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A Companion Guide for the Discipleship to Missional Community (D2MC) Program

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A COMPANION GUIDE FOR THE DISCIPLESHIP TO MISSIONAL COMMUNITY (D2MC) PROGRAM

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ABBREVIATIONS

3DM	"3D Movements"
D2MC	"Discipleship to Missional Community"
LCMS	"Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod"
MAP	"Major Applied Project"
NYG	"National Youth Gathering"
PLI	"Pastoral Leadership Institute"

ABSTRACT

Maschke, Jedidiah T. "A Companion Guide for the Discipleship to Missional Community (D2MC) Program" Doctor of Ministry Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary, 2023. 225 pp.

This Doctor of Ministry (DMin.) Major Applied Project (MAP) offers a companion guide for the discipleship training program called D2MC (Discipleship to Missional Community) taught by PLI, a leadership development organization that works primarily with the LCMS. The D2MC program is based on the training pioneered by Mike Breen through 3DM. The companion guide shows how the methods and practices taught by PLI are soundly based in Scripture and confessional Lutheran theology and offers some personal insights and devotional thoughts. The companion guide was distributed and field tested with volunteer participants through and with the approval of PLI. Participants in the D2MC program offered feedback based on five interview questions that included affirmation of its value, criticism, and suggestions for further expansion of the themes.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCTION

According to Jesus' Great Commission, Christians are called to make disciples. How do we do this? What kind of disciples? Is classroom instruction enough? Or is there something more than what has traditionally been offered as "discipleship" and catechesis in Western Christian churches? Western Christians have traditionally focused on classroom, information-based instruction as part of a churched culture, but the effectiveness of this pedagogical method seems to be diminishing. How should Christians respond? What does that look like in my context?

I am called as pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church and School in Carson City, a suburban church in Northern Nevada where the churched culture has been losing ground for decades. My first several years of ministry were marked by a haphazard approach to discipleship. I started different programs and classes and preached different sermon series attempting to find something I might be able to use in my context. At that time, I served as pastor of First Lutheran Church in Concord, California, in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the unchurched population hovers in the low 90% range. I believed that discipleship was the key, but the catechetical methods would be different than what I had experienced in confirmation class, which, for me, was taught as the religion class during my 8th grade year at St. Paul Lutheran School in Grafton, Wisconsin. For one thing, First Lutheran did not have an elementary school. So how should discipleship look in a different context, twenty years later, in a different state, with different people?

The other concern that I had was how I would be able to successfully pursue ministry without losing my family. It is easy to compartmentalize family and ministry, to try to keep them neatly separated, to try to keep kids from being hurt by people in the church, whether well-meaning or otherwise, but that didn't seem to work either. I wanted my family to love both Jesus

AND His bride. So I began to look around, paying attention to the children of pastors who still loved the church. What were their childhoods like? And, on the opposite end of the spectrum, the kids who hated the church, who grew up despising the bride of Christ, to whom their father paid more attention than their mother…what were the common denominators there?

My first formal introduction to some of the concepts of 3DM[1] came through my involvement in Pastoral Leadership Institute (hereafter PLI) in 2010, but my training in 3DM's methods began when I started being discipled by a local Baptist pastor by the name of Art Barrett in 2012. Ironically, Art was baptized and raised in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (hereafter LCMS). I began to see that there was a better option for life, one that came to be known as "Family on Mission." The ideas I had been learning began to spread to others through the work of Mike Breen (the founder of 3DM), the Bay Area Hub of 3DM, and PLI. From there, I went on to lead my church, First Lutheran Church of Concord, California, through the two-year arc of involvement in 2013–2014, and soon afterwards began assisting with the leadership of 3DM learning communities, since the regional hub was led by several local pastors from the Concord area.

In 2016, I accepted a call to be pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church and School in Carson City, Nevada. In the two years following, I took a break from working on my doctorate, but was able to reengage around 2018 with my Major Applied Project (hereafter MAP).

As someone who has received training both from PLI and from 3DM through the Bay Area hub, I am blessed to have nearly a decade of experience with many of the discipleship tools ("Lifeshapes" as they have been called) that are currently being used by PLI's Discipleship to

[1] 3DM initially stood for 3 Dimension Ministries after the three dimensions—up, in, and out—of Jesus' relationships. The usage shifted to 3 Dimension Movements around 2015 and the home website also changed from www.weare3dm.com to www.3dmovements.com.

Missional Community (hereafter D2MC) track. In the mid 2010s, PLI acquired the rights to use and further develop and refine 3DM's intellectual property, which they have done in the D2MC program. A number of different Lutheran pastors and leaders have been working with this program of discipleship for the past several years and are continuing to promote and refine their offerings for both clergy and lay members of the LCMS.[2]

Part of what makes my perspective unique is that I have experience with the discipleship tools and processes as they are taught in both a LCMS context like PLI and in a broader context across different denominations, like the Bay Area hub. My unique perspective also extends to the fact that I come from a multi-generational Lutheran background as a third-generation pastor in the LCMS.

Research Problem

While the use of "Lifeshapes" (a set of terms and pedagogical tools initially developed by Mike Breen and since adopted by PLI for teaching discipleship) has grown in popularity among both LCMS and non-LCMS congregations, there has been little academic research done in a Lutheran context to understand these tools and discipleship methods that are being taught by PLI. I have also found that there may be some who are put off by incongruities in terminology between what is being taught by PLI and the verbiage traditionally used by the Lutheran Confessions and other dogmatic works written from a confessional Lutheran perspective. My hope is that by studying, applying, and sharing some of my own findings and experiences in the form of a companion guide, I may be able to facilitate a deeper understanding about the discipleship tools, methods and terminology among church members and clergy. These are the

[2] Because of their expansion in scope and change in focus to training both laity and clergy, PLI has all but ceased using the name "Pastoral Leadership Institute" and now is officially known as "PLI Leadership."

problems that my Major Applied Project (hereafter MAP) seeks to address.

Research Question

My goal was to produce and field-test a companion guide for Lutheran pastors and laity who are receiving training from PLI. My research question may be stated as follows: "Is my companion guide a helpful and effective resource for those who are engaged in PLI's D2MC program?"

Research Purpose

The purpose of this project is to write and evaluate a companion guide that will help people understand the theological presuppositions and assertions of the teachings and practices espoused by PLI in their D2MC track. As it stands, there are hundreds of pastors and lay members of LCMS churches who have been and continue to be trained using resources originally developed by Mike Breen and 3DM and refined by PLI. Individual pastors and the leadership of PLI have worked to make sure that these concepts of discipleship and mission and the principles behind them are theologically sound according to our Lutheran Confessions.

While there is agreement in many of the Biblical aspects of the theology and practices espoused by 3DM and the LCMS, PLI has taken their own distinctive tack on the intellectual property (namely, the discipleship tools) they received from 3DM. It is important to state that coming from a Lutheran perspective, there are some valid theological concerns about 3DM and some of Mike Breen's writings. I address a number of these in the third chapter of this project. However, PLI has been careful to maintain fidelity to the Lutheran Confessions by being selective in what they teach and promote from 3DM. In my project I have focused on the tools currently used in D2MC, which differ from some of the official publications and resources put

out by 3DM publishing.

PLI has adopted and adapted several concepts and tools from Mike Breen. Among these are the *Kairos* Circle as a tool for understanding and applying the Scriptures to one's life and the language of "Covenant and Kingdom" from Mike Breen to refer to our identity and calling as Christians. I think it is important to dive deeper into what is taught by D2MC with those words. Lutherans can find a strong analog to these concepts in our understanding of repentance and good works in the case of the *Kairos* Circle and to Luther's idea of "Two Kinds of Righteousness" in regard to Covenant and Kingdom. Care should be taken to highlight especially the meaning of repentance and the third use of the law which affect how we can understand and faithfully talk about sanctification.

Also, considering many PLI trained pastors revising mission and vision statements in their churches to reflect the "up-in-out" triangle describing Christian's growing in three dimensions, it is wise to take a step back to make sure that Lutherans can have a clear, doctrinally faithful understanding of what this means in light of our multiplicity of vocations.

