The Value of Biblical Process

The idea of “process” in church ministry can seem to some to smack of yet another man-centered approach to ministry. It can sound like someone saying, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or like someone stretching an application of Scripture to fit their thinking, such as those churches that will not eat communion together because of Corinth’s poor example. On the other hand, just because what the early church did is recorded in Scripture does not make them the pattern or what they did the command one must follow. In many cases the church’s actions had not been prescribed by God nor was the passage written to convey a process to the original audience.

Yet there are processes laid out in Scripture from God. For instance, there seems to be a process set when He says in Matthew that as we go we are to make disciples. This idea of making disciples in the passage then includes baptizing and teaching them. This would be a mini process: make, baptize, teach. Following this process is obedience; it is required of us. The process is simple, so we then use other truths from Scripture to help us fill out or shape this process, such as prayer meetings to ask for help in this process (Ephesians 6:18-20), a pastor’s leadership in discipleship (Ephesians 4:11-14), membership interviews to guard truth (2 Corinthians 13:5), or actions in church ministries to encourage this discipling (2 Peter 5:5-11). In addition, we add logical ideas from early church examples and cultural influence into the process to help us carry it out. For instance, for a church membership interview we decide what to ask, who should ask it, and if it should be done with a refreshment. At this juncture, is the process still biblical? I think yes, if it is God-dependent and pursues with focus the actual commanded items from God. But it is important not to call those logical actions added ‘commands from God.’ These additions should be able to be done in many ways.

This variety seems to follow with another truth about God’s stated processes in Scripture. He loves to “break” His own processes whenever it might better reveal His desires or accomplish His purpose.

Whatever He breaks never creates contradiction but just reveals Him in a better way. For example, there is only one way to salvation, and we are to be pursuing disciples unto this salvation by actively sharing our faith. But sometimes God uses His Word and the Spirit to convict, wash, and bring someone to faith in Himself with no other person involved. It is the same salvation by grace through faith but a different process that God used to draw the person along.

A biblical process must submit to the Word but with a diversity in how the commands are obeyed. Therefore, BCP, in trying to follow biblical guidelines and commands, must leave room for God to cause these in a variety of ways. For instance, we believe that churches send missionaries and that churches, not agencies, plant churches. But this process can begin in different ways. Sometimes the church comes to us to initiate a plant, and sometimes a missionary comes to us first and introduces us to their sending church. A group of people could approach us for help to become a plant, and we would connect them to a mother church. In this Connect you will see a variety of examples of the BCP process for helping churches begin to plant churches. Each of these churches is working at biblical mandates like discipling or fellowshipping with a sister church. Each obedient action is part of BCP’s process to facilitate churches to be strengthened in their Great Commission obedience so that churches might plant churches together out of the overflow of God’s blessings on their obedience. There is great diversity of obedience in application of the unchanging Word.

One value of a process is that it gives a common language and clear direction for a multitude of churches to easily work together within diversity. As you read on, celebrate what God is doing as we all strive forward together in the biblical process and as we each fill out the shape of that process in many God-honoring ways.
“Just in a Different Way”

At the end of February 2020, BCP missionaries Miguel and Ana Quintana went home to Colombia, South America. They visited their families in Bogotá and also different ministries and churches; however, their visit was cut short due to the coronavirus situation. Thankfully, they were able to get on the last flight on March 17 and return safely home to the United States. Prior to COVID, Miguel and Ana Quintana were busy discipling families and individuals in their congregation of about eighty people at Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Seminole, Florida, meeting at Starkey Road Baptist Church. Upon their return, the Quintanas quickly made changes and have continued faithfully leading their Hispanic ministry in person and virtually. They record and post Miguel’s sermons for each Sunday morning, and virtually continue discipling new believers, meeting with the deacons, teaching the Evangelism Explosion team, and gathering for prayer with the church families. Ministry continues, just in a different format. Miguel and Ana desire to have wisdom to know how to communicate hope and encouragement during these challenging times. Many in Colombia (their home country) and around the world have also connected and have listened to their live streamed services. God’s Word is multiplying – just in a different way. We rejoice to learn of continued strengthening of the church with five trained servant-leaders (deacons), a Constitution, budget, an increase of pastoral salary, a rented facility, and faithful biblical teaching and training.

