Learn in Flight School?," Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology, February 2024, https://www.spartan.edu/news/what-will-i-learn-in-flight-school/.

Focus Activity

- Think of a specific profession or job and identify everything that would be included in the scope of qualifications for that position. Separate your list into attitudes or values one would need to have, information that should be known and understood, and specific motor skills required by someone in this career.
- What might you include in the scope for a disciple? What attitudes, values, information, and skills should a disciple possess and continue to develop?

Scope

A helpful way to understand *scope* is to think of other uses of the term. A microscope brings into sharp focus whatever has been placed on a slide underneath the scope. A telescope only reveals a portion of the sky that is within the range of where the scope is pointing. The same is true of a rifle scope. There is an entire landscape in front of a hunter, but the target appears within the circumference of the scope used for sighting the prey. With that understanding, we may think of the scope of a curriculum as everything within the range of a curriculum's mission. It is the entire field of what is appropriate to deal with in a curriculum designed for a particular purpose. This use of the term encompasses everything that could possibly be included, even if it isn't covered in a plan. While publishers typically use the term *scope* to refer to what is

actually included in their curriculum plans, a more accurate term for this might be the content. Instead of the entire relevant scope, it describes what has been selected for inclusion in the curriculum, even though some possible topics have been omitted.

Why would curriculum designers only select part of the scope to include in their plan? Why not make sure that everything is covered? A scope is often limited because of the intended audience. The faith level of the students might dictate the inclusion of some content areas in a curriculum and the exclusion of others. The mission of making disciples and fostering spiritual formation must always consider the cultural and developmental characteristics of those for whom it is intended. There are topics and truths within Scripture that may not be appropriate to teach to young children, for example. Theologian and teacher L. Harold DeWolf suggests that the manner in which we teach various parts of the scope should differ depending on the age group, though he believes that we should teach the full scope of Christian education to all ages. He states, "*The longer I have taught at both senior and adult levels, the more firmly convinced I am that the whole gospel must be taught at each of these levels, almost as if it had never been taught before.*"[3] While some argue that everything within Scripture is appropriate for everyone, most curriculum designers focus only on what is most relevant for a particular age group.

Some curriculum developers may omit theological perspectives or spiritual disciplines that differ from a church or ministry's tradition or doctrinal position. Another scope consideration is time. If a curriculum plan is designed for a ministry that has a start and end date, such as a Vacation Bible School, or for a particular stage of development, such as for teenagers, it would not be possible to adequately teach everything that could possibly be included

3. DeWolf quoted in Howard P. Colson and Raymond M. Rigdon, Understanding Your Church's Curriculum, rev. ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 60.

within the scope. Another practical consideration for selecting content from within a possible scope relates to the background of those teaching. For instance, if a curriculum plan is designed to be led within a context where those leading are newer Christians or aren't highly educated, it might be advisable to focus on content within the teachers' areas of expertise.

If a curriculum plan is designed by a church focusing on spiritual maturity and learning across the entire lifespan, then an attempt might be made to include a comprehensive scope. Still, it will be necessary to determine which parts of the scope will be covered within various ministries, in what order, and for which groups within the church. In effect, there will be a curriculum within the curriculum. A lifelong race will be constructed, but it will take place in stages. It is more common to develop a specific curriculum for a particularly selected target audience, often defined by life stages. That is the perspective from which this book is written, though the same principles and procedures would apply on a broader scale.

Selecting which parts of a scope to omit must be done with care, but it is part of the overall process. Those topics chosen for omission are referred to as the null curriculum. They are part of the scope but are nullified in the curriculum because there are no plans to cover them. What has been selected for inclusion is often called explicit curriculum.

One aspect of a scope falls outside of either one of these categories. It isn't explicit and it isn't null, but it is hidden. Hidden curriculum refers to content that is not intentionally planned but is often intentional in terms of outcome. It isn't hidden in the sense that it is a secret set of indoctrination goals kept from the learners. *Hidden curriculum* refers to what is learned in addition to what is explicitly stated within the scope. It is implicit, or implied. Think of hidden curriculum as the understandings, values, or attitudes students gain from the total curricular journey. Students often graduate from high school and leave behind a youth ministry that they love. The leaders and relationships have shaped their value for the community and had a positive influence on their understanding

of the Christian life. Their commitment to that local church may become a standard by which they measure their future involvement in a new church. These outcomes were never explicitly stated, but they were shaped and transmitted throughout the entire teaching and learning experience, their curricular journey. Hidden curriculum may result from the learning context, how the environment is arranged, the group size, the personality of the leader, or the connections made with other learners. Each of these characteristics can shape what a student takes away from an experience.

Hidden curriculum is often implicitly taught through modeling. The expectations for interpersonal interactions, the standards of behavior expected, the style of worship, and the community and global needs we emphasize all shape the hidden curriculum. A ministry's core values, when lived out, powerfully impact the totality and outcome of the spiritual formation curriculum because the personality of churches and ministries shapes the discipleship journey. The transmission of these values and standards is aspirational, something hoped for, but when they aren't identified in the scope, they become part of the hidden curriculum.

In describing school-based education, Elliot Eisner emphasizes the reality that explicit curriculum is what is most easily recognizable, but null and hidden (implicit) curriculum also shape learning outcomes:

> Schools also teach through the implicit curriculum, that pervasive and ubiquitous set of expectations and rules that defines schooling as a cultural system that itself teaches important lessons. And we can identify the null curriculum—the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use, the concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire. Surely, in deliberations that constitute the

course of living, their absence will have important consequences on the kind of life that students can choose to lead.[4]

Focus Activity

- Reread the quote at the beginning of this chapter. Use your creativity to discover connections between Pooh's and Piglet's views of a good day and the concepts of explicit, null, and hidden curriculum.
- How would you describe the hidden curriculum within a ministry or academic setting where you are currently involved? What have you learned in this setting that isn't part of the explicitly stated curriculum plan?
- As you think about this same ministry or academic setting, can you think of components of the scope that are null? In other words, what could be part of this learning experience that would meet the stated purpose but is not part of what is covered or taught?

4. Elliot Eisner, The Educational Imagination (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2002), 97.

Organizing the Scope

It can be overwhelming to think about a curricular scope, let alone determine what will constitute the actual explicit content. For our purposes, we will begin using the term *scope* interchangeably with *content*. In other words, throughout the rest of this book, *scope* will refer to the breadth of what is intentionally included in a curriculum plan. As stated previously, this is the way publishers describe their various curricular materials, only referencing what they choose to cover in their resources. In your planning, you will begin by identifying a scope that is suitable for the curricular mission, and then you will determine the content of your curriculum or actual portions of the scope you will include. We will refer to that as the *scope of your curriculum*. This use of the term will minimize confusion as you develop your plans.

An important first step in determining scope is to review the intended mission. What is the purpose of the plan, and what is necessary for students to believe and understand for that to be accomplished? What do growing disciples need to know, understand, value, and exhibit? How would you begin listing everything? It is still an enormous focus, but it offers clues on bringing structure to the planning. The process becomes more manageable if you think about organizing the scope into various parts. Are there natural ways to categorize the scope? What guidelines might allow you to think about the scope in smaller, more manageable components?

In the mid-twentieth century, the *Cooperative Curriculum Project* (CCP) was initiated to provide guidance for the educational ministry of the Church. It was an interdenominational effort, resulting in an extensive plan that could be adapted and used by denominations to help "the church in its task of nurturing persons in

the faith, thus preparing them for the mission of the church."[5] The project described the curricular scope as "the whole field of relationships viewed in light of, or from the perspective of, the gospel—God's whole continuous redemptive action toward man, known especially in Jesus Christ."[6] This focus on all relationships in light of the gospel offers a guideline that the CCP used to bring organization to the curriculum. It is part of what is known as an organizing principle. Howard P. Colson and Raymond M. Rigdon explain an organizing principle as "*the rationale for the approach curriculum builders take to assure the proper relation of the design elements in a curriculum plan. The organizing principle is also a valuable instrument for testing the curriculum plan to see that it has in it the essential elements of design in proper relationship*."[7]

> The CCP's stated organizing principle was as follows: The learner "becomes aware of God through his self-disclosure…and responds in faith and love" when through involvement in the Christian community he comes face to face with the great concerns of Christian faith and life as they are relevant to him in his situation by "listening with growing alertness to the gospel and responding in faith and love."[8]

This statement provides organizational clarity by suggesting that the curriculum plan's intent is for students to grow in their awareness of God, commit to becoming a disciple, and become part of a local church where the scope will be encountered as it is relevant to their lives and that their participation in the life of the Church will contribute to even greater levels of commitment and growth. The scope will rely on the organizing principle for its development.

5. Cooperative Curriculum Project (CCP), The Church's Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1965), 3.
6. CCP, Church's Educational Ministry, 13.
7. Colson and Rigdon, Understanding Your Church's Curriculum, 50.
8. CCP, Church's Educational Ministry, 36.

Remember that the CCP's scope included all of the students' relationships in light of the gospel. As this group further developed the scope of their curriculum plan, they organized their thoughts around the Christian experience of man under God, man's relationship to man, and the experience of man in the world. These three ideas are rooted in Scripture and are the foundational realities that gave shape to the CCP's scope. To make the development process more manageable, the CCP organized the scope into five curriculum areas: life and its setting, revelation, sonship, vocation, and the Church. None of the areas is more significant than any other, and they aren't sequenced in any order. They are simply ways of thinking about the entire scope to assist in planning.

Think of your scope in terms of a home. Families live in homes, and families are the cradle or foundation of existence. They matter, so where they live also matters. It should be a place that provides shelter, protection, comfort, and nurturing and a place where family members can grow into responsible and fulfilled individuals as they interact with those who live with them. Each of the rooms in the dwelling place represents a distinct area designed to contribute to the overall purpose. A house may have bedrooms, a kitchen, bathrooms, a laundry room, an office, a family room, a garage, an attic, or a basement. These rooms represent the various areas of scope, with the house itself representing the entire scope.

Each of the areas in the CCP's plan has a unique focus or perspective, and each area is further divided into themes or major motifs that are important throughout the lifespan. For example, the area of "life and its setting" is about the meaning and experience of life. The themes assigned to this area are man discovering and accepting himself, man living in relationship with others, man's relation to the natural order, man's involvement in social forces, man's coping with change and the absolute, and man's creativity with life's daily routines. The plan explains the meaning of each theme and provides biblical examples, then identifies specific ways in which

each theme is significant for various age levels.[9] These age-level considerations are listed and can be considered as appropriate thematic topics to be included in a plan for a particular age-focused curriculum plan.

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Reflection Exercise

- Can you describe the meaning and importance of an organizing principle for ministry?
- Review the work you have done for your curriculum plan. As you think about your mission, core values, and target audience, how would you describe an appropriate organizing principle for your plan?

Areas, Themes, Topics, and Subtopics

One approach to determining a curricular scope is for a group to brainstorm everything that could or should be included in a ministry for it to realize its overall mission. Once the list is exhausted, the

9. The CCP's complete plan is outlined in The Church's Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan. This 848-page book describes each aspect of the plan in detail. Each area is thoroughly explained, and learning tasks are also identified for each age level. It is a comprehensive plan that may be useful for those creating their own curriculum.

items can be organized into general related areas, with all related subjects grouped together. They can be further organized or grouped by major themes and associated topics. For obvious reasons, this is not the best strategy for developing a comprehensive scope. Entire categories can be overlooked, the scope can be heavily influenced by those who participate in the brainstorming session, and the experiences and faith maturity of the planning group will limit the ideas generated from the brainstorming session.

Starting with a general framework that identifies areas of the scope is advisable. This was the approach of the CCP. This framework should follow the organizing principle you crafted from your plan's preliminary elements. Think about the mission, vision, core values, target audience, and teaching/learning context and weave the ideas together into a guiding principle to help you organize the plan. Once you have identified the areas, or the big chunks of your scope, then you can begin to identify each of the major themes that should be included for each area. Continue this process by identifying more specific topics that further define each theme. Subtopics add more specificity to the scope, identifying various aspects of each topic that more narrowly define the content.

It may also be helpful to think in terms of units of study appropriate for your target audience, related to various topics or subtopics. However, not everything in the scope will be accomplished through a small group, Bible study, or sermon series. Remember that designing a curriculum is like designing a racecourse, and it includes everything students will experience as they run the race. Special events, retreats, camps, and projects related to various components of the scope can all be designed to help students learn and grow. Your plan identifies the boundaries of the curricular racecourse through its various areas, themes, topics, and subtopics. The race itself will involve formal and informal teaching and learning sessions as well as events and experiences related to the scope.

When designing a curriculum for the first time, it may be confusing to think about areas, themes, topics, and subtopics in

the abstract. Most of your previous educational experiences utilize these principles, however. The following excerpts from a university's core curriculum plan are intended to clarify further how these concepts are related and how they can be implemented. Students enrolled in this university select a variety of majors, so their comprehensive curriculum isn't identical. However, as is the case with many universities, there is a core curriculum plan designed to help students accomplish the school's mission, regardless of which major they declare.

University Core Curriculum

> **University Mission:** With the conviction that all truth is God's truth, the University exists to carry out the mission of Christ in higher education. Through a curriculum of demonstrated academic excellence, students are educated in the liberal arts and their chosen disciplines, always seeking to examine the relationship between the disciplines and God's revelation in Jesus Christ.
>
> **Organizing Principle for the Core Curriculum:** The…University Core Curriculum challenges students to integrate knowledge, values, and skills into a coherent worldview that equips them for a life of faithfulness to God through service in the world.
>
> **Scope Areas for the Core:** Faith Integration, Critical Thinking, Communication, Multicultural Thinking, Empirical Thinking, Creative Expression

- **Themes Related to the Faith Integration Core Area:** Biblical Studies, Christian Faith, Religious Perspectives
  - **Topics Related to the Biblical Studies Theme:**

Apocalyptic Literature, The Gospels, New Testament Historical and Prophetic Literature, Hebrew Historical Literature

- **Topics Related to the Religious Perspectives Theme:** Religions of the World, History of Christianity, Religion of Scientific Thought, Philosophy of Religion, Contemporary Christian Theology, God and Ethics, Philosophical Theology, Theological Bioethics

- **Themes Related to the Empirical Thinking Core Area:** Mathematical Science, Natural Science, Social Science, Wellness

  - **Topics Related to the Social Science Theme:** Principles of Macroeconomics, Public Policy, Introduction to Psychology, Principles of Sociology, Cultural Anthropology

As you can imagine, each topic represents a semester-long course of study, and each course has its own set of subtopics and objectives.[10] This model can be used to construct a scope. Determine your mission and your organizing principle and establish relevant areas that will make up your scope. Then determine themes and topics for each area. For each of the topics, begin to think about subtopics related to each one. This is similar to how each course listed in the university example includes its own content. If you have taken a psychology course, for example, you realize that this is a very broad subject and includes many separate units of study on various subtopics in psychology. Identifying your scope subtopics represents a similar approach.

10. This information is a portion of the core curriculum plan for Huntington University, which is included in the Huntington University Traditional Undergraduate Academic Catalog, 2023–2024, vol. 108 (2023): 101–3.

Reflection Exercise

- Look over the various themes the CCP included in the area of life and its setting. Select a couple of the themes and identify three or four relevant topics related to each of the themes you selected.
- Next, select two of the topics you listed for each of the two themes. Create two appropriate subtopics for each topic you selected.