Conclusion

The discipleship methods I learned about over the past decade through 3DM and PLI answered many of my questions about how to make disciples. They gave me a framework for the task of discipleship and catechesis in the church but do so in a way that is faithful to Scripture in its original context and translated into my current church context. In the next section I will discuss the overlap of Lutheran doctrine and traditional, confessional Lutheran terminology with D2MC teachings and practices.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROJECT IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In my initial exposure to PLI in 2010 and as I became involved in 3DM beginning in 2012, I noticed that there are a lot of places where Lutheran theology is confessed in these discipleship programs, though it is often described with different words or from different angles. PLI's D2MC program has taken this a step further by focusing on the discipleship methods espoused by 3DM and teaching them in a Lutheran setting by Lutherans. I believe it is helpful to address these topics according to the following categories.

In this section I will discuss the overlap of Lutheran doctrine and D2MC teachings and practices. Much of this comes from my research and observations, which were assembled and explained in my companion guide. In this chapter, I will conduct a thorough theological analysis of doctrinal concepts and practices that are prominent in the D2MC program: discipleship, imitation, covenant and kingdom. I will also reflect theologically on learning tools employed by D2MC. These tools include the Learning Circle, the Integrated Life Triangle, and the Semicircle (Rest and Work).

Discipleship

I did not define discipleship in the companion guide, and neither does PLI in their teaching notes.[1] Even the Making Disciples for Life documents on the LCMS website do not have a definition for disciple or discipleship readily accessible, and neither did the 2019 convention

[1] Teaching Input #1 at the first immersion begins talking about "team" and "covenant family on a kingdom mission." PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, *Becoming a Discipling Leader,* "Cultural Earthquake–Immersion 1—Teaching Input #1" n.d., 1. The teaching notes describe a lifestyle, growing in relationships up, in, and out. Who are the people being disciples? "People of peace." PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, *Becoming a Discipling Leader,* "Person of Peace–Immersion 1—Teaching Input #2" 2018, 2.

resolution (4-03A) that declared "Making Disciples for Life" to be the theme of this current triennium.[2] Despite the lack of a clear definition on the front end from either PLI or the LCMS, our Lutheran faith gives us a starting point, a direction and a means for discipleship that distinguishes us from other belief systems.

Ernie Lassman points out that discipleship

> is not simply head knowledge, although that is included, but this teaching involves the whole person; intellect, heart, and will. Such teaching includes the good news of Jesus Christ as savior from sin, death, and damnation. But, of course, such teaching involves learning to live 'a life worthy of the gospel' (Philippians 1:27). To be a disciple of Jesus Christ includes both what to believe and how to live.[3]

Other researchers have defined discipleship in their work, namely Kevin Tiaden's MAP and Karen Kogler's master's thesis.

Tiaden focuses on what he calls "missional discipleship" in his MAP, but he does devote a section to defining "discipleship."[4] He highlights the difficulty in defining discipleship by citing Caesar Kalinowski's 2013 article "40 Leaders on Discipleship" in a blog post for *Exponential* and quoting several extremely different definitions of discipleship found in the article. Then he quotes Gerhard Kittel's definition in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and does his own study on the use of the word "disciple" in the book of Acts. Tiaden notes that throughout Acts, the plural form "disciples" and "church" are used synonymously, often in close proximity to each other. He summarizes his conclusions:

> [T]o be a disciple in the book of Acts… means to be in community with the discipler and fellow disciples. It means to be "devoted to the apostles [sic] teaching and the

[2] "Resolution 4-03A: To Commend to Synod Priorities for Mission and Ministry Emphasis for the 2019–2022 Triennium," in *The 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2019, Today's Business, Issue 2B*, https://lcms.app.box.com/v/2019-Todays-Business-2b, 259.

[3] Ernie Lassman, "Making Disciples," in *Formation: Essays for Future Pastors* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2008), 51–52.

[4] Kevin Tiaden, "An Examination of the Teaching of Missional Concepts of Christian Discipleship and their Potential for Creating an Attitudinal Change" (DMin. MAP, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2017), 21–31.

> fellowship," (Acts 2:42) within this community of the believers/baptized. As such I prefer the simple definition for usage in this project: A disciple is someone who believes through the Means of Grace, seeks, walks with and obeys Jesus within the context of a relationship. A discipler would be a teacher who is leading others by the Means of Grace to believe, seek, walk with and obey Jesus within the context of a relationship.[5]

Through this project, I was introduced to Karen Kogler, who shared her 2009 master's thesis "Disciples in the First Century." In it, she begins by giving a background of the religious and cultural context of Palestine in the first century, including the influence of Hellenism on the region. She then describes several different sub-groups within the Jewish faith that are mentioned in the Gospels, including the priests and scribes, as well as the Pharisees and Sadducees. She also explores other groups that played varying parts during Jesus' life, both named and unnamed, including the Essenes, the Herodians, and the Zealots. As with Christianity in our day, Jesus' day also saw many varied groups, sects, and parties, all of which played parts in the religious, political, and social world of the New Testament.

Kogler traces the use of the word "disciple" in Scripture, including the Hebrew counterpart *talmiyd*, which is used only once in the Old Testament. The bulk of her discussion has to do with the use of *mathetes* in the New Testament. Closely related are the texts using the word "follow," which apply both to Jesus' calling of the disciples as well as three other "Would-be Disciples" who are not yet ready to pay the high cost of being Jesus' disciple.[6] The Greek concept of discipleship, originating from groups of learners like the one who followed Socrates, were based on "a personal relationship with the master and a commitment to be with him and learn from him. It was not primarily a commitment to knowledge or beliefs. It included lifelong

[5] Tiaden, "Examination," 31.

[6] Karen Kogler, "Disciples in the First Century" (master's thesis, Concordia University Irvine, 2009), 44.

commitment to his cause."[7]

She also gives her explanation to why the word "disciple" is only used once early in Acts and seems to die out in the early church. She explains that in the swiftly changing, increasingly Hellenistic culture of Palestine of Jesus' day and the decades following His time on earth,

> use of the term *disciple* might well lead people away from a commitment to Jesus himself, and toward a commitment to a way of thinking. … Jewish opposition in Palestine, as well as the devastation experienced by both Jews and Christians in Palestine in A.D. 70, contributed to the center of Christianity moving from Palestine to lands more fully Greek, and, therefore, also to the almost lack of the use of *disciple* as a term for believers in the post-NT church, and for many centuries thereafter.[8]

Kogler's own study on this topic culminated in this definition: "A person was a disciple when they were dedicated to a certain individual and his work. So it was a very personal commitment to the individual and then a commitment to carry on the work that that person was doing."[9] This is actually very close to the Lutheran Cyclopedia definition: "Disciple. 1. One who receives instruction from another, accepts doctrines of another, and implements and spreads them. In Scripture the word is used for a follower of a prophet (Is 8:16), of Jesus (Mt 5:1; 8:21), of John the Bap. (Mt 9:14), of the Pharisees (Mt 22:16)."[10]

Lutherans are distinctive in their approach to discipleship for a number of reasons. First of all, they do not rely on emotional manipulation or techniques of behavior modification to make disciples. Instead, trust is placed in the power of God's Word. Mark Mattes explains, "The Lutheran tradition continues to approach discipleship in the tradition of Isaiah and Jeremiah's confidence in the power of the Word of God alone to make disciples."[11] Not surprisingly, it is

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[7] Kogler, "Disciples in the First Century," 50.

[8] Kogler, "Disciples in the First Century," 74.

[9] Karen Kogler, personal conversation with the author, July 1, 2020.

[10] Erwin Lueker, ed., *Christian Cyclopedia* (St. Louis: Concordia), http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=D&t2=i., 2000.

[11] Mark Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," in *Law and Gospel in Action: Foundations, Ethics,*

shown in *Confessing the Gospel* that this accords with what we find in the Augsburg Confession:

> The Holy Spirit approaches Christians to carry out this vital ministry, not "through our own preparation, thoughts, and works," but through "the external word of the gospel" (AC V, 4, G). The presence and power of the Spirit, who works faith and changes hearts and lives, is mediated through the presentation of Christ. It is specifically as Christians are made aware of his saving and serving love through the message of the gospel that the Spirit contacts them and affects them. The sacraments are forms of that gospel, "signs and testimonies of God's will toward us in order thereby to awaken and strengthen our faith" (AC XIII, 1–2, G).[12]

Mattes goes on to explain what this looks like: "[The church] is a community established through the Word, a recipient of grace given in the proclaimed gospel and administered in the sacraments. Its life is grounded in God's truth and generosity; its mission consists of sharing this truth and generosity with others."[13] He proposes a solution in the form of a few questions: "Can we trust the Word? Will we tend to it and preach it—*let it have its way* with us? We have lost confidence in both tending to the Word and preaching it. By tending to the Word, we must seek to cultivate a renewed catechesis."[14] St. Paul reminds us that "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Our confessions explain this further:

> Because we are speaking about the kind of faith that is not an idle thought, but which frees us from death, produces new life in our hearts, and is a work of the Holy Spirit, it does not coexist with mortal sin. Instead, as long as it is present, it brings forth good fruit—as we will discuss later. What can possibly be said more simply and clearly about the conversion of the ungodly or about the manner of regeneration? ...God cannot be dealt with and cannot be grasped in any other way than through the Word. Accordingly, justification happens through the Word, just as Paul notes [Romans 1:16]: the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."[15]

Church (Irvine, CA: 1517, 2018), 162.