Congratulations to Ron and Sandy Cornell

Ron and Sandy Cornell have been missionary builders since 2007 after thirty years in the work world. Ron was able to retire early while still “young enough” to keep up with Brent Howard. The Cornells share, “It has been rewarding, and we would do it again! The Lord has blessed us with good health, good retirement, a truck, and 5th wheel. It has been our privilege to serve the churches we have worked on. We have been part of approximately seventeen projects, some longer than others but all rewarding. The places we have seen and the people we have worked with are priceless.” Ron and Sandy have officially retired from full-time building, but they will occasionally give Brent a hand. They now enjoy winters in Florida and keep busy helping with electrical problems. Their three children, their spouses and nine grandchildren will keep them coming back to Fulton, New York. “It has been a privilege and a blessing to work with Brent and Michele Howard and all the volunteers. Our challenge would be to men who retire early to come work with us. You won’t be sorry!” Ron and Sandy have exemplified Romans 6:7, “With goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”
“Better Together”

The Grafting of Gretna Baptist Church & Karen Street Baptist Church, Omaha, Nebraska

When Bryan Clark, senior pastor of Gretna Baptist Church in Gretna, Nebraska, was chairman of the state council, one responsibility was to keep tabs on state churches. The pastor of Karen Street Baptist Church in southern Omaha had recently passed away. The church was hurting and very vulnerable, and the state wanted to encourage them. Pastor Bryan found it frustrating to find someone who fit their vision and who could take them beyond surviving to thriving. The church was given a survey, and upon reviewing the outcome, the chairman of the deacons commented, “We need someone like you.” That comment led Gretna Baptist Church to consider what it would look like to graft one church into another. I recently had the opportunity to speak with Bryan about the journey the Lord has taken these two churches on to unite them into one.

I asked Pastor Bryan what elements were key in the success of the process. He said making sure “the vulnerable church was in the driving seat so whatever steps were taken were their idea and Gretna was walking with them.” He stated that really the process became about how joining strengthens both churches, not about rescuing but rather strengthening the body of Christ. The Karen Street members wrote the Grafting Agreement and named it “Better Together,” based on Eccl. 4:9. Grafting with Gretna was seen by both churches to provide a fellowship of believers committed to building strong relationships within the church and community – creating an atmosphere for people to discover, grow, and model their faith in Christ.

The agreement lists strengths of what would be gained by joining. They wrote, “Together we have….

1. more living stones to build Christ’s Church;
2. opportunity to realize and better utilize spiritual gifts to serve God, the Church, our families and neighbors;
3. ability to more effectively reach and serve our communities, in sharing the Gospel of Christ;
4. opportunity to minister to, love, and support a wounded brother or sister in Christ;
5. opportunity to strengthen each others’ faith;
6. ability to strengthen Christ’s Church toward a South Omaha church plant and beyond;
7. ability to develop better facilities that meets the multi-generational needs;
8. ability to serve our missionaries; and
9. ability to immediately grow our full-time staff.”

When asked what he would counsel a hurting church, Pastor Bryan responded, “Prioritize what is most important. Do not be afraid to let go of idols that we hang onto. Be prepared to sacrifice those idols for the greater good. See what is most important in the Church. The building was just brick and mortar. What is the most valuable asset? The people of God.” He shared how often when a church dies, the people end up scattering because “no one is coming alongside them. As we share the burden of our work with fellow Christians, we find that we can accomplish more for the glory of God. Ecclesiastes 4:9 tells us, “Two people are better than one, because they get more done by working together.”

The goal for this article is to foster conversations where healthy and hurting churches see each other. As Pastor Bryan said, this is not about rescuing but about strengthening the body of Christ. How might your local church, healthy or hurting, help to strengthen the church next door?
Discipleship involves three major things: intentional relationships, truth, and time. This relationship involves a mature believer and a lesser experienced one. Keep in mind that age is not a factor; one can be old and newly saved while another can be young and quite mature in the faith. The relationship must be intentional for both parties; otherwise, the cares of this life have a way of swallowing their energies. Discipling focuses on implementing spiritual disciplines into one’s life. They invest time in prayer, Bible study, encouragement, and accountability. When one obeys God’s beautiful plan to disciple, both individuals involved grow. The mature believer becomes keenly aware of their own walk and example while the novice watches and learns new disciplines that guide them to a faithful and worthy God. This process does not happen casually or quickly. This relationship involves intentionality, truth, and time.