Sequence

When constructing an organized curriculum plan that will guide the ministry's teaching and learning, it is important to establish a planned sequence for engaging with the various components you selected as part of the explicit curriculum. Consider the order in which it makes the most sense to offer the various themes, topics, and subtopics in the scope to help learners develop. Some topics or subtopics build on one another and require a level of prior understanding before they can be effectively understood.

In chapter 3, you read about Robert J. Havighurst's view on teachable moments. He proposed that various portions of the scope need to be repeated because age isn't the only thing that determines learning readiness. Some learners might not be at a point where they can fully understand or appropriate various topics when they're first presented, so weaving them into the sequence at more than one point will maximize the possibility that everyone will learn

what you have determined is important for their spiritual growth. Not everyone will be present for every teaching and learning opportunity. If a student is absent, they will miss out on essential portions of the scope if those are not repeated in various places throughout the curriculum.

The Bible references the importance of sequence and the need for repetition in teaching as part of spiritual growth. Paul describes a group of gullible people that are easily swayed by false teachers because they "*are so loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:6–7, NIV). Another example of why repetition is important is found in Hebrews 5. The author is addressing Jewish Christians who are not at the level of spiritual maturity they should have already attained:

> We have a lot to explain about this. But since you have become too lazy to pay attention, explaining it to you is hard. By now you should be teachers. Instead, you still need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word. You need milk, not solid food. All those who live on milk lack the experience to talk about what is right. They are still babies. However, solid food is for mature people, whose minds are trained by practice to know the difference between good and evil.
>
> Hebrews 5:11–14, GW

The key to developing an appropriate curricular sequence is to consider how best to arrange the elements of the scope for spiritual growth. If the plan is developed for an entire ministry, then sequencing might also require determining which themes or topics to include for various age groups. If a curriculum is developed for one particular age group, then there is a limited time frame to consider when planning a sequence. For example, if it is a curriculum plan for high school students, it will probably be a three- or four-year sequence, depending on which grade levels are considered high school.

When developing a scope, publishers tend to think of cycles of learning, with entire cycles repeated every three or four years, sometimes less frequently and sometimes more often. If a ministry develops a separate curriculum for intergenerational learning or for specific purposes, such as a new believers' program, the length of the sequence and cycle needs to be considered in the planning stages for both the scope and the sequence.

Excerpts from a Published Scope and Sequence

Three-Year Plan for Children[11]

Areas: *Getting to Know God*, *Building Trust in God*, *Sticking With God*, and *Putting God First*

Themes Related to Area 1 *Getting to Know God*

Themes: *Bible Basics*, *Who God Is*, *What God Does*

Topics Related to the Theme: *What God Does*

*God helps us, God guides us, God keeps His promises, God protects us, God forgives us, God provides everything we need, God always stays with

11. This is part of Group's Hands-On Bible Max curriculum scope and sequence for 2008–9. This curriculum has changed over the years and now has a two-year sequence. All of Group's scope and sequence charts can be downloaded from their website, https://www.group.com.

us (is faithful), God heals, God does miraculous things, God uses common people to accomplish his plans, God looks for the lost, God longs for us, There are some things God will not do

Themes Related to Area 2 *Building Trust in God*

Themes: *Communication*, *Being Yourself*, *Faith*

Topics Related to the Theme: *Faith*

*Faith is believing what you can't see, Have childlike faith in God, Have faith that God has plans for you, Have faith that God knows best, Have faith when you're in trouble, Have faith when things look tough, Have faith when you don't know everything, Have faith when you need help, Have faith when others need help, Have faith when you don't have much, Have faith when you don't see the answer, Have faith when you stand up for God Have faith in Jesus's power

Themes Related to Area 3 *Sticking With God*

Themes: *Love*, *Hope*, *Grace*

Topics Related to the Theme: *Grace*

*God's grace is a free gift, Share God's grace with others, We can ask for God's grace, God's grace cleans us, We need God's grace, God showed His Grace by sending His Son, God's grace rescues us, God's grace makes our sins disappear, God's grace changes us, God's grace helps us have good rela-

tionships, Anyone can ask for God's grace, God's grace gives us confidence, We give grace because we have received It from God

Themes Related to Area 4 *Putting God First*

Themes: *My Life*, *Remembering*, *Serving*

Topics Related to the Theme: *Serving*

*Jesus taught us to share what you have, God wants us to always help others, God can help us be kind to everyone, God wants us to make peace, Jesus tells us to share our faith, Jesus wants us to help others, Jesus wants us to serve willingly, God says don't give up, God wants us to be hospitable, God can help us help the poor, God wants us to be a friend, Jesus tells us to be generous, Jesus wants us to put others first

The following illustration shows how the publisher has sequenced the areas and themes over a three-year cycle. Notice that they aren't taught in a linear progression. Every year in the curricular sequence includes all four areas of the scope, but different themes are covered each year. This graphic doesn't include the specific topics covered week to week, but this information would be available in a more detailed scope and sequence plan. While none of the exact themes and topics are repeated within the three-year cycle, important biblical truths are covered multiple times in various ways.

1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Year 1	**Year 1**	**Year 1**	**Year 1**
Getting to Know God: Bible Basics	Building Trust in God: Communication	Sticking With God: Love	Putting God First: My Life
Year 2	**Year 2**	**Year 2**	**Year 2**
Getting to Know God: Who God Is	Building Trust in God: Being Yourself	Sticking With God: Hope	Putting God First: Remembering
Year 3	**Year 3**	**Year 3**	**Year 3**
Getting to Know God: What God Does	Building Trust in God: Faith	Sticking With God: Grace	Putting God First: Serving

Focus Activity

- Read over the abbreviated list of themes and topics in the previous sample. Which of the topics do you think will help students understand the gospel message of salvation? What does this tell you about the importance of both scope and sequence in accomplishing a curricular mission?
- What additional themes or topics might you include for each of the curriculum areas if the plan was designed for adult learners?

Significant Concepts

areas, themes, topics, and subtopics

explicit, hidden, and null curriculum

organizing principle

scope

sequence

Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

Continue developing your curriculum plan by identifying an appropriate scope for your intended audience. Refine the organizing principle you created, then use it to specify four areas for your scope. (Your actual final plan may include more than four.) Remember that your organizing principle should reflect your overall mission, vision, values, and target audience. Once you have identified your four areas, list a minimum of four associated themes for each. Next, write a minimum

of three related topics for each theme. This will be a total of four areas, sixteen total themes, and forty-eight specific topics. Finally, for each topic, list two related subtopics. This will be a total of ninety-six subtopics. While this may seem like a lot, keep in mind that an overall comprehensive curriculum plan would probably contain many more themes, topics, and subtopics.

5. Understanding Teaching and Learning

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day... Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?" "Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit. "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?" "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

Margery Williams - *The Velveteen Rabbit, or How Toys Become Real*

Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand:

- The meaning of learning
- Three main types of learning and their related taxonomies
- The principles of learning

Be able to:

- Describe cognitive and affective learning at various levels
- Create possible learning activities related to learning principles for cognitive and affective learning

Some concepts are easily explained and understood by reading their definitions or hearing relevant facts. Others rely more on feelings or emotions that need to be experienced to understand the associated term or idea. Obscenity is one of those difficult concepts to grasp. People may rely on legal definitions to understand what falls into this category, while others may struggle to apply a definition to a specific example. According to the Supreme Court, obscene speech isn't protected speech, meaning that it isn't covered by the First Amendment and may even be considered illegal. This makes it imperative to clearly determine whether something falls into the category of obscenity. In the mid-1900s, the problem of defining obscenity came to the forefront. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr., who served from 1956 to 1990, was a renowned legal scholar of the twentieth century. He made repeated efforts to define obscenity but found the task more challenging than he imagined. Justice Potter Stewart tried to explain it in 1964 and is on the record saying, "I shall not today attempt further to define the

kinds of material…*but I know it when I see it*."[1] This quote by Stewart accurately summarizes the difficulty in trying to define obscenity. Sometimes an understanding relies on emotions or feelings and can't always be captured through words.

The meaning of obscenity has changed over the years through various court rulings, but the current legal definition is

> whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest,
>
> whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and
>
> whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.[2]

These written guidelines are necessary for use in legal decision-making, but for many, obscenity evokes an emotion that allows it to be more easily recognized than by trying to identify it by the standards laid out in a definition.

Art criticism is another area where objective standards exist but subjective feelings and emotions often influence decisions. Good art criticism will incorporate four main categories, the first of which is describing. It is an objective process focusing on the features of the artwork that are observable:

> To begin, the critic should collect the obvious information such as the title of the artwork, the name of the artist who

1. "Movie Day at the Supreme Court or 'I Know It When I See It': A History of the Definition of Obscenity," FindLaw Attorney Writers, April 26, 2016, https://corporate.findlaw.com/litigation-disputes/movie-day-at-the-supreme-court-or-i-know-it-when-i-see-it-a.html.
2. "Movie Day at the Supreme Court."

> created it, the date of its completion, and the medium of the artwork if such information is available. The medium of the artwork is the material that the artist has used, for example, paint, clay, or photographic paper. The step of description also requires the critic to observe the visual elements of art, such as shape, texture, or palette. The term "palette" refers to the specific selection of colors that the artist has used. If an artwork is representational, the critic identifies and describes the subject (the "who" or the "what" that the artwork is about). The most informative descriptions use concrete language to provide an image in the mind's eye. Description is an objective report of perceivable features. To describe an artwork is to provide facts, not opinions.[3]

Next, the critic must analyze the piece of art to see how the various elements work together, then interpret the piece to make a statement about what is being expressed in the work, and finally evaluate the artwork to determine how well it meets the standards of the particular style or movement it is attempting to represent or how well the piece expresses emotion, an idea, or beauty.

This describes the formal process of critiquing art. In other words, there are specific standards to follow to determine "good art." For many who visit art galleries, however, their opinions and value judgments are based more on personal feelings and emotions. They judge a piece of art on how it makes them feel personally. This same reaction is what allowed Sherlock Holmes to solve the great mystery in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. As he was walking through a portrait gallery in the home of Sir Henry, the following conversation took place as they reflected on the surrounding paintings. Sir Henry said, "*I don't pretend to know much about these things, and*

3. Kelly Hoben, "Art Criticism: Definition, Steps & Example," Study.com, https://study.com/academy/lesson/art-criticism-definition-steps-example.

I'd be a better judge of a horse or a steer than of a picture. I didn't know that you found time for such things." To which Holmes replied, "*I know what is good when I see it, and I see it now.*"[4] There are concepts and factual criteria for formal art criticism, but emotions and personal value judgments guide the determination for many. As with Holmes, most people know it when they see it.

People learn in different ways: by processing information taken in by words, encountering situations that impact their emotions, or observing actions or people that they can imitate. This chapter describes these various types of learning and provides principles that can maximize the potential for learning to occur.

Learning

Designing a curriculum plan for ministry is a way of describing the various components of a journey toward spiritual transformation. Transformation is change, moving from one state, stage, or condition to another. In discipleship, it is the change that takes place within an individual that leads that person closer to Christlikeness. The essence of all learning is change. While many definitions for learning can be found, in its simplest form, learning involves changing. It includes changing one's knowledge or understanding; changing one's beliefs, values, or perspectives; or changing one's abilities to perform a task or skill. These three key areas represent cognitive, affective, and behavioral change. Sometimes, they are referred to as head, heart, and hand, or thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

4. A. Conan Doyle, The Hound of the Baskervilles: Another Adventure of Sherlock Holmes, Project Gutenberg, October 1, 2001, ebook #2852, 135.

The previous examples of trying to determine obscenity or what makes good art represent how people appropriate cognitive and affective standards in their decision-making. Their conclusions may be based on cognitive information or be determined by feelings or value judgments. Both of these types of learning impact spiritual transformation, so it is important to understand each. Behavioral change, as it is typically conceived of in terms of spiritual growth, is often the result of deep commitments or values. Most often, it is a result of cognitive and affective learning that results in a changed lifestyle. Behaviors change as a result of one's deeper understanding or commitment to a belief. However, the third key type of learning described in this chapter is related to acquiring physical skills, referred to as *psychomotor skills*. Behavioral change is associated with a change in ability resulting from acquiring a motor skill. Psychomotor skills are not as prevalent in teaching and learning outcomes related to spiritual growth, though they may occasionally be included in a curriculum plan.

Various Christian educators have suggested an additional learning outcome, dispositional learning, to either replace or supplement affective learning. Dispositional learning is said to include values and the tendency for persons to act on those values, while affective learning describes emotions and attitudes. It is the belief of these educators that the affective domain is too large and contains too many components. They believe that secular educators rely on this singular affective category because they don't take into consideration the reality of the immortal soul or one's own will to act.[5] While the case has been made for this additional type of learning, dispositional, it will not be dealt with separately in this text. A clear

5. Klaus Issler and Ronald Habermas, How We Learn: A Christian Teacher's Guide to Educational Psychology (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 30–31.

understanding of affective learning includes the dispositional, as it does give consideration to this area of volition, or the tendency to act on one's values.

It is important to understand that no learning takes place in isolation. Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills are each distinct categories of learning outcomes. LeRoy Ford refers to these as primary learning outcomes, or PLOs.[6] He divides cognitive learning into two distinct PLOs, knowledge and understanding, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Each of these outcomes represents the type of learning or change that is intended to be predominant in a given situation. However, the reality is that learning doesn't take place in a vacuum, and when an individual gains a deeper understanding of a particular topic, known as cognitive change, it is highly likely that the learner will also experience a change in what they value or believe as a result of that cognitive learning. If a student gains a motor skill, it will be the result of not only practicing the skill but also having a deeper understanding of what is required to perform and perhaps a change in the commitment to practice the skill or an attitude of enjoyment of the activity. This overlap or blending of learning outcomes is known as diffusion of learning. In its simplest form, it means that learning outcomes diffuse or spread. Categories blend into one another. There may be one main type of intentional learning, but other types of learning also result.

Focus Activity

6. LeRoy Ford, Design for Teaching and Training: A Self-Study Guide for Lesson Planning (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1978), 25.

- As you reread the opening quote from *The Velveteen Rabbit, or How Toys Become Real*, what phrases, descriptions, or questions represent both cognitive and affective learning about what it means to be real?
- What is a concept or idea that you have trouble expressing in words but "know it when you see it"?
- Can you think of an example of diffusion of learning in your own life experiences?
- What are biblical examples of learning for head, heart, and hand?

Cognitive Learning

Much of what we consider to be learning is cognitive, related to head knowledge. It refers to facts and processing information, things we memorize or understand or can explain. Formal education in schools places a high value on cognitive learning, and this is often the standard for determining whether we consider someone intelligent. Scripture also emphasizes the importance of the mind and cognitive learning:

> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
>
> Romans 12:2, NIV

> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
>
> Mark 12:30, NIV

> The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
>
> Proverbs 1:1–7, NIV

Growing as disciples requires us to grow in the cognitive domain. Believing and trusting in God includes understanding who he is, what he desires for us, what he has done for us, and what he expects from us. An emotional commitment without knowledge or understanding is dangerous. Values and commitments can fall prey to persuasion and feelings that aren't always based on objective truth, meaning people can be easily swayed by emotional appeals. Spiritual transformation includes not just the heart but also the mind. On the other hand, too much emphasis on the cognitive aspect of change can lead to pharisaism, with a sense of being self-righteous or overly critical of those who don't agree with us. This is why the Great Commandment reminds us to love God holistically, with every part of our being.

Reflection Exercise

- How do each of the passages listed in the previous section emphasize the importance of cognitive

change?

- Identify three other biblical examples of the importance of cognitive learning. What is the message of each passage, and what is the importance or purpose of knowledge or understanding conveyed in the text?