[12] Samuel Nafzger, ed., *Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 1044.

[13] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 163.

[14] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 178, emphasis original.

[15] Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV (II) 64–65, 67 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 131.

God's Spirit-infused, gospel-powered Word is the means by which disciples are made. However, as is pointed out in *Confessing the Gospel*, "People may not consciously feel the presence of the transforming power of God's spirit within, and they may not even realize that it is there. So they need to be told about it in teaching and preaching and be encouraged to take it into account. They also need to be told of their responsibilities toward God and others as members of God's world. Their neighbor depends on them to live a life of good works."[16]

The other facet of discipleship that often gets overlooked (and for which PLI provides a model) is the context in which disciples are made. Disciples are made in the context of a loving, spiritual community in which one hears the Word and is discipled, creating a spiritual family that supersedes the biological family.

Jesus and Paul both model this context in the New Testament. Jesus deprioritizes his biological family early in His ministry (Matt. 12:46–50, also see Mark 3:31–35 and Luke 8:19–21), when He asks, "'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'" This belief is also confessed in the Apostles' Creed, which directs us to "the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints." It is understood here that "this defines the church as the community of the sanctified and the sanctifying. It is the people in whom and through whom the Holy Spirit is doing his sanctifying work."[17]

Robert Kolb, in his book *Make Disciples, Baptizing*, writes about the effects of baptism on creating a new community. He shares, in a bit of an exposition on Galatians, that baptism

[16] Nafzger, *Confessing the Gospel*, 1107.

[17] Nafzger, *Confessing the Gospel*, 1042.

> transforms us into brothers and sisters… believers do not count the differences of this world as important in any way as they live together with one another. Jews may indeed remain Jews and Greeks Greeks; men do not lose their maleness or women their femaleness; and slaves and free people coexisted in the early Christian community in their earthly status. The point is that they all coexisted together in a single body of believers. Since God saw them all as his children, they viewed each other as brothers and sisters."[18]

While Christian families do keep up many cultural distinctions among members, their status as new community of disciples, a family on mission, is undeniably the bond of being joined together as siblings with God as our Heavenly Father. Christians are meant to live in a community, in the church. John Pless speaks out against that idea that "faith is brought to maturity by moving people beyond the community, enabling then to stand as autonomous selves over against any particular narrative."[19] He continues, "the goal of our catechesis [discipleship] is to shape the baptized to live in Christ as members of the Royal Priesthood."[20] His goal for disciples is that they should be "priests living in the company of fellow priests under a common High Priest."[21] This is how Jesus led His disciples, and this is also how Paul functioned in his ministry and made disciples of those who followed him.

As Paul begins his missionary journeys, the households he is welcomed into become home bases for the work he does in each city. The first convert outside of eastern Asia is Lydia, who was joined in baptism by her household, "which seems to indicate the presence of children and even infants but may indicate her slaves and dependents."[22] Her house then becomes Paul's headquarters for ministry during his time in Philippi (Acts 18:1–3). He travels to Corinth, where

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[18] Robert Kolb, *Make Disciples, Baptizing: God's Gift of New Life and Christian Witness* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 1997), 102–103.

[19] John T. Pless, *Luther's Small Catechism: A Manual for Discipleship* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2019), 172.

[20] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 172.

[21] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 172.

[22] Robert H. Smith, *Concordia Commentary: Acts* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 246.

he joins Priscilla's and Aquila's household. Together, they join Paul as a traveling family on mission as they make their way on his journeys to Ephesus and Rome with him. It makes sense that we should function in the same way.

With this in mind, I would summarize my findings in this way: Discipleship happens when the lives of baptized believers are formed by baptism, hearing God's Word, and growing in the ways they reflect Christ's love among their family, friends, neighbors and community.

Imitation

St. Paul talks about imitation throughout his letters in the New Testament. When he writes in 1 Cor. 4:16 "I urge you, then, be imitators of me," it comes across as a daring statement on his part. However, a few chapters later, in 1 Cor. 11:1, he clarifies this by saying, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." There is the essential qualification. Paul calls people to imitate him, but only insofar as he is an imitator of Christ. People sin. Sin should not be imitated. But Christians can and should imitate what they see of Christ in others, and they can and should call other people to imitate whatever of Christ is visible in them.

This concept has strong Biblical backing. In a number of Paul's letters, he tells people to imitate him. In Phil. 3:17, Paul writes, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul commends the Christians there, saying, "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:6). This is essentially the same thing Paul also tells Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:13: "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." And we also see this in Heb. 13:7, which says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

This is also an important concept for Luther. He points out that Abraham's faith is passed down even to Gentiles, "not because they will imitate him, but because they have received the promise … It is not the imitation that makes sons; it is sonship that makes imitators."[23]

Luther later writes:

> We do not deny that the example of Christ should be imitated by the godly and that good works must be done, but the pious do not become righteous in the sight of God on this account. Paul is… discussing how we are to be justified. Here nothing but Christ dying for sins and rising again for our righteousness should be set forth. He must be grasped by faith as a gift, not as an example…
>
> It was certainly an outstanding ground for boasting that Abraham accepted circumcision when God commanded it, that he was provided with brilliant virtues, and that in everything he was obedient to God. Thus it is a laudable and happy thing to imitate the example of Christ in His deeds, to love one's neighbors, to do good to those who deserve evil, to pray for one's enemies, and to bear with patience the ingratitude of those who requite good with evil. But none of this contributes to righteousness in the sight of God.[24]

Luther goes back to pointing out that Christians imitate the example of Christ in Abraham, and not just Abraham's good deeds. Many Christians have been deluded into thinking they have nothing to offer of their faith, or they are not good enough to imitate, or that people can only learn directly from Jesus. In baptism, Jesus forgives sins and gives the gift of His Holy Spirit, that Christians can live a new, sanctified life. In the power of His Spirit, they receive His Word and follow Him, manifesting the works of Christ in their own lives.

Covenant and Kingdom

While making disciples is the goal of D2MC, and imitating Christ is the basis of the

[23] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5–6; 1519, Chapters 1–6*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann, vol. 27, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 263. As Mark Mattes puts it, "It is because we are adopted children of God that we can imitate Christ, not vice-versa." In "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 166.

[24] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1–4*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann, vol. 26, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 246–47.

programs and its tools, everything must be built on the foundation of relatable, understandable, personally applicable theology lest it be quickly forgotten, left behind in favor of the next popular trend. Much of the theological jargon that is used to communicate essential Lutheran doctrine is complicated and hard to remember. Sometimes, the words used to describe these truths goes beyond the language used in Scripture. It is for this reason that PLI has adopted the language of "Covenant and Kingdom." These two Biblical words have proven helpful in communicating the theological truth related to justification and sanctification in a memorable way that helps people to see how their lives relate to the God who justifies and calls them through His Covenant and sends them out as sanctified representatives of His Kingdom.

The Lutheran confessions teach that justification must be correctly understood before moving on to sanctification. Justification must be continually reinforced so Christians do not fall back into their old patterns of living. Justification without sanctification, in an effort to avoid legalism, leads to "antinomianism," a lawless, immoral form of Christianity. If sanctification is emphasized without being clear on justification, the danger is that Christians may try to justify themselves by the law. This ultimately leads either to an unattainable set of standards or a "new and improved" law, which aligns with the Christian's growing sense of self-righteousness and fashions an idol resembling oneself. Walking the tension between the two is difficult, and at different times in history and culture, one was often emphasized to the exclusion of the other.

Charles Arand and Joel Biermann write, "Lutheranism in the twenty-first century… fell into its own form of one kind of righteousness whereby our passive righteousness before God became all we needed. And so active righteousness in conformity with the Law was left unstressed or was transformed into Gospel ways of talking."[25]

[25] Charles A. Arand and Joel Biermann, "Why the Two Kinds of Righteousness?" *Concordia Journal* 33, no.