These three things have been a part of God’s plan throughout the Bible. In God’s explanation to Moses about the abrupt exodus from Egypt, He instructed that the feast of unleavened bread was to be a memorial passed down from generation to generation in remembrance of what God had done for Israel (Exodus 12:14, 26). In Deuteronomy 6:1-7 God directed His people to teach and train their children to love God and His Word. Psalm 78:5-8 lays out three distinct things to instruct their children on: confidence in God, the works of God, and obedience to God. The command given to us through the Great Commission is not much different, “Make disciples…teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20). God’s plan for His people has always been for us to be involved in the process of intentionally building others up in faith and practice.

The culture of the Church from the very beginning in Acts 2 was based on the basic principle of caring for each other, meeting physical needs and coaching one another in spiritual growth. They were struck with a sense of awe at what God had done, and this unified them in purpose. They were benevolent toward each other, full of gladness, sincere in heart, and praising God. Oh, that the awe and thankfulness for His amazing grace would propel us to engage in other’s spiritual growth! Keeping our spiritual walk private cheats and thankfulness for His amazing grace would propel us to engage in other’s spiritual growth! Keeping our spiritual walk private cheats.

Discipleship encompasses every spiritual discipline, including evangelism, and changes everything it touches. Engaging in discipleship keeps our mind seeking eternal things (Colossians 3:1-2), guides our actions toward righteousness (3:3-14), brings peace (3:15), allows the Word of God to richly dwell within us (3:16), and results in glorious adoration and worship (3:16-17).

Before Paul died, he penned three books to two men who had believed in Christ under his ministry and had grown under his discipleship to become faithful workers in churches across the known world. 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy were written in that order and are full of examples of how a discipler would encourage and exhort their disciple. In the last book he penned before dying for his faith, Paul encourages Timothy, “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful people who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:1-2). This is the perpetual process of intentional relational discipleship that God has established all through Scripture for His people to obey. Only those who actively engage in this process will ever see the depth of beauty in the Creator’s design. There is nothing more worth our time, and this is the only investment of our time that will last for eternity.
When Jon Jenks came to BCP as president in 2020, there were several churches who had not only completed the men’s Leadership Journey but who were leading other churches through the study themselves. This biblical model of intentional discipleship focuses on men understanding and embracing the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake and study, prayer, stewardship, worship, serving, etc., for the purpose of godliness. With the accountability possible through the small group structure of the study, the Leadership Journey material is helping men become intentional disciplers for the glory of God and the building up of their homes and churches. There are now forty-four churches in this network of discipling churches.

There has been much fruit from these men understanding and embracing their God-given roles of child of God, husband, father, son, friend, church member, neighbor, citizen, to name a few. The spiritual disciplines are God’s way of producing godliness, and nothing is more Christlike than a man who is daily trying to personally live out his faith and who intentionally speaks truth into the lives of others in his sphere of influence.

That influence often begins on those closest to him. One wife commented, “I wish my husband would do the Leadership Journey forever!” I have also experienced this! My husband Steve grew in his walk with the Lord through the Leadership Journey study, and it was beautifully evidenced by his increased desire to be in the Word and to share what the Lord was doing in his heart with me, our neighbors, men at church, and his coworkers. His growth evidenced by his increased desire to be in the Word and to share what the Lord was doing in his heart with me, our neighbors, men at church, and his coworkers. His growth influenced my decision to “join the Grove” in order to sharpen my own pursuit of godliness.

The ladies’ study, Growing in the Grove, written by DeEtta Mann from the church in Wisconsin where Jon pastored, is an intense 26-week study for a small group of ladies from one church. During each session we adore God for who He is, we share how we applied truth during the week from our personal study, we discuss and carry out the “one another” commands of Scripture on each other, and we consider how we can be intentional disciplers of other ladies. The impact on my personal walk with the Lord has been significant and encouraging, and it has, as one might expect, brought Steve and me closer. We are enjoying the blessings of obedience as we reboot habits such as Scripture memorization, goal setting, and journaling, and spur each other on. We are more intentional in our own interactions with each other and as we develop relationships for the sake of discipleship opportunities. Who knew that pursuing godliness could be so much fun!

Ladies, our task is to pray for our men out of our hearts’ desire to see them grow and follow their biblical mandate to lead our families and our churches. The Grove study naturally follows the Leadership Journey when a church’s men are effectively leading their local church’s intentional discipleship efforts. My prayer is that what was said of Lydia in Acts 16:14b, “The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul,” may be realized by believers everywhere. May God open hearts and cause men and women to desire to intentionally disciple in their homes and churches and live out their faith in their God-given roles.