Cognitive Learning Taxonomy

There are different levels or degrees of cognitive learning. Consider an exam in an academic class. Have you ever studied only to find the test far more difficult than you anticipated? Maybe you memorized terms, but the test required you to define them. Perhaps you understood definitions or basic concepts, but the exam asked you to compare and contrast various ideas. This is an example of how cognitive learning can take many forms, progressing from basic to more complex. The term taxonomy is most often used in science, but it refers to a system of organizing or classifying information. A learning taxonomy is a way of organizing various levels or stages related to learning for a specific outcome. The cognitive learning taxonomy was developed around 1956 by Benjamin Bloom and some of his colleagues.[7] Some educators have revised it slightly in recent decades, reversing the order of the final two categories. LeRoy Ford follows Bloom's taxonomy but divides it into two separate outcomes: *knowledge* and *understanding*. We will follow that pattern as it relates to principles that provide guidance in teaching.

The first and lowest level of Bloom's taxonomy is *knowledge*. It includes basic memorization or recognition of information. When

7. Issler and Habermas, How We Learn, 31.

students are asked to recite, identify, label, list, or match information, they are operating at the knowledge level of cognitive learning. No understanding is necessary for knowledge, just recall or recognition. This is why Ford includes it as a separate PLO. The entire cognitive learning taxonomy includes six levels, but the knowledge level is one PLO, and the other five levels are the understanding PLO. When learners are asked to memorize the books of the Bible, use a map to locate the places Paul visited on his missionary journeys, or name the twelve original disciples, they are operating at the knowledge level of cognitive learning.

The second level is *comprehension*. This represents the lowest level of the understanding PLO. Comprehension requires students to put an idea into a new form, such as paraphrasing, explaining, summarizing, or creating a visual representation of a concept. It involves translating or interpreting. Students demonstrate comprehension when they are able to compare and contrast various concepts or ideas. Asking students to explain the necessity of Jesus's death and resurrection, write a definition of stewardship, or create a drawing that illustrates the Church are all demonstrations of comprehension.

The next level of understanding is called *application*. When students can use ideas or concepts in new situations and are able to see how abstract facts operate in real-life concrete experiences, they are able to apply their learning. Application involves recognizing how an idea is lived out and being able to identify a concept in the real world. If students can provide examples of when they have experienced forgiveness, recognize an intercessory prayer when it is offered, or describe how the Acts 15 teaching against eating meat sacrificed to idols might relate to contemporary culture, then they are at the application level of cognitive learning.

The third level of understanding is *analysis*, which involves the ability to break down a larger body of thought into various components. It might include creating an outline of a book of the Bible, creating a diagram illustrating the key topics Jesus taught through his parables, or creating a calendar depicting and describing the

various feasts and celebrations observed by the nation of Israel. Analysis can also involve systematically solving a problem to find acceptable answers. When a group of high school students wants to understand how best to reach their peers with the gospel, they might create a strategy that involves surveys to figure out which students are part of a church, which students are Christians, what issues their peers are facing, or why students don't believe in Jesus or attend a local church. The information can then be used to figure out how best to reach them. Analysis that involves problem-solving requires a clear understanding of the problem, a way to gather relevant facts, a review of the information to see how it all relates, and a proposal of possible solutions to the problem, with the best ideas being implemented.

The fourth level of understanding is known as *synthesis*. It requires students to put together various ideas and concepts about a particular subject to form something brand new. It requires an understanding of different aspects of one particular thought or teaching. Synthesis results in a new product, such as a written Bible study, a sermon, a gospel tract, or a worship service. When students work to create a prayer emphasis retreat, they are engaging in synthesis.

The fifth and highest level of understanding is *evaluation*. It calls for learners to use their high level of understanding to make judgments about the value or merit of an idea, project, event, or production based on specific identified standards. Does the response follow biblical guidelines? Will this accomplish its intended goal? Does the presentation contribute to spiritual growth? Does the worship service follow the pattern demonstrated in Isaiah 6?

Reflection Exercise

- Using the scope you began creating in chapter 4, select two topics or subtopics and begin thinking about cognitive learning outcomes you want your learners to achieve relevant to that topic.
- For each topic or subtopic you selected, identify specific related cognitive learning outcomes for knowledge and for each of the five levels of understanding. What about the topic do you want them to know, comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate?

Affective Learning

Knowing facts and understanding biblical truths is essential for spiritual transformation. Paul emphasized the role of teaching for spiritual growth, and he wrote about the importance of cognitive learning and discernment in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Ephesians 4:11–15, NIV

In this same passage, Paul also emphasized the need for affective learning. Knowing the truth must be accompanied by a commitment to live in truth. Cognitive learning is not sufficient unless there is also heart change:

> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
>
> Ephesians 4:22–24, NIV

Samuel was reminded of the importance of the heart when he was tasked with selecting a king from among Jesse's sons.

> But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
>
> 1 Samuel 16:7, NIV

Affective learning is embracing ideas and concepts, valuing them, believing them, and living them out. It is about a change in attitudes. Affective change is often the result of other types of learning. Knowing, understanding, or learning to do something can often result in a changed opinion or new commitment. However, there are biblical scholars who aren't Christ-followers. They have head knowledge without heart change. Spiritual transformation requires both.

Affective Learning Taxonomy

David Krathwohl created what is probably the best-known and most widely used taxonomy for affective learning. Its five stages progress

from a general awareness of a particular value or belief toward a full commitment that guides a person's lifestyle. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the highest level of affective learning includes the will or a disposition to act on what one professes to value. Unlike Bloom's cognitive learning taxonomy, not every stage of Krathwohl's taxonomy may initially appear as if it is genuine learning. The earliest two stages seem more like preparation for heart change than an actual commitment. However, they represent the lowest levels of value or belief. They are necessary first steps.

The first level of the affective taxonomy is *receiving*. It happens when the learner becomes aware of an idea or particular subject. The learner sometimes pauses to take note of the information, but regardless, this stage represents a point when an individual becomes sensitive to the reality of a particular concept or idea and is willing to tolerate it without total dismissal or rejection. When passersby read billboards with positive biblical messages or advertising about upcoming ministry events, they are at the receiving level. When they hear an announcement about a service opportunity, receive a flyer in the mail, or see a post on social media, they are receiving information that can lead toward commitment or belief in whatever is being represented. This need to begin at the receiving level is expressed in Romans 10:14: "*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*"

The second level of Krathwohl's taxonomy is *responding*. Those who receive the information become interested enough to react in some way. The only commitment at this point is to explore what they have seen or heard. Think about a speaker who makes an engaging and persuasive presentation about a new idea. Learners who are intrigued may stay around to ask questions about the idea. They aren't yet persuaded to fully endorse what was presented, but they want to know more. Outreach events, missionary speakers, and gospel presentations are designed to elicit a response from those in attendance. When someone becomes aware of your church by

receiving information and then decides to visit, that person is at the responding level. There is no commitment to be a regular attender. No positive or negative attitudes about your church have been formed. A response is further down the road toward commitment, but not yet there.

The third level of affective learning is *valuing*, which is what is most commonly thought of in terms of commitment or belief. It is when a learner voluntarily recognizes truth or value in something and commits to that idea, organization, or belief system. When someone confesses Christ, that person is at the valuing level. When individuals sign tithing pledge cards, they are at the valuing level. Volunteering at a homeless shelter, keeping a prayer journal, and attending a discipleship group are all examples of valuing.

Organization is the fourth level of affective learning. Students are at this level when they are faced with competing value commitments yet choose to follow through on their prior commitment relative to the idea or subject. This calls for them to take more than one value or belief into consideration before choosing to act. Unfortunately, there is often less emphasis on the organizational level than the valuing level within many ministries. When students make a commitment, there may be little follow-up to help them grow and live out what they have professed. This is what contributes to a lack of spiritual transformation for many Christians, and it is why understanding the need for affective teaching and learning is so important.

When learners commit to practicing a spiritual discipline daily but find themselves with a full schedule, do they keep their commitment to practice the discipline? If a student professes a desire to grow as a Christian and commits to regular worship in their faith community but has an opportunity to be part of a traveling sports team on Sundays, what choice do they make? When someone signs a pledge to contribute monthly to a charity but doesn't have the funds to follow through each month, is that person at the organization level? Sometimes people waver back and forth

between valuing and organization. Only when their choices remain consistent with their commitment and what they say they value are they at the organizational level.

The highest level of affective learning is *characterization*. At this level, the learner consistently acts in accordance with the values they have professed and internalized. At this stage, a learner's lifestyle reflects their values. Others recognize this person as an exemplar or representative of the value.

Reflection Exercise

- Using the scope you began creating in chapter 4, select two topics or subtopics and begin thinking about affective learning outcomes you want your learners to achieve relevant to that topic. You may find it helpful to use the same topics you chose for the cognitive learning exercise.
- For each topic or subtopic you selected, identify specific related affective learning outcomes. What about the topic do you want them to believe, value, or commit to following? What attitude do you want them to hold toward that topic?
- Can you think of specific persons whose lifestyles model the specific values you desire for your learners?

Behavioral Learning

Curriculum resources often list behavioral outcomes for their lessons, but most of these are not psychomotor skills. As a result of a study, it might be desirable for students to be able to share their personal testimonies or to be able to locate specific passages of Scripture. These are not technically behavioral outcomes but cognitive skills. A cognitive skill relies on understanding. Some of the behavioral outcomes included in published curriculum resources might actually reflect attitudinal change. Perhaps it is desirable to see students inviting non-Christian friends to church or becoming more involved in ministry projects. While those are observable behaviors, they are a result of heart change and don't constitute a skill. In its purest form, a behavioral outcome is a learned skill. Psychomotor skills do involve both cognitive and affective elements. There must be an understanding of what one is trying to achieve and a willingness to perform the act. However, the dominant learning component is the actual skill that is performed.

Psychomotor skills are physical skills or actions learned through practice, such as sports or playing an instrument. They typically require the use of fine motor skills for precision or coordination or developing motor skills for strength or performance. It might be helpful to think of psychomotor skills in terms of activities where one could take lessons.

Behavioral Learning Taxonomy (Psychomotor Skills)

Elizabeth Simpson developed the psychomotor skill taxonomy based on the work of Benjamin Bloom and others who came before her. The taxonomy describes stages of the learning process for gaining motor skills. The first level of Simpson's taxonomy is known as

perception. In this stage, learners use their senses to gain an awareness of the skill to be learned. When students listen to the worship team and notice the various instruments and sounds, they are at the perception stage of learning to be part of the worship team. When they observe someone cooking a meal or painting a portrait, they are at the perception stage. Whether they smell the dish as it simmers on the stove or watch the brushstrokes of the artist, they are using their senses to become aware of the skill they wish to learn.

The second stage is *set*. Learners prepare themselves mentally, physically, and emotionally to engage in the skill. They gather equipment, put on uniforms, and practice a stance or finger placement. They have a general understanding of what they need to do to perform the skill and are willing to begin.

Guided response is the third stage in psychomotor skill learning and what is often considered the beginning of learning a skill, though perception and set are both necessary. In guided response, the learner is assisted in acquiring a new complex skill. This may be guidance by a coach or mentor or by practicing through trial and error while watching a video or reading an instructional manual.

Mechanism is the fourth stage, when learners can perform some aspects of a complex skill with confidence and proficiency. These have become habits due to the practice in the guided response stage. A student learning to play baseball might have become confident at the plate but is still learning how to catch and throw with proficiency. Ford labels this level as habit and ends with one more stage, complex overt response.[8]

Complex overt response is reached when the learner can seamlessly perform the complex movements required for the skill. There is a level of proficiency and coordination without a great deal of effort. The skill has been internalized and doesn't require a lot of thinking to perform. Think of learning to drive a car. At this stage,

8. Ford, Design for Teaching and Training, 311.

drivers can pull into traffic, navigate the road, stop, start, back up, and park without having to think about what they are doing, even though there are a lot of individual skills involved. This level of skill allows learners to perform without hesitation.

Stages six and seven allow learners to move beyond the original skill they have learned. *Adaptation* involves the ability to adapt or change the performance of a skill to meet the requirements of a different environment. It is what allows a skateboarder to quickly transition to snowboarding or an ice skater to snow ski. *Origination* takes place when learners create new skills built on what they can already do so well. Think of the various feats that some athletes do on bicycles or the outlandish performances witnessed on some of the competition shows. New skateboarding tricks, new cooking techniques, and original gymnastic routines are all the result of origination.

Reflection Exercise

- Can you think of a particular psychomotor skill you have learned and what it was like to progress through the various stages of learning?
- When have you adapted or originated a skill based on something you could already do quite well?
- When might it be necessary to include psychomotor skills in a curriculum plan? What types of skills could be included?

Principles of Learning

It is important to have a clear sense of the learning outcomes you hope to accomplish through a curriculum. Identifying the knowledge, understanding, and attitude or value outcomes for each area of the scope will help you finalize your plan in such a way that your overall mission is achieved. Each PLO is accomplished differently, which adds to the importance of clearly thinking through the types of learning you desire that are relevant to each topic and subtopic you identified. Knowledge isn't acquired in the same manner that values are adopted. Understanding and belief result from different types of teaching and learning strategies. Diffusion of learning means that there will always be overlap in learning, but if there is a desire for a specific type of learning outcome, then it is important to understand the types of learning experiences that are most likely to lead to that type of change. Ford created a list of principles or guidelines for teaching toward each of the four learning outcomes. The following lists are adapted from his original work.[9]

Principles of Learning for Knowledge

The following guidelines will help students acquire basic knowledge, the ability to recall or recognize information.

1. Involve them in activities where they have to provide an active response and not remain passive learners.
2. Incorporate learning activities that require the learners to use more than one of their senses at the same time. Hearing and seeing information is an example of this principle.

9. Ford, Design for Teaching and Training, 97.

3. Give the students advance organizers for their learning, allowing them to see what they are supposed to learn ahead of time. This might be a chart of what each session will cover or a list of keywords they should listen for in a biblical passage.
4. Provide the learners with immediate knowledge of the results of what they are attempting to recall or recite.
5. Involve the learners in many different learning activities that are all focused on achieving the same learning outcome.
6. Plan unique and memorable activities that will help them remember the information they are intended to learn.

Principles of Learning for Understanding

The following guidelines will help students acquire understanding. As you read through the principles, notice how they are geared toward various levels of understanding from comprehension through evaluation. When planning discipleship events or teaching sessions, it will be helpful to follow principles that relate to the level of learning you hope your students will achieve.

1. Plan learning activities in which students will be asked to translate basic concepts into new forms.
2. Incorporate activities that will require learners to discover the connections between various ideas and concepts.
3. Ask students to define or interpret specific ideas, biblical truths, or concepts.
4. Utilize learning activities that involve students in using what they have learned in practical ways.
5. Call for students to engage in an activity that requires them to break down larger bodies of information into meaningful parts.
6. Provide case studies or other means of presenting students with problems they have to solve based on their understanding of the key concept you want them to understand.

7. Require students to engage in an activity that requires them to combine several ideas or concepts about a subject and create a new product or resource.
8. Call for students to use their understanding of a concept to judge the value or worth of something based on specific guidelines or standards related to that idea.

Principles of Learning for Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

The following guidelines will be useful in helping students develop personal values, attitudes, or beliefs related to specific biblical truths.