Jordan Cooper sees the solution as follows:

> The solution to this dilemma is to recapture the historical Lutheran distinction between the two kinds of righteousness: active, and passive. The passive righteousness of faith in justification is determinative for the divine-human relationship, and this fact distinguishes Luther from his medieval forebears. This does not, however negate the importance of the Christian's active life of obedience under God's law. This reality, often terms [sic] 'sanctification,' is an essential teaching of the Christian faith which is an important factor of historic Lutheran theology.[26]

So correctly and precisely teaching the doctrine of sanctification is essential for discipleship.

Unfortunately, among broad swaths of Christianity in the world today, sanctification is taught as synonymous with virtuous living or moral purity. But that does not concur with Luther's understanding of the word. Luther scholar Ian Sniggins explains: "Sanctification for Luther normally does not mean the process of moral purification or improvement in virtue, which is its chief connotation in post-Reformation theology. Rather, in the biblically strict sense, that is holy which is set apart for the worship and service of God."[27] This is where Hal Senkbeil's comments can help us. He puts it this way:

> Justification (God's action to save us) and sanctification (our life of service to him) are to be clearly separated temporally and theologically, but not essentially. Like the proverbial horse and cart, they can neither be unhitched nor rehitched. Putting sanctification before justification is an affront to God's grace and a stumbling block to faith. Holding to justification without sanctification leads nowhere, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).[28]

As he points out, there is a temporal distinction between justification and sanctification, in that our justification happened when Christ died on the cross for us while our sanctification happens in our lifetimes. Theologically, they are also separated:

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2 (April 2007): 126.

[26] Jordan Cooper, *Hands of Faith: A Historical and Theological Study of the Two Kinds of Righteousness in Lutheran Thought* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 2.

[27] Ian Sniggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 153–54.

[28] Harold L. Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action—Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1989), 120–21.

> While faith in justification is passive, it is active in sanctification. Moreover, the cause-and-effect relationship between justification must be noted. Sanctification is always the necessary result of justification and never the cause of it. God never forgives a person because of, or in view of, that person's sanctification. The Holy Spirit, working through the means of grace, bestows passively the promised forgiveness (justification), and he also works faith in the heart of penitent sinners which causes or produces their active engagement in the keeping of God's law (sanctification).[29]

Justification inevitably leads to sanctification, and the doctrine of the Two Kinds of Righteousness helps explain how. This distinction is so important that Luther refers to this as "our theology."

> This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their limits. Christian righteousness applies to the new man, and the righteousness of the Law applies to the old man, who is born of flesh and blood. …He must not enjoy the freedom of the spirit or of grace unless he has first put on the new man by faith in Christ, but this does not happen fully in this life. Then he may enjoy the kingdom and the ineffable gift of grace. I am saying this in order that no one may suppose that we reject or prohibit good works…[30]

PLI teaches and embraces this theology of two kinds of righteousness and uses it to properly distinguish Law and Gospel in Scripture as we apply God's Word to our lives. To do so, they have adopted the language of "Covenant" and "Kingdom" to communicate this message and help people to understand it in a simple and memorable way that remains faithful to the text of Scripture.

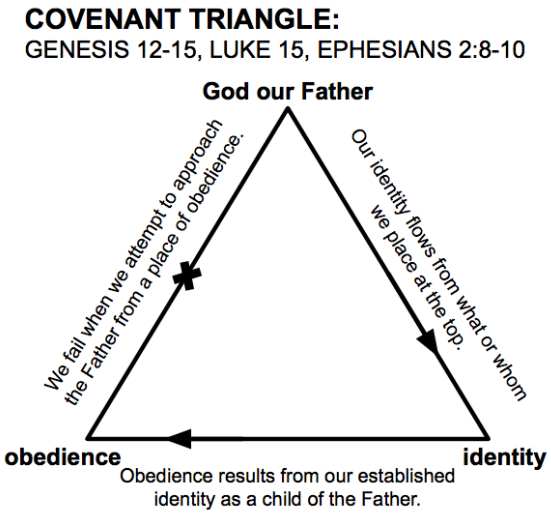
At the heart of PLI's philosophy of ministry is the question of identity, asking questions like, "Who are we? Who am I? How do I know?" The answers to these are found in Luther's paradigm of two kinds of righteousness, which are labeled by PLI as "Covenant" and "Kingdom" and are taught early in the D2MC experience. They are introduced with the stories of

[29] Nafzger, *Confessing the Gospel*, 1021–22.

[30] *LW* 26:7.

Abraham to illustrate Covenant and Joseph to illustrate Kingdom, and then bringing both together in Jesus.[31] These dual emphases serve as a grounding point for Scripture.

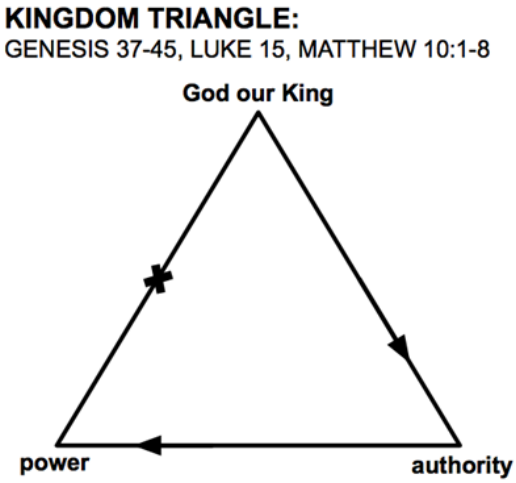
Figure 1. Covenant Triangle.



"Covenant" refers to the way Christians know God as a loving Father, who has given His identity to His children in baptism. From that identity we are blessed to obey our Father and follow His will, because He only wants what is best for us. We cannot obey our way into our identity. This is about "relationship".

[31] PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, *Becoming a Discipling Leader,* "Covenant and Kingdom–Immersion 1—Day 3, Teaching Input #6," (n.d.), 1.

Figure 2. Kingdom Triangle.



We are also a part of God's "Kingdom." Our heavenly Father is also the King of the universe, and He has dominion over all things. As we grow in our Father's identity, He gives us His authority to act in His name, whether that would be forgiving sins or serving others, and we have all of God's power behind us through His Spirit as we serve Him in His stead and in His name. This is about "representation."

These themes of Covenant and Kingdom help to bring into focus the Two Kinds of Righteousness first put forth by Luther in his introduction to his commentary on the Galatians. While both the covenant and kingdom triangles incorporate both passive and active righteousness, they act as lenses which, when adjusted, allow us to bring into focus each kind of righteousness.

The words "covenant" and "kingdom" expand on the two kinds of righteousness, our righteousness "before God" (in Latin: *coram deo*), and our righteousness "before the world" (*coram mundo*). Covenant focuses us on being in a right relationship with God. It is God the Father who gives us our identity in Baptism (passive righteousness), so then we can move forward into our obedience (active righteousness). Kingdom focuses us on one's righteousness

before the world and being in a right relationship with one's neighbor. Our Father is also the King, who gives the authority to act on His behalf, like Joseph, with His power. As part of God's Kingdom, the dominion our heavenly Father has as King of the universe is offered to Christians as they grow in the Father's identity. He gives them His authority to act in His name, whether forgiving sins or serving others, with all of God's power behind them through His Spirit as they serve Him in His stead and in His name. This is about "representation," and corresponds to one's righteousness before the world.

We find in Scripture that our place in this world is inseparable from our place in relation to God. God has established a covenant, a promise or an agreement with us that helps us to see and understand who we are because of our Baptism into God's name. The covenant God makes with us connects us with Christ's identity, and that forms the basis for who we are as Christians.

Hal Senkbeil says that Baptism

> means that there is now a whole new dimension to the Christian life. Now as we live in the real world, Christ actually lives within us (Galatians 2:20). The new life we live is really Christ's life, after all, we have been joined with him by baptism into his resurrection (Romans 6:5). Now, since we have been raised with Christ and he is actually living within us, we set our sights on heavenly matters, where Christ reigns in ascended glory. … Baptism is a continual reminder that God does not leave us to fend for ourselves in the Christian life. We say with the apostle Paul: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2:20). We are not left to our own devices in doing battle against our sinful nature, Satan, and the world around us."[32]

Luther exhorts us to hold fast to the covenant we have in Baptism in a sermon he preached in 1534.