A Tribute to BOB SAUSER

Bob and Judi Sauser served in pastoral ministry their entire married lives. They worked with the youth and music first in two different ministries, and then served as senior pastor in Chariton, IA; Elimsport, PA; Camillus, NY; Butler, PA; and Creston, IA. God worked through the people and circumstances in Camillus to develop the ministry of discipleship that many associate with Bob to this day. He was known to explore new hobbies with the aim of spending time with people so he could interact with them on a spiritual level. There he coached high school basketball and used this opportunity to build into the youth by requiring the players to memorize Scripture as a requirement to play. Bob retired (or attempted to retire) from pastoral ministry, but it wasn’t too long before he had accepted a ministry as Regional Field Director for Baptist Church Planters, visiting missionary pastors and encouraging and supporting them in their work. Bob and Judi traveled the Midwest and West Coast much during the nine years as RFD. In 2019 Bob retired from Baptist Church Planters and accepted a role as pastor to Good Shepherd Baptist Church in Omaha, Nebraska. He ministered there until his death from COVID in November 2020. Bob will be remembered for his big smile, hearty laugh, mischievous twinkle, but mostly for the huge heart he had for others. Herb Taylor, fellow RFD with BCP, shared, “Bob was a co-worker and a dear friend. He was a great mentor to me as well, helping me to think through difficult ministry situations and to determine the best steps to minister to others. He was such a joy to be around and just a lot of fun to spend time with. He was truly a godly friend who is now enjoying the glory of Heaven with the Savior whom he loved.” A friend posted this online, “Bob was a great encourager to me, very insightful, very committed to doing the right thing, and I sensed a kindred spirit in ministry.” Another individual posted, “Pastor Sauser sat with me a couple times in the hospital while my mother was dying. The kind words and wisdom he shared with me those evenings have stuck with me not only during the time of my mom’s passing but to this day. What a wonderful man. I’m positive the angels were singing at their best when he entered Heaven.” Bob’s life was a gift to all who had the privilege of knowing him.
This rhetorical question comes from God in Luke 12:20-21. The truth is that God owns everything and is in control of everything. The rich man had received abundant blessing from God’s land that had produced a bumper crop. Before the man could enjoy the blessing, God’s calendar revealed that his time on this earth was done.

Psalm 50:10-12 says, “Every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills … and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.” God gives and God takes away at His appointed time. If my soul is required by God today, everything still belongs to God. 1 Timothy 6:17 tells us that “God giveth us richly all things” and verse 18 tells us why God gives us stuff - to be “ready to give, willing to share.”

Your will becomes a public document upon your death. It is available for anyone to see. Take the opportunity to share your testimony in it. Here is one sample of a preamble you might consider: “Rejoice with me as I declare my completed faith in Jesus Christ my Savior. I am totally convinced by faith that after this life of joys and sorrow, accomplishments, and failures, I will live eternally in Heaven. This is possible not because I have earned or deserve it, but because Jesus died in my place. I now live with Him.”

When we die, everything still belongs to God. We have an opportunity, before we die, to recognize that fact and take steps to leave a God-honoring legacy. Many believers have been tithers and generous stewards of what has been entrusted to us in this life, but when we prepare our wills or trust documents, we forget that God still owns everything. Demonstrate in the time of death that you are a “faithful steward,” and recognize His ownership, “ready to give, willing to share.”

If you need counsel preparing end-of-life documents, contact the finance office at Baptist Church Planters. We can provide names of financial advisors that will understand “where your heart is”!

Welcome to Larry Beckman

Larry had served with Baptist Mid-Missions for 32 years – first in Africa, then as Administrator for Missionary Finance. He had retired from BMM in 2016 but came out of retirement to serve with BCP. In October of 2020, we welcomed Larry to the office part-time in the finance department. Larry and his wife, Karen, faithfully serve at First Baptist Church of Elyria. Larry is a deacon and served on the recent pastoral search committee. Karen is the financial secretary, and together they minister in the Children’s Sunday School. The Beckmans have eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Larry’s life is a testimony of faithful service. At 19 years of age, Larry was invited to attend church by a young student nurse, Paula, who later became his wife. It was there that he realized his need for a Savior and was gloriously saved. Larry worked as a safety supervisor in nuclear plants which moved him to several locations in the Midwest. He surrendered to serve God in missions after hearing a missionary preach, and the Beckmans moved to Iowa to prepare for ministry by attending Faith Baptist Bible College. Together they served in Africa for ten years. Larry and Paula were blessed with three children – Jenéé who is married to a businessman; Patty who is married to a pastor in Iowa; and Nathan who with his wife serves as BMM missionaries in Thailand. Paula was promoted to Heaven in 2007 following an extended battle with cancer, and the following year Larry married Karen.