1. Involve leaders and peers in the learning situation who will model the attitudes and values that you hope the learners will adopt for themselves.
2. Give opportunities for the learners to read or hear about others who exemplify the attitude or value you want them to appropriate.
3. Help students to engage with respected, authoritative sources that will emphasize the importance of the attitude or value.
4. Assist students in identifying and articulating the attitude or value and what it means.
5. Give learners opportunities to have meaningful emotional experiences related to the value or belief.
6. Plan opportunities for learners to act on the values and practice the attitudes in appropriate ways.
7. Help students analyze their own values and engage in decision-making related to moral and ethical issues.
8. Involve learners in activities that call for them to reflect on their lives through the lens of biblical truth.
9. Provide opportunities for students to share their stories with

others in a safe environment that gives them a sense of freedom and trust.

Principles of Learning for Psychomotor Skills

While there will be fewer opportunities or needs for helping students develop skills within the context of a curriculum plan focused on spiritual transformation, there will be times when it will be appropriate. Following these guidelines will help. They do not include activities designed for adaptation or origination.

1. Arrange situations for the learners to see the entire process or skill before they begin.
2. Provide a step-by-step demonstration of the skill for students to observe.
3. Ask the learners to explain aloud the instructions or their plans for carrying out a specific sequence of actions needed to accomplish the skill.
4. Assist the learners in their first attempts to accomplish the skill.
5. Give learners opportunities to perform the skill numerous times without any assistance.
6. Allow students to practice the skill under realistic conditions.

Focus Activity

- Read over the principles for each of the PLOs. Select four subtopics you included in the curriculum

scope you created in chapter 4. Identify both a cognitive and an affective learning outcome for each.

- Using the principles of learning for understanding and attitudes, values, and beliefs, describe two different learning activities that could be used to accomplish each outcome for each subtopic. What are two things you might include in your teaching to help students acquire an understanding of each of the subtopics? What are two different activities you might incorporate into a learning session to help students develop a commitment or begin to value the biblical truth related to each of the subtopics? The principles should guide you toward creating appropriate learning activities for each PLO.

Significant Concepts

affective learning
cognitive learning
diffusion of learning
primary learning outcomes
principles of learning
psychomotor skills
taxonomy

Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

Select one subtopic for each of the forty-eight separate topics included in the scope of your curriculum plan. (You may include the subtopics you used for the reflection exercises you have already completed for this chapter.) For each subtopic, identify both a cognitive and an affective learning outcome you want your students to achieve. These don't have to be written in any particular form, but it is imperative that you begin thinking about the significance of your scope. Ask yourself, "Why is this part of the scope? What should learners know about this topic? What attitudes or commitments do I hope they will adopt as a result of their curricular journey and encountering this idea or concept?" This work will prepare you for the process of writing your specific goals and indicators, which will be covered in the next chapter.

6. Establishing Curricular Outcomes

"Now will you tell me where we are?" asked Tock as he looked around the desolate island. "To be sure," said Canby; "you're on the Island of Conclusions. Make yourself at home. You're apt to be here for some time."

"But how did we get here?" asked Milo, who was still a bit puzzled by being there at all.

"You jumped, of course," explained Canby. "That's the way most everyone gets here. It's really quite simple: every time you decide something without having a good reason, you jump to Conclusions whether you like it or not. It's such an easy trip to make that I've been here hundreds of times."

Norton Juster - *The Phantom Tollbooth*

Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand the:

- Characteristics of goals written in proper form
- Characteristics of goal indicators written in proper form
- Three types of indicators and their appropriate use

Be able to:

- Construct appropriate goals and indicators for cognitive outcomes
- Construct appropriate goals and indicators for affective outcomes
- Identify goals and indicators written in proper form

Sabine Moreau headed to the train station to pick up a friend. The station was to the north of her hometown in Hainault Erquelinnes, Brussels, but sixty-seven-year-old Sabine didn't question her GPS directions, which took her south instead of north. She began to see signs for the German towns of Frankfurt and Cologne, but she continued to follow the route on the GPS. The trip became quite lengthy, forcing Sabine to refuel twice and even pull over for a couple of hours of sleep. Still, Sabine didn't question her route. Eventually, Sabine entered Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, and she realized something was not right. Sabine's friend at the station and her son also figured out there was a problem when she never

showed up, and her son finally contacted the police. All Sabine had to say when she got home was, "*I admit it's a little weird, but I was distracted.*"[1]

In Australia, three Japanese tourists used a GPS to drive to North Stradbroke Island, which is just off the coast of Brisbane. The device didn't take into account the nine miles of water that divided the island from the mainland, and the tourists kept following the directions even when the road turned to gravel, then thick mud, and eventually water lapping against the tires. They finally abandoned their car and walked back on foot, while their misadventure was witnessed by passengers on a passing ferry. The car was retrieved by a tow truck but was too damaged by the journey into the ocean to be repaired.[2]

Robert Jones used his GPS on a drive to West Yorkshire, England. He kept driving as the road became steep and narrower. Eventually, his car bumped into a thin wire fence mere inches from a one-hundred-foot drop. Though he was able to safely exit, the car was balanced on the edge of a cliff, and it took a recovery team nine hours to retrieve it and haul it off. Jones explained, "*It kept insisting the path was a road, so I just trusted it.*"[3]

Three women visiting Bellevue, Washington, were out late and couldn't find their way back to their hotel. They asked their GPS for a reroute and drove down what they thought was a road that would take them back to the highway. The road was actually a boat launch, and they ended up in a lake. They were able to get out of

1. Lauren Hansen, "8 Drivers Who Blindly Followed Their GPS into Disaster," The Week, January 8, 2015, https://theweek.com/articles/464674/8-drivers-who-blindly-followed-gps-into-disaster.
2. Hansen, "8 Drivers."
3. Hansen, "8 Drivers."

the car, but the SUV was completely submerged by the time help arrived. A local fireman said, "*We've seen sitcom parodies of something like this and to actually see it is surprising.*"[4]

A thirty-seven-year-old German truck driver used his GPS to guide him to a factory in Switzerland to deliver his cargo. He ignored the "no entry" warning signs and continued to follow the voice from his GPS. His truck became wedged in a cherry tree, stuck fast. Branches of the tree had to be chopped down to free the truck.[5]

In designing a curriculum plan, it is essential to determine your final destination. The mission statement provides the ultimate purpose, but each element of the scope should also include specific goals related to the content. An intentional plan deliberately includes content for a specific reason. The goals and indicators clarify those reasons. Some curriculum resources focus on a subject, but they lack a clear rationale or goal and indicator statement, so they don't always clearly lead toward a specific learning outcome.

Writing clear goals is a way of ensuring that you are heading in the right direction and that each element of the plan is aligned with your overall mission. Identifying indicators will help you know whether you're on the right track. The GPS users in the previous examples set a direction, but they blindly followed the device and ignored the signs that they weren't traveling where they wanted to go. If you plan teaching and learning situations that follow the principles related to the primary learning outcomes (PLOs) you identified in your goals and you construct clear indicators for each goal, you will be able to determine whether your plan is on track toward the accomplishment of your mission.

4. Hansen, "8 Drivers."
5. Hansen, "8 Drivers."

From Scope to Goals

Determining the scope of a curriculum plan is essential. It sets the boundaries for what learners will intentionally experience along the journey, the most significant concepts, ideas, principles, and topics intentionally taught within a particular ministry or course of study. They hold value in and of themselves, but a list alone will not lead students to achieve the essential change you envisioned when you identified the themes and topics that compose the ministry's scope. Students won't learn by looking at a list. Your curricular mission won't be achieved simply because you have identified what needs "to be covered" in the plan.

Think about a jeweler whose mission is to create unique, beautiful, handcrafted jewelry that is meaningful to the customer, utilizing the highest-quality materials and expert craftsmanship. The jeweler sources the finest precious gems and desirable metals from around the world, purchasing only authentic stones and pure metals that will last a lifetime and potentially become heirlooms for generations to come. Her curated collection exceeds that of other jewelers in the region. Her showcases are full of exquisite, pure materials.

Customers are impressed by the array, but no jewelry pieces are on display in her shop. No samples exist, not even drawings of "what might be." While some customers may have a personal vision of the heirloom they desire, the process of selecting each gem or metal and designing an exquisite piece is overwhelming. Most potential customers need the expertise of the jeweler to spark their imagination, but there are only raw materials available for viewing. For the jeweler, the customer is in charge of determining the desired change to the metals and gems, then she will handcraft the jewelry to their expectations. However, the customer is looking to the expert jeweler to help him or her see what can and should be changed to merge the metals and gems into something exquisite. The jeweler's ultimate mission to craft unique jewelry is never fully

realized. She has the materials to accomplish what she set out to do, but she has not successfully changed them into beautiful handcrafted pieces.

Gathering the essential raw materials for a curricular plan is necessary. This is the act of creating the scope. It is also just as crucial to determine why each theme, topic, and subtopic is part of the curricular journey. You must determine the learning you hope to see realized by those who engage in a study of each biblical topic and scriptural teaching in your scope. In chapter 5, you began this process as you read about three types of learning: cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills. For every topic and subtopic included in your plan, it is important to think about both the cognitive and affective learning you want students to achieve. In fact, both cognitive and affective outcomes should be associated with every topic on your list. As was mentioned in chapter 5, very few parts of your scope will directly lend themselves to psychomotor skill outcomes. While you may think of desired behavioral changes associated with the scope, almost all of the time, the changes envisioned will be due to cognitive skills (*I understand how to share my faith*) or high levels of commitment that result in changed behavior (*I am sharing my faith because I am committed to sharing the gospel*).

Identifying the type of learning you want students to experience and then describing the rationale or purpose for each component of the scope is the essence of goal setting. It specifies the desired learning outcomes for each aspect of a curricular scope. *What changes are desired in the learner as a result of encountering each of the building blocks? What outcomes do you hope to see in the students' lives as a result of studying each biblical truth, life-changing idea, or principle?* Various terms are used to describe these learning outcomes. Some authors refer to them as *objectives*, others prefer the term *instructional objectives*, and still others call them *aims*. The most direct and universally understood term for a learning outcome is a goal, which is what will be used for the purposes of curriculum development within this book.

As you consider each topic, give careful thought to the associated desirable outcomes. You should be able to envision various types of learning for each topic and subtopic. For example, if prayer was a topic you identified, perhaps related to a larger theme of spiritual disciplines, you might want students to know the meaning of prayer, understand the importance of prayer, and be committed to a consistent prayer life. You will write separate goals for each of these outcomes because every written goal should focus on only one PLO.

While each goal is focused on one PLO, we know that learning doesn't occur in isolation. When we gain an understanding of something, we often change our perception or value of the subject we are studying. For example, when students understand more about the health benefits of sleep or the risks associated with a lack of healthy sleep practices, they may commit to establishing a more consistent sleep routine, going to bed earlier, avoiding technology before turning in, or sleeping longer. Your PLO was cognitive, but in their understanding of the importance of sleep, some students also achieved an affective outcome. This overlap of learning outcomes is quite common and was introduced in chapter 5. It is the concept of diffusion of learning. For each learning experience, you will focus on teaching for change in one domain—cognitive, affective, or behavioral—but the learning becomes diffused or spread out into different areas.

Your comprehensive curriculum plan should contain several goals for each subtopic. Consider the topic of prayer that was previously referenced. You may want students to memorize a standard definition of prayer or specific biblical examples of prayer. Asking students to memorize specific content constitutes the knowledge level of cognitive learning. Additionally, you may want learners to understand the importance of prayer, to understand what the Bible teaches about prayer, to understand how they can develop the habit of prayer, or to understand the various types of prayer. Affective changes you desire as learning outcomes may be a commitment to a consistent prayer life, a devotion to praying for

others, or a willingness to express their prayer concerns with others. As a Christian, you would not create any skill goals related to prayer. Some religions require specific motor skills or behaviors to accompany the practice of prayer, but this is not part of the biblical teaching on prayer. Prayer does not require any specific motor skills to validate the practice, which in its simplest definition is communion with God. While you would want your learners to be able to pray, that would be a cognitive outcome. In other words, if they understand how to pray, they are equipped with everything they need to be able to pray. The practice of prayer involves understanding and commitment, not developing specific motor skills.

Focus Activity

- As you think about the process of constructing a curriculum plan, can you create a visual representation of the process that shows the order and relationship of each of the various components?
- Reread the opening quote from *The Phantom Tollbooth*. How does this conversation relate to the importance of goal setting in a curriculum plan?
- Describe the process of moving from a curriculum scope to specific goals and indicators. Why is this a necessary process?

Writing Goals

Just as a mission statement articulates the direction and outcome of a ministry or curriculum plan, a goal clearly identifies a purpose for each part of a curriculum's scope. It answers questions such as, *Why is it important for this to be included in the plan? How will it help the learner achieve the overall mission? What would we expect learners to know, understand, or value related to this topic?* Each subtopic within a curriculum plan will likely have several purposes. It was included in the plan because it was determined to be essential to accomplishing the mission. The essential reasons will probably include both cognitive and affective outcomes. Everything in the scope will correspond with multiple learning outcomes.

Characteristics of a Goal

Goals that are written in proper form have at least four basic characteristics. First of all, a goal statement is a *fairly broad description of what a student will learn.* It doesn't provide specific details about what a student will do to prove they have learned, but it gives an overall picture of the direction of the learning. For example, an acceptable goal written in proper form would not say, "Students will paraphrase the Ten Commandments." This is too narrow. A broader description would focus on the reason for the paraphrase: "Students will understand the meaning of the Ten Commandments."

Secondly, a goal statement always identifies *what the student will learn*, what the student will accomplish, and not what the teacher will do. Goals don't describe what you will do to help students learn, such as "*Explain to the students the meaning of jubilee within the Old Testament.*" If you are going to explain the meaning of jubilee, it is probably because your goal is for your learners to understand the Old Testament meaning of jubilee.

The third characteristic of a goal is that it always *identifies the PLO*. A proper goal always communicates whether you want your students to achieve a cognitive, affective, or behavioral outcome. In reading the goal, it will be obvious whether the outcome is knowledge, understanding, value/commitment, or a psychomotor skill. This means that a goal written in proper form would not say, "Students will learn about…" The type of learning must be specified.

The final goal characteristic may seem obvious but is often overlooked. The goal must clearly *identify the specific learning subject*, and it should be something that could *actually be achieved within the desired time frame*. If the goal is written for one specific teaching session, the teacher must determine whether the goal could be accomplished in one session. This would not be an appropriate goal: "Students will understand prayer." There is a subject included, but it is not specific enough for a session. It is simply too comprehensive to be achieved within any measurable time frame. What about prayer do you want them to understand? What is something students could grasp within a single session? If a goal is constructed for an entire unit of study, such as four sessions, the same question should be asked: *Can this goal be accomplished within four learning sessions?* (Note: It is appropriate to write a goal for an entire unit of study, but each of the sessions within the unit should also have separate learning goals.)

Reflection Exercise

Which of the following goals are written in proper form? For each goal that is not written in proper form, identify which of the characteristics is violated.

- Students will commit to volunteering with a local ministry.
- Students will understand the Holy Spirit.
- Help students understand the concept of original sin.
- Learners will create a timeline of the events surrounding the crucifixion.
- Students will gain comprehensive knowledge about the Christian life.
- Students will learn to connect significant concepts.
- Equip students to study Scripture.

Writing Indicators

The first step toward bringing a curriculum plan to life is to write specific goals related to each topic. This focuses on the desired learning outcome. However, constructing goals alone won't guarantee that students have learned. They provide direction for the learning experiences and determine the teacher's intended outcomes, but they don't provide any guidelines to evaluate whether the stated outcomes were met. When teachers take learning seriously, they identify a means to measure how well the goals have been achieved. Each written goal must include a specific action statement that will indicate that the goal has been accomplished. The terminology used for such a measurement can vary, but the simplest label and the one used in this resource is an indicator. As the label implies, it is an action on the part of the learner that indicates the achieve-

ment of the goal. It is up to the one constructing the curriculum to determine an appropriate indicator for each goal. It must, however, include a specific action that can be observed or measured.