> Therefore, learn that Baptism is nothing temporary, as the world sees it with its carnal eyes, imagining that Baptism only avails once. But know that by Baptism you enter into an eternal covenant, and even if you sin, you have Baptism behind you. Go back to it. Christ does not fall from His throne even though you sin. Be afraid, then, because you have fallen from Christ, but enter into the covenant again, and do not say, "I will take up a new order in which I will do many good works so that God will

[32] Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action*, 156–57.

> forgive my sins." No! You must return to the covenant of your Baptism and say, "I fell out of it, but I will take hold again of the ship that does not break apart."[33]

This baptismal covenant is where we find our identity in Christ, an identity we can return to no matter how often we stray from it. Baptism, then, also becomes the event through which we find our purpose. As Mark Mattes summarizes, "This Word proclaimed in preaching or the sacrament grants us a new identity and a shared life not only with Christ, but with those in need."[34]

This key to discipleship can be found widespread throughout Luther's writings. Mark Mattes picks up on this when he writes, "[Luther's] positive teaching on discipleship can best be seen in his reinterpretation of Augustine's view that Christ is both *sacramentum* and *exemplum*."[35] He is hearkening back to Luther's words in his early lectures on Galatians in 1519. Luther writes,

> In the fourth chapter of the third book of his *On the Trinity* St. Augustine teaches that the suffering of Christ is both a sacrament and an example—a sacrament because it signifies the death of sin in us and grants it to those who believe, an example because it also behooves us to imitate Him in bodily suffering and dying. The sacrament is what is stated in Rom. 4:25: "Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." The example is what is stated in 1 Peter 2:21: "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps."[36]

The death of sin that is completed in Jesus' death on the cross is prefigured in the covenant that God makes with Abraham. As Abraham witnesses the torch and smoking pot pass through the blood of the sacrifices in Gen. 15, he is led through an experience of being "born again" into a new relationship with God. Joseph's life (Gen. 37–46) prefigures Christ's rescue mission, a mission Christians are called to join as they follow in Christ's steps and heed His example.

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[33] Martin Luther, "Sixth Sermon on Holy Baptism, March 3, 1538" in *Luther on Holy Baptism: Sermons to the People (1525–39)*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia, 2018), 97.

[34] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 167.

[35] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 165.

[36] *LW* 27:238.

PLI teaches that a dangerous temptation for many people is to try to gain a place and an identity in the family by obeying the Father and skipping the identity step. The teaching notes for D2MC explain this temptation by saying, "We can go from Father to Obedience to Identity, the belief that we will finally be loved and accepted if we are good girls and boys. This is the way of law, not grace."[37]

That really is at the crux of Covenant and Kingdom and ultimately of all Lutheran discipleship. If Christians attempt to earn anything or get anything through obedience or discipline or mortification of the flesh or anything else that is done, that is wrong. That was the point of all of Luther's focus on righteousness. By placing this at the forefront of this Covenant triangle, PLI's teachings remain faithful to the intent of our Lutheran forebearers and ultimately, faithful to the gospel itself.

For some people (usually observant, catechized Lutherans) the use of the word "obedience" can be initially off-putting in relation to this concept of Covenant because it is closely connected to our identity and the Gospel. Obedience is a Law word, even when referring in this context to the Third Use of the Law, whereas Covenant seems to be about focusing on the Gospel. Keeping in mind that our Father is the one who bestows our identity in baptism, D2MC teaches that "our identity is secure as God loves us as his kids unconditionally. And it is out of that secure place that we can live out that identity in obedience to our Father. Not because we are trying to earn something, but because we are now living out who we were created to be."[38] This is nicely summed up in *Confessing the Gospel*:

> The Christian life is not the obedience of slaves who are trying to avoid punishment and ingratiate themselves with their master. It is not the good behavior of convicted

[37] PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, *Becoming a Discipling Leader,* "Covenant and Kingdom–Immersion 1—Teaching Input #4" (n.d.), 3.

[38] PLI, Unpublished Notes, *Becoming,* Teaching Input #4, 3.

> criminals who are trying to shorten their sentences. Rather, the Christian life is the loving, grateful obedience of children who have come to realize how much their heavenly Father cares for them and what he has done for them.[39]

However, there is a necessary relationship of obedience that flows out of our identity. Jordan Cooper notes that through faith, the Christian's unity with Christ is "increased and strengthened as the Christian participates in the sacramental life of the church, and it is demonstrated through growth in holiness."[40]

This preference for "growth" has the potential to be dangerous, and, if left unchecked, even deadly to faith. Discipleship is not progressive sanctification, as if Christians will always find themselves on a graph smoothly arcing towards godliness. This expectation is unrealistic at best and deadly to faith at worst. Christians who look for comfort in their own actions and growth in their own good deeds end up with either smug, ignorant, and oblivious self-righteousness or, if self-aware, despair.

In *Confessing the Gospel* we read:

> [A]ny attempt to measure sanctification is doomed. … The Christian life does not take the form of uninterrupted progress. Instead, it ebbs and flows. Sanctified living varies from Christian to Christian and in the same Christian at different times. … Alternatively, the gospel does not evaluate a believer's sanctification. For the gospel tells of the redemptive work of Christ in his life, death, and resurrection, and it does not look at the works of people.[41]

Instead, Christians ought to look for freedom as a sign of growth in holiness. How free are they in asking God in the words of Luther's Morning Prayer, "and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you"? [42] Mark Mattes

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[39] Nafzger, *Confessing the Gospel*, 1061.

[40] Jordan Cooper, *Christification: A Lutheran Approach to Theosis* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 19.

[41] Nafzger, *Confessing the Gospel*, 1077.

[42] Martin Luther, "Morning Prayer" in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 30.

sums it up by saying, "the life of the disciple is not about religious self-improvement but about the freedom of trusting God to be God and taking care of His creation."[43]

The way Cooper breaks this down helps us see where this growth happens in both Covenant and Kingdom. As the Christian participates in the sacramental life of the church, that's Covenant obedience. We may actively take part in worship, appearing before God and receiving His Word and Sacraments. These gifts identify us with our Heavenly Father and strengthen that identity. As this identity is demonstrated through growth in personal holiness, that's Kingdom representation, where we represent our ultimate King before the world.

This is found in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, too, where this growth in personal holiness is shown to be what the Scriptures call "Sacrifices of praise," "Spiritual sacrifices," and "Spiritual worship."

> "Sacrifices of praise," [are] the preaching of the gospel, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the afflictions of the saints, and indeed, all the good works of the saints. These sacrifices are … performed by those who are already reconciled.
>
> These are the sacrifices of the New Testament, as Peter teaches [1 Peter 2:5], "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices." … "Spiritual" refers to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Paul teaches the same thing in Romans 12[:1]: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." "Spiritual worship" refers to worship where God is recognized and is grasped by the mind, as happens when it fears and trusts God. … The Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13[:15], teaches the same thing, "Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God," and it adds an interpretation, "that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name." He commands us to offer praises, that is, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, and the like. These avail not by the outward act but on account of faith. This is stressed by the phrase, "through him let us offer," that is, by faith in Christ.[44]

Elsewhere in the Apology, things are even more clear. "Faith is not just knowledge. But it is willing to receive or take hold of those things that are offered in the promise about Christ.

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[43] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 178.

[44] Ap XXIV.25–26 in Kolb and Wengert, 262–63.

Furthermore, this obedience toward God (i.e., to want to receive the offered promise) is no less a divine service than is love. God wants us to believe Him and to receive from Him blessings. He declares this to be true divine service."[45]

Obedience to God is good. However, it is essential to reframe one's understanding of obedience in light of the covenant He has established by giving Christians their identity in Baptism, so that they can see that even in obedience it is God acting by giving the means to grow in holiness and ultimately, any growth in one's relationship with Him.

These themes of Covenant and Kingdom come together in the Lord's Prayer and in the implications the prayer has for us when we pray it. By understanding who God is from both the perspective of Father and King, Christians come to deeper faith in a God who both cares for them personally and, having the means to move the heavens and the earth, will do exactly that if it is for the good of His children.

The Lord's Prayer teaches that God is a dear Father who would give and has given what is most precious to Him for our sake. "Our Father in heaven" is also the King of the kingdom that is coming, and He already has the kingdom, power, and glory over all things in this universe. T. C. Appelt writes,

> In this kingdom of God, the heavenly Father is the King, the believers in Christ are the subjects. As such they do the will of their King; they lead a godly life. This obedience to the commandments of their heavenly Father is the result of their faith; for when they entered this kingdom of God through the work of the Holy Spirit, they were born again, they entered a new, spiritual life. Their faith and their godly life are as inseparable as cause is from effect. Therefore the kingdom of God comes "when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life."[46]

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[45] Apology to the Augsburg Confession V (III).106–107 (227–28), in Paul T. McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions,* 2nd ed., (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 116. Paragraph 227 is significantly different than, and paragraph 228 is not included in, the Kolb-Wengert edition.