Karen Jones was reared in a Christian home. Her father was a Navy chaplain and later pastored in Florida. Her mother was a Christian school teacher. At a young age Karen realized she was a sinner and needed to be saved. After graduating from Bob Jones University, she taught in a Christian school, but recognized God’s leading toward missions. For 21 years she served with New Tribes Mission. In 2005 she moved to Ohio to serve with BMM where she currently works in the Accounting Department.
The ChurchCare Construction team has made great progress on the Ministry Activity Center at First Baptist Church of Elyria, Ohio. The 16,000-square-foot project was closed in before cold weather hit. The exterior is complete, and the builders have been working on interior finishes and expect to complete the project this spring.

In January, a group of five men from Peoples Baptist Church in Newfield, New York, worked for a week and installed the ceiling and wall metal in the gymnasium. This church has sent a team to work on every ChurchCare building project.

In September, the ChurchCare Board approved a new administrative assistant position. Ryanne Howard was hired to this part-time position. She is the daughter of Brent and Michele Howard, missionary builders, and recently graduated with an Associate degree from Faith Baptist Bible College. Ryanne has become a vital part of the ChurchCare team at the Mission office. Ryanne trusted in Jesus as her personal Savior in 2005 when her cousin Katelyn showed Ryanne her need of a Savior. It was Christmas Day, and she was so excited to tell the news to her mom and family. Ryanne attends First Baptist of LaGrange and loves to use her God-given talents to sing on the praise team.

The following is an excerpt from a letter received by David Whipple in December 2020 from Ray and Myrtle Morris who served as missionaries in Chile and whose finances we help manage. Ray does some writing, and we felt the letter has a very appropriate challenge for us as believers living in this day and age. (We are printing only one of two issues that Ray describes.)

Ray wrote, “As we look at the world around us, I wish to make comments on two issues that seem to be repeatedly occurring in some sectors amongst many in this culture.

The first is the matter of conspiracy theories. The freedom that we enjoy through the Internet seems to open-up all sorts of ideas. It leads me to react against some theories and I ask as an evaluative procedure: Do the theories lead me into a deeper life of commitment to the Lord Almighty? Does my concern about a conspiracy lead me into a closer walk with the Lord or has that concern about the theories become a distraction and an impediment to a closer walk with the Lord? A few self-measurement possibilities for our consideration: Does my concern with a conspiracy provoke my sentiments to a deep concern for respect and balance and with a consideration for others and for the Lord Himself, or does it produce feelings of impotence, frustration, resentment, and anger? What obsesses me in my waking moments? Does this preoccupation with a conspiracy draw me into contemplating more of Christ and His character and into a closer walk in obedience with Him? I consider that 1 Peter 2:11-17 may help us to keep our balance.”
“Prepare for Change”

We live in a world where the only constant is change. Change means different, and different can be hard. We are updating our donor management software, and our hope is that this change provides us with the ability to serve you better. The update will mean things may look a little different when you receive your receipt or when you give online. You can have great confidence in us that we are doing everything we can to make this change as smooth as possible. Once everything is complete, you will have new capabilities to log in to a personal dashboard on our website where you can manage your giving, print past receipts, update your profile and information, and more. This change is accompanied by an upcoming renovation of our entire website to further provide more tools for you and your missionaries. We know that there will be some adjustments. Please bear with us as we work through the new process.

If you have any questions or need additional help at any time, we are here to serve, and we look forward to speaking with you.

MEMORIAL GIFTS
Since our last publication, gifts were given in loving memory of:

Frank and Inez Swartz
Paul and Allegra Whipple

If you would like to give a gift in memory of someone, we will list the name in the Connect.

We’d love to hear your feedback and thoughts on our Connect.
Contact us at bcp@bcpusa.org.

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