Indicators and goals can be written as two separate statements, or they can be combined into one goal-indicator statement. A simple way of combining these two essential planning elements is by using the following formula:

> Learners will ___ (this is your goal), and they will demonstrate achievement of this by ___ (this is your indicator).

Indicators identify the specific action learners will take to prove they have learned. It is up to the teacher or the curriculum writer to determine what this action will be. Indicators should be reasonable actions tied directly to the goals, simple proof that the goal has been achieved. If you can't observe proof of learning, you can't be confident that the goal has been met. If your goal is for students to know the books of the Bible, what is the simplest way they could indicate they have achieved the goal? You might say, *Learners will know the books of the Bible, and they will indicate achievement of this by writing the names of all sixty-six books.* What if the student can recite the names but can't write them? Maybe you want to allow students to either write the names or recite them. The best way to frame the indicator might be *Learners will know the books of the Bible, and they will indicate achievement of this by identifying all sixty-six books.* This allows you the freedom for students to identify them on a list, by writing them out, or by reciting them. Knowing your learners, their ages, and their educational backgrounds will help you construct appropriate indicators.

Regardless of the proof you identify, it should indicate to you that the goal has been met. As previously mentioned, an indicator must include an action that can be demonstrated. If your goal is for students to know the books of the Bible, it would not be appropriate for an indicator to say, *They will indicate achievement of this by memorizing the names of all sixty-six books.* Why is this not an acceptable indicator? Because memorization can't be observed. It is

still a goal and not an indicator; memorizing is the same as knowing the books. An appropriate indicator would require proof that the students have memorized.

Types of Indicators

Indicators require a type of measurable activity, but they can come in a variety of forms. You might ask students to draw a picture of a concept, explain an idea, write a paraphrase, act out an example, choose something from a list, demonstrate a skill, or select concepts from a case study. We generally think of indicators according to three distinct categories. The first type of indicator is verbal. Words are used to indicate the achievement of a goal. They may be spoken or written, but the essence of the indicator is the use of words.

The second main category of indicator is discriminatory. Students indicate their learning by making choices or discriminating. This could include such actions as selecting appropriate terms or explanations from a list, watching a digital clip to identify positive or negative examples of specific concepts, choosing a picture that best represents a concept, or analyzing a case study to identify examples of a specific idea you want them to understand. Regardless of the actual indicator, if it calls for the learner to discriminate or make choices, it is a discriminatory indicator. Even if they choose words from among a variety of choices, the indicator is discriminatory and not verbal. A verbal indicator calls for students to prove their learning through the use of words, but when they are choosing or discriminating as proof of their learning, then they are completing a discriminatory indicator.

The final type of indicator is rarely used in discipleship curriculum because it is a motor indicator. It calls for learners to engage in a physical activity to prove they have learned, but the activity must be a demonstration of a motor skill goal. In other words, drawing a picture that illustrates the main teaching of a Bible

story involves a physical activity, but it isn't a motor indicator. It doesn't prove mastery of a particular psychomotor skill. It represents illustrating ideas or words or may even represent choosing which ideas to illustrate. What it doesn't do is demonstrate the acquisition of a motor skill. Motor indicators are only tied to psychomotor skills. If the goal is for learners to be able to shingle a roof properly, then they could prove the achievement of that goal by doing something like nailing shingles on a roof in an acceptable fashion. Knowing the three key types of indicators can be helpful for the teacher who is trying to identify the proof they will require to determine whether learners have accomplished a particular goal.

Indicators include information about how well a student will have to perform to show they have accomplished the learning goal. If the goal is for students to know the books of the Bible, would you be satisfied if the learners could recite fifty-three of the sixty-six books? What if they were able to recognize sixty-four of them on a list but couldn't identify the last two? If your goal is for students to understand the benefits of prayer, how many benefits would you want them to explain in order to meet your learning goal? This "how well" information should generally be part of a learning indicator. However, it isn't always necessary. How well a student must perform might be generally understood, as in the case of knowing the books of the Bible. If learners can't identify all sixty-six books, it is obvious they don't know the books of the Bible, at least not all of them, which is what the goal implies.

If an indicator does include information about how well a student must perform, then the amount or standard must be specific. It isn't acceptable to simply say a student should know "*a few concepts*" or "*most of*" something. The key benefit of identifying how well a student needs to perform is that it can be a signal to the teacher that further emphasis on a topic might need to take place. It provides a measuring stick to reference how well students have learned. Instead of arriving at the end of a session wondering if the students genuinely understand the concepts you intended them to

learn, when the indicator includes information on how well the student must perform, then you can more easily determine whether the goal has been met at an acceptable level.

Indicators may describe any special circumstances under which a student will demonstrate achievement of the goal. This characteristic is used less often in the context of discipleship learning. It is beneficial to know, however, as it provides specific conditions for the student's demonstration of learning. It may be a time limit, for instance, or the materials a student will have to work with to demonstrate learning. *Will they be given a list of characteristics to explain or descriptions of biblical accounts to place in some type of order, or will they be allowed to work with a partner or in teams?*

Reflection Exercise

- Write appropriate indicators for the following goals:
  - Learners will understand the difference between books of poetry and prophecy in the Old Testament.
  - Students will know the Ten Commandments.
  - Learners will understand the significance of the Tabernacle.
- Write a verbal indicator and a discriminatory indicator for the following goal:
  - Learners will understand why God chose to remove Saul as king.

Affective Indicators

Affective goals are those focused on heart change. When the learning outcome is intended to elicit a commitment or value adopted by the student, then an affective goal and indicator are required. These types of goals and indicators are central to the type of learning one hopes a disciple will embrace on the journey toward spiritual growth. The difficulty for the teacher is in accurately assessing this type of learning. The first characteristic of every indicator is to identify the action the teacher will require to prove the learners' achievement of a specific goal. Obviously, it isn't always possible to recognize when a learner has made a genuine commitment or come to value a particular Christian ideal. *How can one know if a learner is committed to sharing the gospel with lost friends or family members? How can a teacher be certain that a student values the Bible or being part of the Church?* The answer is that no one can ever be certain about the values or heart commitments of another person. The importance of evaluating the attainment of an affective goal is no less important than measuring cognitive change, but it is always imprecise, and the outcomes can never be accurately verified. That doesn't mean that the teacher leaves affective learning up to chance or ignores the importance of determining indicators, however.

The Bible teaches the importance of affective learning and often provides examples of the evidence seen in the life of a disciple when this type of heart change is genuine. For example, Christians are called to love others, and genuine love is indicated by the following:

> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
>
> 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, NIV

A goal might focus on loving others, demonstrated by any of the previous actions. The actions would be indicators but would still need to be written in such a way that they could be observed. *What might demonstrate kindness, patience, or humility?*

Belief in God is an example of an essential affective change in the life of a genuine disciple. Scripture teaches that even faith must be demonstrated by outward actions. Values, beliefs, and commitments are always indicated by observable behaviors:

> What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
>
> But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."
>
> Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.
>
> James 2:14–19, NIV

Affective indicators are written in a unique way. Instead of precisely determining what action a student should take to prove learning, teachers select actions that they would be most likely to observe and then offer opportunities for the student to reflect those actions. The teacher or curriculum writer must determine an appropriate observable action that would indicate the student has made the commitment or adopted the value or belief stated in the goal.

These are often referred to as a representative response. What action might the teacher observe that would represent the type of affective change they hope to accomplish through their teaching? Because they are less certain, the indicators use a slightly

different format than those used for cognitive or behavioral outcomes. The following is one format for writing a goal and indicator for an affective outcome:

> Learners will ___ (this is your goal), and they will demonstrate achievement of this by doing such things as ___ (this is your indicator, a representative response).

Here is a sample of an affective goal and indicator using a representative response:

> *Learners will commit to sharing their faith with their lost friends, and they will demonstrate achievement of this by doing such things as describing a conversation they have had with a lost friend about their need for salvation.*

The teacher would plan for a time during the session when students are invited to share their personal experience of sharing their faith with a lost friend. Of course, for a variety of reasons, some students may exaggerate their faith-sharing experiences, and some may choose not to talk about actual faith conversations. It is up to the teacher to gain a sense of whether their students are committed to sharing the gospel. If students don't talk about their experiences but have begun to invite their lost friends to a Bible study or other ministry events, the teacher may gain some level of confidence that the goal is being achieved even though the specific indicator has not been met.

Consider another example:

> *Learners will develop a heart for the poor, and they will demonstrate achievement of this by doing such things as volunteering to participate in a ministry project with those in a local homeless shelter.*

The teacher would presumably plan an opportunity for students to participate in a ministry project at the homeless shelter or make them aware of opportunities that exist within the Church or community. As in the previous example, students may sign up to participate in such a ministry project for a variety of reasons, and some students might not sign up because their schedule won't allow them to volunteer on a particular date. Either way, the teacher can

never be sure whether the students have developed a heart for the poor, but they have determined a representative response that will help her gain a reasonable determination of whether the students are growing in their compassion for the poor in the community.

Reflection Exercise

- Write appropriate indicators for the following goals:
    - Learners will commit to incorporating spiritual disciplines into their daily lives.
    - Students will pursue personal holiness.
    - Learners will grow in their reliance on the Holy Spirit.
- Write three affective goals and then identify indicators that include reasonable representative responses for each goal.

Significant Concepts

goals

indicators

representative response

verbal, discriminatory, and
motor indicators

Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

For the chapter 5 final assignment, you identified cognitive and affective learning outcomes for forty-eight subtopics. Using this same list of subtopics, transform the learning outcomes you created into goals and indicators. Follow the guidelines for writing goals and indicators in proper form. Make sure that your affective goals include affective indicators with representative responses.

7. Bringing Curriculum to Life

"Why, Huck? It makes no sense for a Frenchman to speak in a different language. He should talk so that everyone could understand him."

"Listen, Jim. Does a cat talk like we do?" "No, a cat does not." "Does a cow talk like us?" "No." "Does a cat talk like a cow or a cow talk like a cat?" "No, they don't." "Then it's natural and correct for a cat or a cow to talk different from us and different from each other. Do you agree?" "Certainly, Huck." "Then why should it not be natural for a Frenchman to talk in a language different from the one we speak?"

"Is a cat a man, Huck? Is a cow a man?" "Well, no." "Then, of course, a cat or a cow won't talk like a man. But is a Frenchman a man?" "Well, yes." "Then why can't he talk like a man? Answer that."

Mark Twain - *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand:

- Key learning styles and preferences
- Categories of learning methods
- How to create curriculum resources

Be able to:

- Design learning activities for various learning styles
- Create learning activities that adhere to principles of learning
- Construct lesson plans and units of study

How do you help someone change their perspective when their reasoning seems illogical? How can you dispel misinformation or shatter stereotypes that have become deeply embedded and impact both beliefs and attitudes? It is a challenge to transform the opinions of others and foster change.

Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, has most often been portrayed in movies as an evil and manipulative woman. Her beauty and selfishness are highlighted, with little to no references to her intellect or positive qualities. Cleopatra was actually Greek, though she did speak Egyptian, one of about ten languages at her command.[1] Julius Caesar fell in love with her on a visit to Egypt, and she returned with him to Rome. The Romans weren't sure what to think about Cleopatra. They hated the idea of an Egyptian queen in Rome, but they were also mesmerized by her charm. However, when Caesar was

1. George Moss, "4 Historical Figures People Often Misunderstand," Oxford Open Learning, May 2, 2024, https://www.ool.co.uk/a-level-3/4-historical-figures-people-often-misunderstand.

assassinated, Cleopatra returned home to Egypt and joined Marc Antony as a naval commander, leading ships against the Roman Empire along with Caesar's nephew, Augustus. The Romans feared that Cleopatra wanted to rule Rome. When the relationship between Antony and Augustus eventually deteriorated, Augustus made it known that Marc Antony planned to leave lands and bestow titles on the children he had with Cleopatra. This convinced the Romans that both Antony and Cleopatra were their rivals and should be eliminated. The Roman Senate removed all of Antony's power and declared war on Cleopatra.[2] This negative history between the Romans and the Egyptians probably accounts for much of the way Cleopatra has been portrayed. Eventually viewed as an enemy to Rome, the Romans painted her as a beautiful but seductive, power-hungry temptress. Arabic history remembers her as a powerful, intelligent, strong ruler and a great leader.

Ludwig van Beethoven is considered one of the greatest composers of all time. He was introduced to music when he was quite young, and his first teacher was his very strict father. If he failed to practice correctly, his father would beat him and his mother if she tried to intervene. His resolution to become a great pianist is said to have been motivated by his desire to prevent his mother from being abused by his father. She died young, and his father became an alcoholic. Beethoven relied on private donations for his work, and even though his music was loved by many, he often struggled to raise enough support to continue his creative work.

Though he was considered a great musician, Beethoven's habits were unconventional. He was considered clumsy, ugly, and untidy, and regardless of many attempts to make him behave, the efforts didn't seem to work. He once told the archduke that it was

2. "The Roman Empire in the First Century: Cleopatra & Egypt," PBS, 2006, https://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/cleopatra.html#:~:text=A%20final%20solution,three%2Dquarters%20of%20their%20fleet.

impossible for him to follow the rules of social behavior. Beethoven's music was also unconventional in his use of style and form, which caused him to be alienated from more classical teachers of the time.

He began to lose his hearing in his early twenties, but he continued to compose masterpieces. He eventually became totally deaf, but his ability to inwardly hear the music allowed him to create beautiful music. However, his deafness made it difficult to perform with orchestras because he was unable to keep time with the other musicians. This caused him to be ridiculed by the public. Yet his most widely admired compositions, including the Ninth Symphony, were composed during the last fifteen years of his life.[3]

Vincent Van Gogh was a Dutch postimpressionist painter whose most famous works include *Sunflowers*, *The Starry Night*, and *Café Terrace at Night*. While he eventually became known as one of the most celebrated artists of the twentieth century and a pioneer in the development of modern art, Van Gogh's artistic abilities were largely ignored during his lifetime.

When he was young, Van Gogh worked in his uncle's art dealership, but after becoming frustrated and unhappy, he became a Protestant minister. He preached in poor agricultural districts and empathized with those who lived in poverty. Van Gogh began to share in their difficult living conditions, but despite trying to live according to the gospel, the Church authorities decided that he was undermining the "*dignity of the priesthood*," and they removed him from his post. That is when he became an artist.

Van Gogh was not considered a great artist during his lifetime and only sold one painting. He was demoted from one art academy because of his inability to draw. However, he continued to work hard and improve his technique. His early failures as an artist haunted him throughout his life, and he was troubled by a sense of

3. "Beethoven Biography," Biography Online, accessed January 30, 2025, https://www.biographyonline.net/music/beethoven.html.

inadequacy. Van Gogh was also known to have a volatile temper and was considered unstable. He was eventually committed to a mental health facility, where he lived off and on until his death.