[46] T.C Appelt, *Catechetical Preparations: Part III* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1935), 21.

Herbert Girgensohn explores the connection between the fatherhood and kingship of God in his explanation of the Second Petition. He writes, "The future kingdom is the kingdom of the Father. At the same time, he is the King who wages his kingdom's war."[47] He continues:

> The real goal and end of all the ways of God [is] understood and laid hold of in faith, and absolute trust in what is implicit in the name Father. It is the Father who rules. Thus it is a matter of a trust which really takes seriously God's Fatherly, saving love and learns to look at all the future from the point of view of the disclosure of God's fatherhood in Jesus Christ even though many things are still incomprehensible and cloaked in mystery. The kingship and the fatherhood of God belong together. It is only from the word "Father" in the address that the second petition acquires the tone it should have and all its yearning urgency for us men.[48]

Girgensohn points out that it is our trust in God as our Father, who loves us and saves us, that gives us the proper perspective on life and guides us in how to represent him. And yet conversely, he also says, "the fatherhood of God derives its true meaning from the kingship of God. Our Father is the royal ruler of the world actually allowing his kingdom to come."[49]

This dovetails with what is taught in the first teaching input on Covenant and Kingdom in D2MC: "What we have to recognize is that it is all connected. The Father is the King, we receive authority only when we ground our identity in him, and we have power when we are obedient to him. But notice how it all hinges on identity. If that isn't grounded, if we don't get that, everything else is lost."[50]

Christians first see God as our Father. They are called by name in baptism to be His children. He loves them and wants what is best for them, which He showed on the cross. This perspective of knowing God through the lens of the cross, is to be understood before the

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[47] Herbert Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959), 247.

[48] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 247.

[49] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 247.

[50] PLI, Unpublished Notes, *Becoming,* "Teaching Input #4," 4.

Christian can we see Him as the all-powerful and sovereign ruler of the world. Robert J. Koester, in his book *Law and Gospel: Foundation of Lutheran Ministry*, points out the importance of this subtle difference between a theology that places Christ's cross at the center as opposed to a theology focusing on God's sovereignty. "A person who is concerned with becoming holy in this life will automatically place a greater importance on submitting to the will of a Sovereign God than he will place on Jesus' sacrifice for him. … God's kingdom is revealed to us—not based on his sovereignty but on his atonement for our sins."[51] This seemingly small detail makes a world of difference in the attitude one has towards God's identity. A God who will sacrifice His Son for us is a God who loves deeply and is loved in return, whereas a God whose sovereignty over the whole universe is His predominant feature can must be preeminently feared.

Girgensohn continues on this vein explaining the distinction in this way as he teaches on the second petition of the Lord's Prayer:

> "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13–14). God's acceptance is already in effect because Jesus forgives sins. This acceptance of God is not merely an isolated act that squares up individual sins; rather God accepts the whole sinful man, who is thus removed from judgment, received into gracious fellowship with the Father, and made a citizen of his kingdom and a child of the Father's house, in which he can now live his life in fellowship with the Father and in the spirit of the Father's house.
>
> It is men under the power of Jesus who pray the petition. They are the ones to whom it was given. They are the only ones who can pray it; for it is their Lord they expect, and their Father's house they yearn for, and the kingdom whose blessings they already know.[52]

One of the benefits of understanding Covenant and Kingdom as the overarching themes of the Bible is that knowing God's roles as both our Father and our heavenly King helps Christians

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[51] Robert J. Koester, *Law and Gospel: Foundation of Lutheran Ministry* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1993), 62.

[52] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 250.

to more clearly understand the God to whom they pray. It is no wonder Luther writes, "with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father."[53] Christians are blessed to pray with boldness, knowing their heavenly Father will give whatever is asked in the confidence of faith that He, as King and the ruler of all things, "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

The next step in the Kingdom triangle is authority. Authority, in the Bible, refers to the right to do something or to tell someone to do something. D2MC reminds Christians that they have been given the authority to represent God in their lives. Jesus is the one who "dispenses all his authority and power to his disciples, essentially saying, 'You've seen me push out the Kingdom and represent the Father. I've taught you to do everything I can do and I'm telling you, you'll do even greater things.'"[54]

This authority is like having a badge signifying that one possesses official status and rights ordinary citizens do not.[55] Since God has given Christians authority to represent Him, He also gives them extraordinary powers, in the same way that peace officers and military personnel may have weapons or other tools that give them powers and rights according to their vocations beyond those of ordinary citizens. This is what it means to be a part of God's kingdom.

The greatest authority and power Christians have is given in the office of the keys, or the authority to forgive sins. Luther explains the keys "are an office, a power or command given by God through Christ to all of Christendom for the retaining and remitting of the sins of men."[56]

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[53] Luther, "Lord's Prayer: Introduction," *Small Catechism*, 20.

[54] PLI, Unpublished Notes, *Becoming,* "Teaching Input #4," 3–4.

[55] Bob Rognlien, *Empowering Missional Disciples: An Introduction to 3DMovements* (n.p.: Gx Books, 2016), 80.

[56] Martin Luther, *Church and Ministry II*, ed. Conrad Bergendoff, vol. 40, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958), 366.

This power has been given "to all of Christendom," to all those who have been baptized into the name of the triune God. "The keys belong to the whole church and to each of its members, both as regards their authority and their various uses…In all of these declarations we find established the fullest authority and the most immediate exercise of the right to bind and to absolve…The ministry of the Word belongs to all."[57]

It is rightly not Christians who have the authority in themselves, but "God through Christ" in them who does these good things through them and, importantly, by His authority. That may seem subtle, but it is incredibly important. Christ says He is with Christians always (Matt. 28:20), and God has given Him the authority (Matt. 28:18), so God works in and through Christians as He shares that authority and gives them power to forgive sins in John 20.

This authority also conveys with it the power to live a life of love for one's neighbor as part of Christ's kingdom and to lead others to this kingdom. Luther summarizes Christ's message as saying

> "I give you the kingdom of heaven, power over the devil, and no matter how much you die, I keep you from perishing." Of course, we do not do this with our own strength; but we do it by virtue of the authority and command of God, who has given men the power to lead one another to eternal life through the priesthood of Christ. … we have the Son of God Himself… saying: "I absolve you, I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power to baptize, to save, to tread demons and hell underfoot. I give you this divine power in order that you may do the same works that I do, and greater works than these" (cf. John 14:12).[58]

Christ's promise is this (as paraphrased by Martin Luther): "I will so exercise My authority in you that you will do the same works that I do, and much greater ones. Whatever you ask, I

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[57] *LW* 40:27–28.

[58] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 26–30*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 5, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), 141–42.

will do."[59] Even though Christ is no longer present "in a corporeal and circumscribed manner"[60] after His ascension into heaven, His presence through His Spirit through our Baptism emboldens Christians to keep claiming His authority and exercising His power in their daily lives.

I appreciate Luther's explanation of this Kingdom righteousness as he explains it in his *Lectures on Galatians*:

> When I have this righteousness within me, I descend from heaven like the rain that makes the earth fertile. That is, I come forth into another kingdom, and I perform good works whenever the opportunity arises. If I am a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the saddened, I administer the sacraments. If I am a father, I rule my household and family, I train my children in piety and honesty. If I am a magistrate, I perform the office which I have received by divine command. If I am a servant, I faithfully tend to my master's affairs. In short, whoever knows for sure that Christ is his righteousness not only cheerfully and gladly works in his calling but also submits himself for the sake of love to magistrates, also to their wicked laws, and to everything else in this present life—even, if need be, to burden and danger. For he knows that God wants this and that this obedience pleases Him.[61]

The idea of Covenant and Kingdom is embedded in Jesus' command to make disciples. This is why PLI writes, "if we don't start here, nothing else matters…We believe in an integrated theology that starts in the scriptures and finds its way into everything we do."[62]

The Learning Circle

The Learning Circle, also known as the *kairos*[63] circle, is a series of steps for reflection,

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[59] Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14–16*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 24, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 184.

[60] SD VII.103 in Kolb and Wengert, 611.

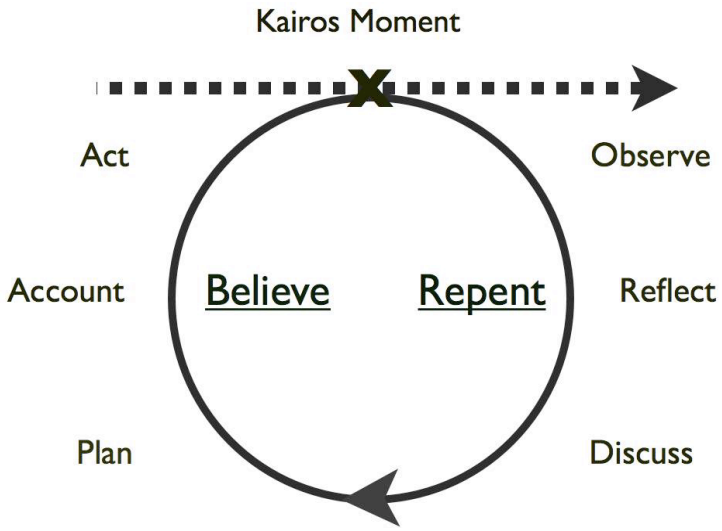
[61] *LW* 26:11–12.

[62] PLI, Unpublished Notes, *Becoming, "*Teaching Input #4," 4.

[63] *Kairos* is a Greek word used in the New Testament that is translated in the ESV as time, season, or opportunity. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* defines it as "a point of time or period of time, time, period, freq. with implication of being esp. fit for someth. and without emphasis on precise chronology." Fredrich W. Danker, Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 497–98.

discussion, and action used to apply God's Word to one's life.

Figure 3. The Learning Circle.



A *kairos* or "*kairos* moment" refers to a moment in time when God interrupts one's life and alters its course. By reflecting on this event or circumstance and considering what God's Word says in light of it, Christians begin to understand God's work in their everyday lives through repentance and faith manifesting itself in action. This is important for sanctification because, as we read in *Confessing the Gospel*,

> sanctification includes internal as well as external aspects. The Holy Spirit is interested and involved in bringing believers not merely into outward conformity with God's will, but also and especially into inward conformity by changing their thoughts, feelings, and desires. Only those external changes that express the profound internal changes belong to sanctification. Mere external change is still sin. The Spirit enables Christians to act in new and godly ways by establishing a trusting and grateful relationship with God and a loving disposition toward other people.[64]

The six steps of the learning circle are as follows:

1. Observe—one notices that there is something significant happening.
2. Reflect—one stops to consider, out loud in a small group, what lesson God may be trying to teach.
3. Discuss—one lets others speak about the observations and reflections, so that the

[64] Nafzger, *Confessing the Gospel*, 1022.

interpretation happens within a community and not in isolation.
4. Plan—one figures out what the next step is in order to act in a way that is faithful and appropriate in light of Scripture.
5. Account—one decides who will help with following through on the decided course of action.
6. Act—one does what needs to be done.[65]

The *kairos* moment is a scriptural concept that has been around for a long time. In 1920, Louis Wessel, a professor of theology from Concordia College in Springfield, Illinois, pointed out that a *kairos* is a different measure of time than *chronos*. He comments, in reference to Gal. 6:10, that a *kairos* is a moment which represents an opportunity, specifically an opportunity to act and to do good.

> Galatians 6:10: As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
> The word correctly rendered opportunity, *kairos*, is the present period of time with its peculiar circumstances, while *chronos* is time conceived as a line extending through a series of periods. The question, who is my neighbor? must be answered in consideration of times and circumstances, all men being our neighbors as we have opportunity to do them good.[66]

By using the learning circle to talk about *kairos* moments, Christians can take advantage of these opportunities where God is interrupting their everyday lives. His Spirit works through the Word, which is applied to Christians' lives and teaches them to act in ways that serve their neighbor. One of these kinds of moments is what the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* identifies as "contrition," namely "the genuine terror of the conscience that feels God's wrath against sin and grieves that it has sinned. This contrition takes place when the Word of God denounces sin, because the sum of the preaching of the Gospel is to condemn sin and to offer the forgiveness of sins, righteousness on account of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, and so

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[65] Mike Breen and the 3DM Team, *Building a Discipling Culture,* 2nd ed. (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011), 59–63.

[66] A.L. Graebner, W.H.T. Dau, and Louis Wessel, *The Proof Texts of the Catechism with a Practical Commentary* (Springfield, IL: Concordia Supply, 1920), 36.

that having been reborn we might do good."[67] While "genuine terror of the conscience" may indeed be a *kairos* moment, the goal is not to simply elicit fear or even an experience that feels meaningful. A *kairos* moment ought to be any opportunity where God's Word is considered and the Holy Spirit leads someone to turn away from sin in repentance ("having been reborn") and to act according to faith ("do good").

The Lutheran Confessions devote a noteworthy amount of time and space to the proper distinction of Law and Gospel, which in turn leads to the proper place of repentance and good works in the lives of Christians. Before Christians begin using tools such as the *kairos* circle to encourage each other to do good works, it is essential that they be motivated to do these good works for the right reasons. Time and again, the Confessions show how God works in Christians not only to save them (justification) but to solicit a response in the form of good works in the lives of those who have faith (sanctification). One example comes in the Formula of Concord.

> Similarly, love is a fruit that certainly and necessarily results from true faith. For all who do not love surely indicate that they are not justified but rather are still in death or have lost the righteousness of faith, as John says in 1 John 3[:14]. When Paul says [Rom. 3:28] that we are "justified by faith apart from works," he is indicating that neither the contrition that precedes nor the works that result from faith belong in the article or the treatment of justification by faith. For good works do not precede justification, but result from it. People must first be righteous before they can do good works.
>
> Likewise, too, although renewal and sanctification are a blessing of our mediator Christ and a work of the Holy Spirit, they do not belong in the article or in the treatment of justification before God but rather result from it since, because of our corrupted flesh, they are never fully pure and perfect in this life, as Dr. Luther writes in his wonderful, exhaustive exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, "We concede that good works and love must also be taught, but this must be in its proper time and place, that is, when the question has to do with works, apart from this chief doctrine."[68]

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[67] Ap XII.29 in Kolb and Wengert, 192.

[68] SD III.27–29 in Kolb and Wengert, 566–67.

This is arguably the most essential doctrinal distinction in Lutheranism. To understand the difference between justification and good works is to get to the heart of the gospel. The Formula of Concord gives two reasons why correctly distinguishing and not mingling sanctification and justification is such a big deal for Christians who are making disciples.

First, this gives credit where credit is due, along with the glory and honor for salvation. Christ is the redeemer, and in order to ascribe all the glory rightly due to Him, Christians cannot take any credit for that. The other reason has to do with the Christian's spiritual and emotional well-being. Christians are regularly tempted to trust in themselves, as if the works they do could make a difference when it comes to their own salvation. If they begin to develop that kind of trust in their own works, and then sin again, it can put their salvation in doubt and lead to despair. This is what we read in the Formula of Concord:

> Therefore, even if the converted and believers have the beginnings of renewal, sanctification, love, virtues, and good works, yet these cannot, should not, and must not be introduced or mixed with the article of justification before God, so that the proper honor may continue to be accorded our Redeemer Christ and (because our new obedience is imperfect and impure) so that the consciences under attack may have a reliable comfort.[69]

Luther himself also warns against this in his lectures on Galatians:

> It is also [the devil's] habit to set against us those passages in the Gospel in which Christ Himself requires works from us and with plain words threatens damnation to those who do not perform them. If here we cannot distinguish between these two kinds of righteousness; if here by faith we do not take hold of Christ, who is sitting at the right hand of God, who is our life and our righteousness, and who make intercession for us miserable sinners before the Father, then we are under the Law and not under grace, and Christ is no longer a Savior. Then He is a lawgiver.[70]

Thankfully, from the beginning, our Lutheran forebearers have given us faithful examples to follow regarding how to speak about justification by faith and the good works performed

[69] SD III.35 in Kolb and Wengert, 568.

[70] *LW* 26:11.

through Christ. This distinction is at the heart of all that Christians do and what empowers them to make disciples who cling to Christ and the grace He has earned for them. In the Lutheran confessions, repentance is defined as consisting of contrition and faith, and good works are not excluded from repentance. Contrition is often the first step, the "*kairos* moment" that leads to an observation. From there, the gospel is often applied in the "reflect" or "discuss" stage, as one considers how life looks different when lived in faith and freed from the obligations of fulfilling the law. Subsequently, good works spring forth as they are planned, accounted for, and acted upon.