Van Gogh didn't hold a regular job but put his whole being into his art, often neglecting his health, appearance, and finances. His brother Theo often sent him money and provided him with painting materials. While aware of how he was perceived, Van Gogh remained passionate about his vision for life, as evident in this letter to his brother:

> What am I in the eyes of most people—a nonentity, an eccentric, or an unpleasant person—somebody who has no position in society and will never have; in short, the lowest of the low. All right, then—even if that were absolutely true, then I should one day like to show by my work what such an eccentric, such a nobody, has in his heart. That is my ambition, based less on resentment than on love in spite of everything, based more on a feeling of serenity than on passion.
>
> —Vincent Van Gogh (Letter to Theo, July 1882)[4]

What do these historical snapshots reveal about human nature? They remind us that people are more complex than we can observe from the outside, that others' opinions aren't always accurate, and that not everyone values the same things or views life in the same way. Stereotypes and prejudice can prevent us from changing our beliefs or opinions.

Discipleship isn't about indoctrination or persuading people to agree with us, but it is about helping others acknowledge biblical truth about God as revealed in Scripture. Sometimes, this

4. "Vincent Van Gogh Biography," Biography Online, accessed January 30, 2025, https://www.biographyonline.net/artists/vincent-van-gogh.html.

involves clearing up misconceptions, and other times, it is about introducing people to ideas that are brand new. Regardless of where people are in their current understanding, the invitation to discipleship is open to everyone. This is the work of spiritual transformation and the purpose of a curriculum plan. This will require teaching and learning resources that take into account all aspects of human diversity and provide all persons the opportunity to grow into Christlikeness, no matter where their journey begins.

Focus Activity

- Review the opening quote from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. What types of challenges might you encounter in teaching someone like Jim?
- What are some specific areas of needed change or learning challenges represented by the lives of Cleopatra, Beethoven, and Van Gogh? Think in terms of individual needs to consider in teaching and learning, such as cognitive abilities, cultural diversity, physical disabilities, or mental health concerns.
- What lessons about curriculum design and spiritual formation can be learned from these examples?
- Can you think of people within your own life context who exhibit similar discipleship challenges?
- What biblical principles might be helpful to remember when trying to disciple learners from diverse backgrounds?

Learner Considerations

A curriculum plan is a complex document, full of potential but completely useless unless it is implemented. In the introduction to this book, it was noted that it is important to design teaching and learning experiences that lead toward spiritual transformation for a specific target audience. Unplanned experiences are also part of the curricular journey because we recognize that not everyone learns the same things or in the same ways, even when participating in the same curriculum. All persons bear God's image, but that doesn't mean people act, think, or respond the same way. While it isn't feasible to try to create unique learning experiences for each individual learner, it is important to recognize the variety of ways in which people learn so that the curriculum comes to life for everyone on the journey.

While the focus of this book is on curriculum development and not teaching, there are some commonly understood patterns of teaching and learning that should guide those who select and create teaching and learning experiences for discipleship. Students differ in how they perceive and process information, how they relate to other learners, what motivates them, their level of self-awareness, and how they communicate. These characteristics represent particular learning styles or preferences. When implementing a curriculum plan, it is important to focus on student learning. This necessitates the incorporation of methods and structures that will provide opportunities for students to encounter experiences that intersect with their preferred learning styles. It is important to realize that these are learning preferences and not required conditions for learning to transpire.

Sometimes learning preferences are the result of conditioning. Cultural expectations on the role of the teacher and learner can shape these preferences and even override natural preferences. If students have grown up sitting passively while the teacher lectures, they may be uncomfortable in a situation that expects them

to interact or respond to questions. They may hesitate to ask their own questions or participate in a group activity. However, remember that people can learn in a variety of ways, even when the way in which they are taught doesn't align with their preferences. Change is always uncomfortable, but if our desire is for students to experience life transformation, then we will consider their learning styles and best practices for teaching and learning in our curriculum design. This doesn't mean that each learning session will incorporate a smorgasbord of learning methods, but it does suggest that variety will be the hallmark of our teaching.

Global or Analytic Learners

Most people interpret the world from one of two main polarities, referred to as either global or analytic. While all learners engage both polarities to some extent, and there are some who make equal use of both, it is more common for individuals to show a preference as either a global or an analytic learner. A study of the behaviors of naval fighter pilots in World War II revealed this understanding. A psychologist, Herman Witkin, began conducting tests to understand why some pilots were able to fly out of a fogbank, retaining their upright orientation, while others emerged from the fog upside down. What he discovered was that some pilots depended more on their field of vision to maintain an upright position and became disoriented by being unable to see their surroundings. He labeled them field-dependent, or global, learners. Others were labeled field-independent learners because they were able to maintain their upright orientation even though they couldn't see where they were. They

fall into the category of analytic learners.[5] Witkin's research led to our understanding of how learners interact with the world from either a global or analytic perspective.

Which of the following examples best describes you?

1. A friend asks you about a movie you just saw.
   - A. You tell your friend who was in the movie, you talk through the plotline, and maybe you even quote a few lines of the dialogue.
   - B. You tell your friend how the movie made you feel and give a general idea of the theme, but you can't remember who the actors were, even though you do remember what they looked like.
2. Someone asks you how to get to the nearest fast-food restaurant.
   - A. You explain which direction to head, where to turn, names of streets, and an approximate distance.
   - B. You confess that you aren't really sure which streets to take, but you are able to provide a general idea of where to head and you can describe the buildings and scenery they will pass on the way.

If you see yourself as more of an A, then you are probably more analytic, or field independent. If B sounds more like your style, then you might be more global, or field dependent.[6]

Characteristics of a Global Learner

5. Cynthia Ulrich Tobias, The Way They Learn (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1994), 104–5.
6. Karen Jones, "Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles," in Teaching the Next Generations, ed. Terry Linhart (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 86–99.

- Recognizes and remembers faces
- Produces humorous thoughts
- Focuses on big ideas
- Interprets body language
- Subjective
- Likes working with groups
- Prefers instructions by demonstration
- Makes emotional appeals
- Prefers fantasy, poetry, or myth
- Processes information randomly
- Remembers pictures or images
- Paraphrases
- Likes open-ended assignments

Characteristics of an Analytic Learner

- Recognizes and remembers names
- Focuses on the meaning of words
- Produces logical thoughts
- Emphasizes details
- Objective
- Likes working alone
- Prefers verbal instructions
- Makes emotional appeals
- Prefers realistic stories
- Processes information sequentially
- Reads for details or facts
- Outlines
- Likes well-structured assignments

Reflection Exercise

- Refer to the lists of principles of learning from chapter 5 for understanding and for attitudes, values, and beliefs. Which principles would be most helpful for global learners? For analytic learners?
- Select three of the goals and indicators you created in chapter 6. Describe learning activities for both global and analytic learners that would help students achieve each of these goals and indicators. Use the principles of learning to help you create your learning activities.

Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic Learners

Learning occurs as we take information in through our senses, including hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, or touching. The three main ways information is perceived are auditory, kinesthetic, and visual. Most traditional teaching, especially for spiritual transformation, relies on auditory methods, though successful learning for the majority of learners often depends on all three modalities.

Auditory learners benefit from hearing, listening, and speaking. Speaking is especially important for the auditory learner, which emphasizes the importance of discussion. Visual learners like to see what they're learning from charts, diagrams, graphs, or pictures. For instance, they are more apt to remember and learn biblical content if they read it themselves as opposed to listening to someone else. Taking notes is also beneficial. Kinesthetic learners need to become physically involved as they learn, so sitting still can be distracting. Doing a project is beneficial, but so is pacing or walking around. Kinesthetic learners are more likely to remember what they have done than what they have discussed, heard, or read.

Reflection Exercise

- Select three of the goals and indicators you created in chapter 6. You may use the same ones you used for the previous Reflection Exercise. Describe learning activities for auditory, kinesthetic, and visual learners that would help them achieve each of these goals and indicators.
- How might you structure a discipleship small group to benefit all three types of learners, auditory, kinesthetic, and visual?

Learning Style Inventory

Curriculum includes more than the learning content; it also consists of everything a learner experiences. The room arrangement, the time of day, the fellow students, and the temperature all impact learning. Kenneth and Rita Dunn developed the *Learning Style Inventory* (LSI) to assess these curricular components by studying student environmental learning preferences. Their research has become one of the most widely used, valid, and reliable assessments of its kind.[7] The LSI identifies a learning style as "a biologically and

7. Rita Dunn, "Rita Dunn Answers Questions on Learning Styles," Educational Leadership, October 1990, 15–19.

developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others."[8] The instrument takes the following learning preferences into account:

- *Environmental factors*: sound, light, temperature, seating arrangements
- *Emotional factors*: motivation, conformity/responsibility, task persistence, learning/classroom structure
- *Physiological factors*: perceptual (auditory, visual, tactile/kinesthetic), intake needs of food/drink, time of day, mobility
- *Psychological factors*: analytic-global, impulsive-reflective
- *Sociological factors*: working alone, in a pair, with peers, in a group; relationship with authority; need for variety[9]

As you plan for teaching and learning situations, remember that learners have preferences that impact their learning. The emphasis is on preferences that have an impact, not absolutes. Remember that these preferences aren't necessary for learning to take place. They may make it easier. Accounting for learning preferences may seem insignificant, but if we want to maximize the opportunity for significant life change, then we need to seriously consider the LSI research as we select where learning will take place, what expectations we place on the students, and how we plan the content.

Focus Activity

8. Rita Dunn and Shirley A. Griggs, Learning Styles: Quiet Revolution in American Secondary Schools (Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988), 3.
9. Jones, "Multiple Intelligences."

- Based on your discipleship learning experiences, which of the LSI characteristics have been most overlooked?
- Which of the LSI characteristics would be easiest to accommodate, and which do you think might be more difficult to include as you design discipleship experiences?

Teaching Methods

Spiritual transformation involves learning, but not all learning is done in the context of a small group or structured learning situation. As you review the goals and indicators you created for your scope, you may decide that a retreat, service project, mentoring relationship, or special event might be the optimum method to accomplish your learning intent. Regardless of the structures you implement, it is important to consider a variety of methods you can incorporate into your plan. Repeatedly using the same methods can suppress learning. Routines can be comfortable, but introducing the unexpected can result in positive tension that leads to learning. Using too many methods can also create chaos that can detract from learning, so it is imperative to consider the audience, the goal, and the available resources when you plan creative ways of teaching that are most likely to lead to life transformation.

There are a number of resources available that describe innovative methods of teaching. The following paragraphs describe the most common categories of methods you may want to consider.

Art Techniques

Using art methods is a great way to engage all types of learners, not just those gifted in art. Using cartoons can allow images to offer commentary on human characteristics and situations more effectively than words. Displaying objects around the teaching environment that represent key ideas or concepts can often communicate or illustrate difficult or significant concepts. Posting a series of drawings, paintings, or pictures can be effectively used in a number of ways. Students can select an image representing an idea or feeling, allowing them to reflect on significant ideas and appropriate meaning. Illustrating events, concepts, or reactions to a passage can be accomplished with any number of materials. Remember, when asking students to produce something, the focus is not on the final product but on the process it takes to create. Maps or charts can clarify facts that are hard to visualize, and montages or collages can offer a variety of images and symbols that highlight a particular theme. Sometimes a picture study can allow students to analyze an artist's understanding of a concept. Warner Sallman's *Christ at Heart's Door* is an excellent example of how this art method can be used.

Drama Techniques

Drama is often used in teaching children or youth, as in acting out Bible stories or creating role-plays. The method can be effective with adults as well and for higher levels of learning than simple comprehension. Creating hypothetical dialogues or monologues or presenting a short dramatic situation relevant to the topic can generate discussion. Engaging in a simulation to reproduce a situation so students can get a feel for the setting and identify what others have experienced can be impactful.

Learning Games

Games are contests in which players operate according to specific rules in order to achieve a goal. The four key characteristics are *contest*, *players*, *rules*, and *goals*. Learning games include all four of these characteristics and are marked by a serious learning intent. They can include problem-solving, negotiating, questioning, role-playing, information retrieving, or team building.

Music

Music is often used as an introduction to a learning session to focus the attention of a group of learners. It might also serve to unify a group. However, music is also a powerful teaching method when it is purposefully woven into a plan. It can create an atmosphere to enrich learning and provide a means of worship but also contribute to biblical insights and heart transformation. Instead of music being ancillary, learners can engage in encountering musical content. They might study the lyrics from contemporary songs or traditional hymns to evaluate their message or compare it with biblical teaching. Students could also be encouraged to create new lyrics to familiar tunes that reflect personal or life applications aligned with a session goal.

Pencil-and-Paper Techniques

Note-taking, filling out worksheets, and journaling are probably the extent of the writing methods most teachers incorporate into their discipleship sessions. There are so many more ways to utilize this method, which involves students in clarifying their thoughts and feelings and expressing their understanding. Writing requires learn-

ers to engage in deeper thinking than asking for spontaneous discussion. Asking students to create an acrostic built around a significant keyword, writing a review or paraphrase of a Scripture passage, or engaging in a creative writing activity are all positive uses of writing methods. Younger children can benefit from coded messages, crossword puzzles, or puzzles to help them review and process content. Creating hypothetical dialogues, expressing feelings or encouragement through letter writing, completing open-ended stories, or answering open-ended statements are additional ways to incorporate paper-and-pencil methods. Writing poetry, lyrics, haikus, or cinquains requires both creativity and critical thinking. Asking for unsigned responses can provide teachers with an indication of whether their affective goals have been achieved.

Verbal Techniques

Brainstorming is an often-overlooked method of problem-solving that allows learners to offer spontaneous ideas or solutions without criticism. Large groups can be divided into small groups to discuss problems or case studies before reporting back to the larger group. One discussion method, the circular response, allows everyone to take turns responding to a posed question or statement. No one can speak twice until everyone has had an opportunity, which can alleviate the common problem of having students who dominate a discussion or those who rarely speak. Panel discussions and informal debates can prompt alternate opinions and encourage critical thinking about significant concepts. Interviews, panel discussions, and lectures are other possible verbal techniques to consider when planning discipleship sessions. Jesus's preferred teaching method was verbal and often involved storytelling:

> He did not tell them anything without using stories. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

Mark 4:34, CEV

Reflection Exercise

- Jesus used a variety of teaching methods designed to help his followers grow in their understanding and commitment. Which methods are represented by the following passages of Scripture? Matthew 5:1–2, Mark 12:13–17, Matthew 18:1–5, Matthew 16:13–20, Luke 10:1–11, and John 8:1–8. What other examples would you include in this list?
- Select one cognitive goal and one affective goal you created in chapter 6. For each goal, create three separate learning activities using three different methodologies. Don't describe an activity or method you regularly experience. Instead, use your creativity to develop an activity that would help learners engage in deeper spiritual growth. In your descriptions, include all of the necessary details for leading the activity.
- In your experience, what methods are most overused in discipleship settings? Why do you think that is the case?

Crafting Resources

A curriculum plan comes to life when appropriate resources are selected and experiences are planned that bring about spiritual transformation in the life of the learners. These decisions must

be made carefully so that the planned goals and indicators can be achieved. Many outstanding curricular resources are available through Christian publishers that may fulfill various purposes of a plan. Events and unique learning experiences can also be designed to help learners accomplish some of the curricular goals. However, sometimes it is desirable to create your own curriculum materials. It wouldn't be practical or even advisable to attempt to create all of the learning resources needed to successfully implement a curriculum plan. It is tedious work to produce quality materials, and it wouldn't be the best stewardship of your time. It may be preferable or even necessary at times if your target audience represents a specialized population for which quality resources don't exist, aren't readily available, or are cost prohibitive.

There are many approaches to writing curriculum materials or lesson plans. The first step is to understand the purpose of the resources you are designing. Consideration must also be given to the learning context, the experience and expertise of the teachers, and how the resources will fit into the overall scope and sequence of the plan. Lesson plans may be created for an entire unit of study related to a particular topic or subtopics. Units often include four or five weeks of materials, corresponding to a calendar month. According to Lois LeBar, since most discipleship meetings last only about an hour each week, it can be difficult for students to make connections between various sessions unless they are combined into units of study. A unit allows for a more intentional focus, resulting in greater learning continuity for the students. Each session would include one subtopic or piece of the overall subject. An example of a unit on the Holy Spirit might include sessions such as *The Holy Spirit as Teacher and Guide*, *The Holy Spirit as Counselor*, *The Holy*

Spirit as Illuminator, *The Holy Spirit as Enabler*, and *The Holy Spirit as Convicter*.[10] Of course, units of study can be combined to form a more robust resource to be used over a longer period of time.

Planning for Discussion Groups

If resources are designed for discussion-based small groups, it is important to consider strategies for both disciple-making and community building as you plan. The purpose should always be spiritual growth, but this is maximized when learners feel connected to one another and experience the freedom to interact honestly and without judgment. It will also be important to carefully craft questions that lead learners toward spiritual transformation. Rarely do worthwhile questions simply emerge in the moment. They should be planned and incorporated into the teaching resource. It takes time to write significant questions, but if discussion is the key structure of a small group, the process can't be overlooked. Obviously, discussions flow out of questions and responses, and a qualified leader will be able to keep the dialogue moving so it doesn't come across as an inquisition.

Questions

Yes or no questions aren't helpful, but open-ended questions can help learners make sense of information and think beyond the obvious. Avoid compound questions, those that combine more than one focus. Long-winded questions and those that are obvious, mislead-

10. Lois LeBar, Education That Is Christian (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1953), 208, 215–16.

ing, or irrelevant should also be avoided. Closed questions are those that solicit one particular correct response. These should be used sparingly, as they focus more on factual information and lower levels of understanding. Steer away from them altogether if they rely on one specific Bible translation for a correct response. Challenging questions allow students to think more deeply about the application of the content to their lives. Utilizing each type of question can be helpful. It is also possible to structure questions that lead learners through Bloom's taxonomy from basic knowledge through evaluation: *What did the people do when they heard the news? What did Jesus mean by his statement? When have you observed a similar reaction? How might their disagreement be resolved in an orderly fashion? How would you structure a worship experience in this environment? How well did the Israelites adhere to God's commands?*

Michael Novelli has written a number of resources about Bible storying as a teaching strategy. He recommends using questions from various categories to help learners understand and apply the meaning of the text. *Wondering questions* require students to consider the story's content before they begin appropriating meaning. These may include such questions as, *Did you notice anything in the story that you hadn't realized before, what surprised you in the story, or what questions does the story raise in your mind? Remembering questions* call for learners to recount specifics of the story, but they should be used sparingly, since they are a form of closed questioning. *Interpreting questions* take students beyond knowledge to the comprehension level of understanding. For example, *How would you describe (key character's) commitment, or personality, or emotions, or motive? Why do you think* X *acted the way he did when* X*? What does this story teach us about God? Why do you think this story was included in the Bible? Connecting questions* require application of the biblical content to the life of the learner. Examples of

this type of question include, *How is this story your story? Where do you see yourself in this story, or how does this story challenge or encourage you?*[11]

Planning for Structured Lessons

Spiritual transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit within an individual, but God works with the human teacher to help facilitate that change. LeBar suggests that the teacher "*prepare as if it all depends on God; work as if it all depended on you.*"[12] God has chosen to work with and through willing Christians to disciple others. He has commanded us to make disciples, and doing so effectively requires planning. In speaking about worship, Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 14:33 that "*God is not a God of disorder*." When teachers fail to plan, disorder is likely to follow. What is intended as a Bible study can easily devolve into a social gathering that results in very little learning. God expects our best effort at everything we attempt, and discipling others is one of the most significant tasks we can undertake. If we make the effort to plan a curriculum that will lead to spiritual growth in the life of learners, we can't simply go with the flow when it comes to teaching and hope that our goals will be accomplished:

> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

11. *Michael Novelli, Shaped by the Story: Discover the Art of Bible Storying (Minneapolis: Sparkhouse*, 2013).
12. LeBar, Education, 229.

> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
>
> Colossians 3:16–17, NIV

HBLT

Larry Richards introduced the hook, book, look, took (HBLT) method for creating structured lesson plans. It is a useful approach to lesson planning that can be adapted for any learning environment or target audience.

In their book *Creative Bible Teaching*, Richards and Gary Bredfeldt suggest that Paul used this approach when he addressed the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens. When he was walking through the city, waiting for Silas and Timothy, Paul noticed all of the idols and one in particular that was dedicated to an unknown god:

> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.
>
> "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did

this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Acts 17:22–33, NIV

Paul's approach was to start his teaching from the vantage point of the learner and stimulate their interest by informing them that he could tell them the identity of the unknown god. He hooked them, motivating them to listen. Then Paul shared the truth about God and his desire for a personal relationship with them. He proclaimed the truth about Jesus Christ and his resurrection as the way to enter into that relationship. After sharing the truth, Paul led his audience to consider how this truth was meaningful for all persons everywhere and that the entire world needed to repent. Finally,

Paul focused on personal application. We know this because some wanted to hear him again, and others chose to believe and follow Christ.[13]

The HBLT method includes these four key steps of motivation, examination, life application, and personal application. They are designed as four distinct parts of a session, each with a different purpose, but in reality, they should flow together in one seamless plan, and the learners shouldn't be aware when one part ends and another begins. However, before you begin writing each component of an HBLT plan, you must determine the overall purpose of the unit of study you are creating and identify the specific goals and indicators for each session. You can refer to your curriculum plan to select the topic or subtopics and the associated goals and indicators you identified. Create a template or outline for the entire unit, including the following elements:

- Unit Subject and Title (identify the focal topic or subtopic from your curriculum plan)
- Unit Goal
- Age Group of Target Audience
- Session Topic/Subtopic 1 and Title
- Key Scripture Focus
- Exegetical Idea (the big idea of the biblical passage)
- Pedagogical Idea (the main concept or idea you want the students to learn; the takeaway for the session)
- Learning Goal and Indicator
- List of Needed Materials or Supplies for the Session
- Preparation List (describe any special things the teacher will need to do ahead of time, such as a special room arrangement, queuing up a video clip, making photocopies, etc.)
- List of Learning Activities for the Hook, Book, Look, and Took

13. Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, Creative Bible Teaching (Chicago: Moody Press, 2020), 169–70.

in Order (include an estimated time frame for each section to help the teacher in planning; these must be written in detail in the plan so that anyone could teach the session from this written document)
- Closing Challenge and Prayer
- Session Outline Repetition for Each of the Subsequent Sessions

Reflection Exercise

- Review your curriculum plan and select one of your topics for developing a unit of study. Each of the subtopics may be used for individual sessions. Plan on a four-session unit.
- Using the template, create an outline for your unit.

Designing HBLT Learning Activities

Each part of the HBLT plan is designed for a specific purpose, but none is limited to one single activity. While a small group discussion-based approach to teaching relies on verbal learning techniques, the HBLT approach to teaching and learning allows for many different techniques and methods, making it an ideal way to connect with students with a variety of learning styles. The hook is introductory and, in a typical one-hour session, should probably not take longer than ten minutes to complete and transition to the book. The book represents an exploration and study of the content, the foundational biblical concepts and truths you want your students to understand and value, so this portion of the lesson should be sig-

nificant in terms of time allowed. Twenty to twenty-five minutes is a good consideration as you plan. Both the look and the took are significant, but ten to fifteen minutes is often sufficient for each of these if only an hour is dedicated for the entire session. Keep in mind that this doesn't account for any additional activities a group may engage in when they meet. If there are announcements, a separate time of worship, or refreshments or games included, this time must be factored into the planning process. It is hard to imagine how effective discipleship could take place if less than one full hour of focused group study takes place on a weekly basis.

The hook is designed to motivate students to learn and to stimulate their curiosity by connecting the subject with their personal needs. When learners believe that a session is relevant to their lives, they are more likely to want to participate and be involved. This requires teachers to know their learners. The focus in chapter 3 of this book was on understanding the audience. This will be helpful as you are designing your lesson plans, but additional effort will be required on the part of the teacher to develop personal relationships with those in the group.

A good hook sets the focus for the session and should include a natural transition from that learning activity to the subject or biblical content of the study. In designing the hook, refer to chapter 5, which describes principles of learning for knowledge, understanding, and affective learning. These guidelines can help you think about the types of learning experiences that will be most relevant to your goal. Then refer to the various techniques and methods described previously in this chapter to stimulate your thinking and help you design a learning activity that will pique the interest of your learners and motivate them to participate fully. An effective hook could be a discussion about a current event related to the study, a poignant question, an object lesson, a media clip, or even a short game. The key is to make sure the activity hooks the learner and isn't simply an irrelevant icebreaker. The hook is part of the lesson and should lead toward learning and growth. Include a tran-

sitional statement at the close of the hook that connects this motivational exercise to the overall purpose and focus of the session.

The book portion of a lesson plan is examination, focusing on a deep study of the passage or biblical truths. This requires an accurate understanding of the Scripture under consideration. To accurately plan for the book, it is necessary to have done a prior in-depth biblical study. Deductive studies begin with a topic and use Scripture to illustrate or illuminate the topic so that it is dealt with in a manner that is biblically accurate. Inductive studies focus primarily on a study of Scripture and allow the topics or content to be derived from the text. Discipleship sessions may take either form, but regardless, a comprehensive study of the passage or passages is necessary. A guide for completing an inductive study is included in chapters 4 and 5 in *Creative Bible Teaching* by Richards and Bredfeldt. Another excellent resource for preparing to teach is *Effective Bible Teaching* by James C. Wilhoit and Leland Ryken.

The key components of an inductive Bible study are observation, interpretation, generalization, application, and implementation. *Observation* includes an understanding of who authored a text, when, and for what purpose. It examines the type of literature represented by the passage as well as the structure of the text. *Interpretation* involves a careful study of the meaning and significance of the passage. It takes into account the continuity of the message as it relates to the totality of Scripture and considers both the context and customary meaning of the passage. *Generalization* focuses on the big idea of the passage, answering such questions as, *What is the author talking about, what is he saying about the subject, and what is the key transferable idea of the passage to life today*? The answers to these questions form the exegetical idea for a lesson when summarized into one concise statement of truth. *Application* in an inductive study is a means of discovering biblical answers to common problems. When studying a passage, it is important to answer the following questions: *Is there a teaching here to be learned and followed? Does the passage contain a rebuke or a correction to be heard*

and obeyed? In what way does the passage train us to be righteous? Implementation is the final part of a study, when the learner is challenged to appropriate personal meaning. This may include identifying the need for personal change, considering how best to make those changes, and asking God for the power to implement the changes the Holy Spirit has revealed to them through the study.[14]

One common mistake that teachers make is to substitute an inductive study for a lesson plan. Often, teachers simply lecture over the background and meaning of a passage and fail to involve the learners in active learning or personal application of the text. While the inductive study includes elements of both examination and application, it is not intended as a substitute for a well-designed group lesson plan. Effective lesson plans rely on comprehensive biblical studies to formulate the content for the book portion of their resources. They are most effective, however, when students engage in active learning and are led to discover biblical significance instead of being told why Scripture matters.

The look portion of a lesson is focused on helping learners understand how the biblical content relates to life today in their culture. It allows them to connect biblical teachings to daily life and understand their relevance in contemporary society. One of the most effective means of doing this is to incorporate case studies or current events. This may be done using a variety of techniques. Learners may be asked to analyze trending shows or the lyrics of popular music. They may use their biblical understanding to propose solutions for current cultural difficulties or evaluate the actions of celebrities or public policies according to what they have learned. Art, drama, or creative writing may be appropriate methods for discovering life applications.

The final part of the HBLT method is the took. This is where personal spiritual transformation is prompted. Lasting change won't take place within one discipleship session, but the took asks stu-

14. Richards and Bredfeldt, Creative Bible Teaching, 68–78.

dents to begin considering where change is needed in their own lives. It goes beyond an understanding of how the content is generally relevant or applicable. It prompts students to think about areas where they are in need of personal growth. They should have a clear understanding of how the study relates to their lives. It might prompt them to think about changes, such as starting or stopping a behavior. This could involve a personal inventory for them to complete and reflect on their responses. It might ask them to write a letter to someone and seek their forgiveness. Students might be asked to create a personal plan for incorporating a particular spiritual discipline into their lives. Consider your learners as you design meaningful ways for them to begin the process of appropriating what they have learned through the session.

One final consideration for your teaching plan involves determining whether you have included an opportunity for the indicator to be achieved. Remember that the indicator's purpose is to determine whether the goal has been met. It is useless, however, to determine the evidence needed to prove the achievement of a goal if you never ask for that evidence within your study. At least one of the learning activities should provide an opportunity for the learners to accomplish the indicator. This is often found within the look or the took. It is known as a test because it is a means of testing the accomplishment of the goal.

The test activity should match the indicator in three key ways. It should *require the learner to use the same or a similar form of response*. If it is a verbal indicator, then the test activity should be verbal. If it is discriminatory, then it should require discrimination. The test activity should also *relate to the same content*. This is more precise than expecting them to relate to the same subject. Content is a more narrow, specific part of a broader subject. For example, cooking is a subject, but grilling steaks and boiling potatoes are not the same content. Both the indicator and test activity should focus on the same content related to the subject. The final characteristic

of a test activity is that it should *be at the same level of learning as the indicator*. For example, if the indicator calls for application, an appropriate test item would not require the student to synthesize.

Reflection Exercise

- Select three of the goals and indicators you completed for chapter 6. Write a test learning activity for each one. Make sure that your test and indicator match in all three of the key areas: form, content, and level of learning.
- Using the template, create an outline for your unit.

Lesson plans should reflect a variety of methods and appeal to all types of learners through at least one of the activities. Each part of the lesson may include more than one learning activity, but they should build on one another and be presented in a logical order. You may want to number each activity to provide clarity for whoever is going to be teaching. Care should be taken so the session doesn't become a jumble of disparate activities, but every learner should be able to leave a class with the sense that they have gained something important and relevant for their lives. As you write your plans, focus on balancing your techniques and approaches. Use precise, direct, active verbs that will help potential leaders visualize the action you are calling for in your goal, indicator, or activity. Give enough detail for the reader to know exactly how to do what you are asking them to do. Make sure your learning activities and the methods you suggest can actually be accomplished during the time frame

you have established. Proofread what you have written and get rid of ambivalent or vague language that can mean different things to different people.

Significant Concepts

deductive studies

hook, book, look, took

inductive studies

interpretation

learning styles

motivation, examination, life application, personal application

observation, interpretation, generalization, application, implementation

test activity

Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

Using the unit template you created for a previous Reflection Exercise, select one of the sessions and write a complete HBLT

lesson plan. Include each element of the plan, incorporating various techniques and methods to accomplish your goal and appeal to a variety of learners. Refer to the learning principles from chapter 5 as you design your activities. Don't forget to include a test activity in your plan that mirrors your indicator. Remember that each portion of the plan may use more than one activity, but the session should have a flow. The learners should not feel as if they have jumped through hoops or bounced from one activity to the next but should experience a seamless time of learning that is personally impactful.

8. Evaluation

Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them....I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them intimately close at hand. And that hasn't much improved my opinion of them.

When you tell them that you have made a new friend, they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you, "What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?" Instead, they demand: "How old is he? How many brothers has he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?"

Only from these figures do they think they have learned anything about him.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry - *The Little Prince*

Chapter Goals

This chapter is designed to help you:

Understand:

- The role of evaluation in curriculum planning
- The importance of orthodoxy and orthopraxy
- Key considerations for evaluating curriculum resources

Be able to:

- Evaluate a curriculum resource for its appropriateness
- Evaluate each aspect of a comprehensive curriculum plan

Successful companies aren't immune from making branding mistakes that cost them customers and a loss in revenue. Coca-Cola changed its formula in 1985 to compete with Pepsi, a growing competitor. Customers rejected the new formula and thought Coca-Cola was abandoning its values and its heritage. The company immediately began receiving five thousand phone calls a day from furious customers, and eventually, the number of calls went up to eight thousand a day, causing Coca-Cola to hire more operators. Protest groups formed, such as the "*Old Cola Drinkers of America*." Coca-Cola eventually decided to return to the original formula.[1]

Right or wrong, consumers have opinions, and their views impact the success or failure of businesses. For restaurant owners, it isn't always about the food. People choose restaurants based on ten key factors. The number-one factor is the customer experience. They could buy food at a grocery store, but when they go to a

1. Courtney Bozigian, "Bad Branding Examples from Well-Known Brands, Bad Branding: Real-World Mistakes to Avoid + Strategies for Success," Digital Silk, December 18, 2023, https://www.digital-silk.com/digital-trends/bad-branding/.

restaurant, they are most often paying for an experience. They want to have fun with their friends, spend time with family, and feel special and respected. They want to be able to ask questions without feeling like they're stupid or being a burden. If the servers are approachable and smile, customers are likely to return.[2]

Cultural expectations can also determine whether a company succeeds. Walmart was successful not only in the United States but also in China and other foreign countries. That reality prompted its expansion to Germany. However, it eventually had to pay a competitor to take over its real estate and employee liabilities so it could leave Germany before losing any more money. Why did this happen? While there isn't one simple answer, a lot of it had to do with Walmart's failure to understand German culture. Having greeters at the door bothered Germans, who aren't fans of very friendly customer service. Employees smiling at customers was strange, and some of the male customers thought the friendly female employees were flirting with them. Walmart team members do morning chants to motivate them for the day, but German employees would sometimes hide out in the bathroom to avoid this ritual. For Germans, chanting is something you do at a soccer game, not at your place of business. Having the cashiers bag their groceries was also a cultural no-no since Germans customarily bag their own.[3]

Judgment and evaluation are part of life, even if the standards are sometimes hard to decipher or may seem unfair. For Olympic athletes, there are strict rules that determine whether

2. "How People Choose Restaurants: Top 10 Factors," Owner, October 18, 2023, https://www.owner.com/blog/how-people-choose-restaurants-top-10-factors.
3. Anthony Karge, "3 Embarrassing Examples of Cross-Cultural Business Failures," Content Marketing@MakerVerse, October 10, 2018, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/3-embarrassing-examples-cross-cultural-business-failures-karge/.

they are eligible to compete or retain a medal. Drug violations are an automatic disqualifier. Chinese swimmer Sun Yang was banned for three months in 2014 after testing positive for the stimulant trimetazidine. In 2018, Yang, a three-time Olympic champion, wouldn't allow the antidoping officials to leave his home with his blood sample. One of his companions smashed the vial with a hammer so it couldn't be tested. Yang was then banned from competing in the Tokyo Olympics. The Russian bobsledder Nadezhda Sergeeva was disqualified from the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics after also testing positive for trimetazidine. She was given the banned drug by her mother, a doctor. One of the most infamous Olympic drug scandals was when Ben Johnson, a Canadian sprinter, won the hundred-meter dash in record time at the Seoul Olympics. After testing positive for an anabolic steroid, his gold medal was taken away and given to the American sprinter Carl Lewis.[4]

Standards of evaluation are necessary in many life situations for a number of reasons. They can ensure fairness in business practices or athletic competitions. They can protect public health when they take the form of inspections for disease or when medicines are evaluated for safety and effectiveness. They are used in determining whether a student has sufficiently accomplished what is required for a promotion or a degree. This is especially significant for medical personnel and other professions whose actions can result in life and death for others. Evaluation, as it relates to curriculum, doesn't seem to rise to the level of life and death, at least not physically. However, when you consider the purpose of curriculum for spiritual transformation, the importance of evaluation should take on greater significance. That's not to suggest that a poorly designed plan or hastily chosen resource will keep someone

4. AP Staff, "Doping at the Olympics: The Most Infamous Cases," Associated Press, February 10, 2022, https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/sports/beijing-winter-olympics/doping-at-the-olympics-the-most-infamous-cases/3546126/.

from knowing Christ or growing in spiritual maturity. God's sovereignty is greater than that. However, it is possible that dull and ineffective lessons or inaccurate teaching can turn people away from the Church or quench their desire for growth.

Faith maturity is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual; God initiates this faith relationship:

> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.
>
> John 6:44, NIV

God also invites us into the process. Our partnership with God in the discipleship project is significant. God didn't just give us busywork to make us feel useful. Spiritual growth is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit, but we have a role to play in the spiritual development of others:

> What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.
>
> 1 Corinthians 3:5–9, NIV

Selecting and Evaluating Resources

As described in chapter 7, bringing a curriculum plan to life involves planning learning experiences and selecting resources to accomplish the goals that were established for the scope. Sometimes, the

resources are created, but much of the time, they will be selected from those that have already been published. Choosing the right resources will impact whether the intended goals are achieved and ultimately determine whether the overall purpose or mission of the plan is realized. All too often, ministry leaders select curricular resources without carefully evaluating their effectiveness. They may opt for those that are the least expensive, have the most visual appeal, or have been recommended on a blog or by a friend. While this doesn't necessarily diminish the value of the resource, it also doesn't guarantee their appropriateness. Any resource considered for use should be evaluated for both its orthodoxy and its orthopraxy.

Orthodoxy refers to sound or correct doctrine. As it relates to Christianity, orthodox teaching should align with biblical teaching. Chapter 2 included the *Nicene Creed*, which is an overview of the central tenets of Christian belief. Most Christian publishers include an explanation of their doctrinal beliefs on their website, or they identify an affiliation with a particular denomination. Denominations clearly identify with particular doctrines, and an internet search of an authorized denominational site will describe those beliefs. While most Christian denominations would affirm the teaching of the *Nicene Creed*, it cannot be assumed. Some groups have drifted from biblical teaching to embrace cultural changes that have not traditionally been accepted.

One of the most important doctrinal considerations is related to salvation. *What does it mean to be a Christian? Can one grow up in a Christian home and identify as a Christian, or is a personal commitment and decision to follow Christ necessary?* There may be additional doctrines or beliefs valued by your ministry that you want to evaluate. They may be central in your ministry but of lesser importance to some publishers. Sometimes core beliefs are shared, but the interpretation may vary. This is true for Church ordinances such as baptism or communion. When selecting

resources for use within a ministry, it is important that their views on such key issues align with acceptable teachings within your church or ministry.

While orthodoxy refers to right belief, orthopraxy refers to right practice. It encompasses the idea of both ethical and liturgical practice. How Christians are expected to live in accordance with their faith and how the Church is expected to function are examples of orthopraxy. Denominations and individual churches hold standards related to orthopraxy. Some of these are represented by their core values, but not everything will be addressed in such a short list. Orthopraxy has undergone more changes throughout the last several decades than orthodoxy, so it is important to understand a publisher's view on orthodox practice. If issues of ethical and liturgical conduct matter, then it is imperative to make sure that the resources you select align with those standards. A review of curriculum materials by a particular publisher related to key areas of concern will provide clarity on their views.

It might seem daunting to evaluate the orthodoxy and views on orthopraxy of any particular resource you're considering, but following some guidelines will help you make wise decisions. If the publisher doesn't clearly state its position, then create a checklist of foundational truths and practices and use the list as you evaluate a resource. You may also use existing resources that have been developed for evaluating the curriculum.

Correct belief and practice are central to the evaluation process, but there are other considerations that should be included in the process. For example:

- Are the materials available online for download, or are they only in print?
- Are there resources for students or only for the teacher?
- If there are resources for individual learners, are they visually appealing? Is the layout clear and easy to follow?
- What is the intended target audience for the resource, new Christians or mature believers? (Published resources often

state the intended target audience if applicable.)

- Are the examples and illustrations inclusive, or are they focused on one ethnicity or people group? (This is more significant when artwork is included, but even names can reflect a bias. While often unintentional, if learners receive the impression that the resources are focused on a people group to which they don't belong, they are less likely to see the relevance.)
- What is the reading level or educational expectations for the learner? (Your ethnographic or cultural study of your ministry will help you determine if the resource will be too difficult or underchallenging.)
- How clear are the guidelines for the teacher? How much preparation time is needed? (While you want to look for enough details and depth in the plan, you also need to consider how much time your volunteer leaders will have to prepare during the week.)
- Is there a good representation of learning techniques, or is the approach mostly focused on lectures or other verbal methods?
- What would it cost to purchase these resources for use within your ministry? (Some downloadable resources include pricing based on the size of the group. Others allow multiple downloads. Some resources have both digital and print options.)

Terry Linhart's book *Teaching the Next Generations* includes a basic but helpful checklist in chapter 12 that includes additional evaluative questions. You can also find more extensive evaluation guides online.

Focus Activity

- Refer to the list of possible guidelines for evaluating curriculum resources. Are there other considerations you might add to this list?
- Select a curriculum resource currently used in your church or ministry. Using the evaluating list provided, review the resource to determine whether it meets your ministry's standards. Is it something that should continue to be used, or would you recommend eliminating it and finding an alternative learning resource?

Evaluating Resources You Created

Chapter 7 provided guidelines for creating units of study and individual lesson plans. Evaluation of this created work is also important, even if you're confident that the guidelines were carefully followed when the units of study were created. As you review your plans, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the goal clearly stated?
- Is the indicator appropriate? Is it focused on the same primary learning outcome (PLO) as the goal? Does it reflect an observable behavior that would prove the accomplishment of the goal? Does it state how well and under what conditions the indicator should be achieved?
- Will the hook motivate the learners? Is it appropriate in length and subject matter as a means of stimulating learning and introducing the content?
- Is there an introductory transition between the hook and the book?
- Is the book of sufficient substance and quality to allow for sig-

nificant learning opportunities?

- Does the look focus on life application, creating a bridge from the biblical content to contemporary life?
- Does the took require learners to consider how the session's content connects to their own lives?
- Is one of the activities a test of the indicator, and does it reflect the same level of learning, type of indicator, and content as the indicator?
- Which of the appropriate learning principles have been followed when creating the learning activities?
- What learning preferences are represented by the activities?
- Do the learning activities reflect a variety of techniques or methods?
- Are the learning activities age-appropriate? Will they foster genuine learning? Do they help learners go beyond comprehension and application in their understanding? Do they set the groundwork for organization or characterization if they are focused on affective outcomes?
- Is there a natural flow to the session from the hook through the took?
- Is the session closing an appropriate way to end the lesson?

After the plans have been used in an actual discipleship session, they should be reviewed again to assess how well they accomplished their purpose. Using the same checklist, make note of areas that could benefit from a revision. Make those changes and review the revised plan when it is used in the future. Creating lesson plans and evaluating their effectiveness will not only benefit the learners, but it will also provide the ministry with curriculum resources that can be reused or confidently shared with other ministries.

Reflection Exercise

- Review the teaching plan you created for chapter 7.
- Use the questions provided in the previous section to evaluate your plan. Make any changes necessary.

Evaluating Your Curriculum Plan

A curriculum plan is a blueprint for a discipleship ministry. Each part of the plan serves a unique purpose in the design of a comprehensive racecourse for spiritual transformation. Review each part of your plan to make sure it is constructed appropriately, that it is comprehensive, and that it is current.

Construction

Review each of the following required elements for a curriculum plan. *Are they clearly stated? Are they accurate? Do they represent the overall purpose of your ministry?*

Mission: Does it reflect the biblical purposes for ministry? Is it written succinctly?

Vision: Does your vision describe what you're trying to achieve in your ministry? Will the vision inspire others to see the overall purpose of the ministry and why it is important? Does it add clarity and significance to your mission?

Core Values: Do each of the values represent the most significant biblical truths that shape your ministry? Are they clearly articulated? Is each one supported by a biblical foundation?

Curriculum Context / Target Audience: Does your plan include an ethnographic description of the community you are try-

ing to reach? Are both demographics and psychographics included? Is the information clearly interpreted in ways that suggest ministry implications that should be considered? Have you provided a clear and concise description of the developmental characteristics of the target population for your ministry? Does the description include holistic information about the age group, considering all aspects of development and how these should inform the practice of ministry?

Organizing Principle: Is this written in one or two sentences, and does it describe the strategy you will use to organize the various areas of your scope?

Scope: Is your scope both comprehensive and clearly defined with themes, relevant topics, and associated subtopics? Have you omitted important truths? Have you allowed for the most significant biblical concepts to be addressed from various perspectives on multiple themes or topics?

Goals and Indicators: Are each of your subtopics clarified with both cognitive and affective goals? Are the goals realistic and written in proper form? Are they achievable and significant? Will the stated indicators provide demonstrable proof that the goals have been achieved?

Comprehensive

Take time to review your curriculum plan again. The first evaluation was a check to make sure each element was included and that it was written clearly. For your second evaluation, focus on the scope. Review each of the themes and associated topics and subtopics. As you consider what it means to be a disciple and experience spiritual growth, evaluate whether your plan is designed to lead toward that end. What is the likelihood that the mission of your curricular journey will actually be accomplished if your plan is fully implemented? Look for gaps that may exist in terms of both cognitive and affective outcomes. While spiritual growth is a lifelong endeavor, a well-

constructed plan should facilitate the discipleship journey. Change should be evident in the lives of believers who follow the racecourse you have designed.

Current

Once a curriculum plan has been developed and thoroughly evaluated, it should not require any regular changes. If it is designed for one particular age group or developmental phase, it should be implemented and not require further evaluation until the cycle is complete. As the sequence of learning progresses, it will be important to assess whether the intended growth is taking place in the lives of the learners. If you notice deficiencies, it may be necessary to modify the scope of your plan to strengthen what is taught. As culture continues to change, there may be additional topics or subtopics you wish to include. Perhaps your resources need to be updated to reflect the shifts taking place in your community. Case studies, illustrations, or even methods should be revised to allow for greater relevance in the lives of the learners. Always remember the purpose of your plan, which is to help disciples grow toward greater Christlikeness:

> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.
>
> Ephesians 4:14–15, NIV

> No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are easy prey for predators. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ

in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

Ephesians 4:15–16, MSG

Significant Concepts

orthodoxy

orthopraxy

Putting It All Together: Chapter Assignment

Throughout this book, you have completed chapter assignments designed to help you create a curriculum plan for a specified ministry of your choosing. As a final assignment, combine your previous assignments and complete your work so you have a comprehensive curriculum plan.

- Create a section called "curriculum context" in which you identify the target audience and location

where your plan will be implemented, then include both mission and vision statements.

- List your core values and their significance and provide biblical support.
- Describe your population, including both demographic and psychographic information along with explanations on how the information should inform the practice of ministry.
- Write a description of the developmental characteristics of your target audience.
- Identify a short organizing principle that describes the various areas you will use to organize the many components of your scope.
- Clearly outline your scope by areas, using a minimum of four themes for each area, at least three topics for each theme, and a minimum of two subtopics related to each of your topics.
- Construct at least one cognitive and one affective goal and indicator for each of your subtopics.

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