Lutheran theologian Erich Kiehl remarked:

> The Word of God in its total setting must be the content of Christian education. If we are serious about saying that all the Scriptures are God's Word and that through this infallible Word God speaks to us, we need to listen reverently and carefully to what God has to say in His Word in its original setting. This means that through a careful study of the theological and historical setting we need to learn what God was saying to the people of that time before we seek to say what He is saying to us today. This has always been a basic principle of Biblical interpretation.[71]

This principle of interpretation is important for discipleship as the curb that keeps individuals from making Scripture to be whatever they wish. By including this step of discussing our *kairos* moments with other faithful, trustworthy Christians, they are protected from poor decisions that arise from novel interpretations and even, in some cases, heresy.

The Integrated Life Triangle

The life of the Christian in relationship to God, to those who share our faith, and to those who do not yet know God is taught with the use of a tool called the "up-in-out" triangle or the "integrated life" triangle.

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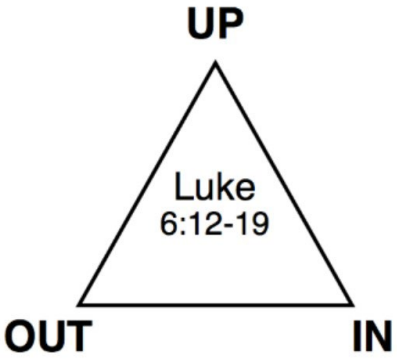
[71] Erich Kiehl, "Christian Education," in *Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church,* eds. Erich Kiehl and Waldo Werning (Chicago: Lutheran Congress, 1970), 102.

Figure 4. The Integrated Life Triangle.



This triangle is a visual reminder that Jesus, during His life, was consistently growing in His relationships "Up" with His heavenly Father, "In" with his friends, followers, and disciples, and "Out" in the ways He would go to others to preach to them, heal them, and serve them. PLI teaches that this pattern can be seen in Jesus' life in Luke 6:12–19.[72] First, Jesus took time by himself, going up a mountain, to pray to His heavenly Father (Up). Second, Jesus called together His disciples and designated these twelve apostles as the ones with whom He would be spending the most time for the purpose of training them (In) to be sent out to preach. Third, the large crowd of people from all the surrounding regions came to hear Jesus and to be healed, and Jesus ministered to them (Out) as He encountered them in His everyday life. This is called an "Integrated Life," and a triangle is used as a reminder of the three dimensions.

Francis Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics* echoes these three dimensions of good works, stating how Christians should lead holy lives for God, for one another as Christians, and for others.

> When Scripture speaks of the necessity of good works, it means that we must perform them. It is the clear teaching of Scripture that God has commanded them. …God commands Christians to lead a holy life 1) on His account. He does not want His children to serve sin and Satan. He wants them to serve Him, their rightful Lord, who has created them and then dearly purchased them by the blood of His Son. He redeemed them for this very purpose that they should lead a holy life. … 2) Christians should perform good works on their own account. Sanctification and good works are to be for Christians the external testimony of their state of grace and their possession

[72] PLI, Unpublished Teaching Notes, "Integrated Life" (Immersion 1, Day 2, Teaching 2) (n.d.), 1.

> of salvation. 1 John 3:14: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 3) Christians live a holy life on account of the world. By their holy life they should prove the truth of the Gospel to the unbelievers and thus induce them to hear the saving Word.[73]

Much of Luther's *Small Catechism* teaches how Christians are to live in relation to God, or what is called the "Up" dimension of our lives—how to lead holy lives on God's account. The Ten Commandments teach how "we are to fear and love God." The Creed teaches how to know God. The Lord's Prayer and the Daily Prayers teach how to talk to God. And the sections on Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar teach where to find God and His spiritual blessings.

Another benefit of the catechism is that it describes how Christians are brought into community in the church, the "In" dimension of our lives, or how Christians perform good works on their own account. John Pless writes, "Created by the Word of God, the Holy Christian Church is the place of disciples…Called by the Gospel, disciples are gathered in Christ's Church, His "holy community" as the Large Catechism calls it."[74] He then goes on to quote Luther's description of the church:

> In this Christian community we have the forgiveness of sins, which takes place through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel. This encompasses everything that is to be preached about the sacraments and, in short, the entire gospel and all the official responsibilities of the Christian community. Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God's grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet we are never without sin because we still carry our flesh around our neck.[75]

The key to growing in this "In" dimension of one's integrated life is found in the forgiveness of sins, which we have received from God and which makes up the foundation of Christian

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[73] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:29.

[74] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 66–67.

[75] LC II.54 in Kolb and Wengert, 438.

community:

> The forgiveness of sins is not simply the initial activity of the Holy Spirit as though our justification before God was a beginning stage that we now move beyond to a higher level called discipleship. No, disciples live in the community of God's church by the forgiveness of sins. We cannot live without the forgiveness of sin. The life of the disciple is constituted in the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ. The forgiveness of sins is no mere psychological device for living with one's sense of guilt and shame; it is the reality of God's righteousness for us in Christ. As such, it is the air that the disciple breathes.[76]

In the *Small* and *Large Catechisms*, Luther does not make much of a distinction between the "In" and "Out" dimensions of Christian living, although there is a notable exception in his *Large Catechism* where the distinction is implied in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer:

> "The coming of God's kingdom to us" takes place in two ways: first, it comes here, in time, through the Word and faith, and second, in eternity, it comes through the final revelation. Now we ask for both of those things: that it may come to those who are not yet in it and that, by daily growth here and in eternal life hereafter, it may come to us who have attained it. All this is nothing more than to say: "Dear Father, we ask you first to give us your Word, so that the gospel may be properly preached throughout the world and then that it may also be received in faith and may work and dwell in us."[77]

This ought in no way to diminish the importance Luther placed on sharing the gospel and living in relation to those who do not know Christ and teaching them to know Him. While the catechism may be sparce on these examples, they are frequently found in Luther's other writings.[78] In a treatise supporting the right of the congregation from Leisnig to call their own pastors, Luther contends that in addition to confessing and teaching (In), spreading the word (Out) is also the duty of every Christian:

> No one can deny that every Christian possesses the word of God and is taught and anointed by God to be priest, as Christ says… it is their duty to confess, to teach, and to spread [his word]. …It is certain that a Christian not only has the right and power

[76] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 69.

[77] LC III.53–54 in Kolb and Wengert, 447.

[78] For more examples, see Volker Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission,* trans. Klaus Detlev Schulz and Daniel Thies (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003).

> to teach God's word but has the duty to do so on pain of losing his soul and of God's disfavor.[79]

How do these things happen?

The distinction between churched and unchurched, what we would call our "In" and "Out" relationships, would not have been on Luther's mind in the same way as it is for us today, as an overwhelming majority of the people in Germany in his day were baptized as infants and were at least nominally connected to a parish.[80] As Volker Stolle puts it, "Luther appeared, because of his internal struggle and a certain landlocked provincial attitude, to have overlooked the great world missionary challenges."[81] However, Stolle goes on to note, "the picture has changed. …Mission is no longer understood as a thing that plays itself out chiefly on the outer edges of Christendom but as a way of life or, rather, as a lifestyle for every Christian congregation within its particular surrounding. Here, Luther now begins to speak with surprising wisdom."[82]

Luther's wisdom boils down to two things: first, thorough catechesis, and second, doing good for one's neighbor, regardless of church attendance or affiliation. This is why Pless writes, "The Decalogue can be embraced…as the path that the disciple walks within this fallen creation, fearing, loving, and trusting in the triune God above all things and serving the neighbor in love according to the will of our Creator."[83] Christian formation takes place in catechesis and faithful living according to what is taught in Luther's catechisms. While Luther gives some extreme

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[79] Martin Luther, *Church and Ministry I*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch, vol. 39, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 309–10.

[80] Detlev Schulz, however, asserts that "the missionary task was broader already in the sixteenth century. The entire country of Germany and its citizens constituted a mission field." Luther considered the Roman Catholic faith to be on par with Judaism and the Muslim faith. As religions of the law, they all led to eternal condemnation and therefore all their adherents were in need of conversion. In Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 58.

[81] Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations,* preface, Kindle.

[82] Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations,* preface, Kindle.

[83] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 45–46.

examples, his point holds true. Take, for instance, what Luther teaches in his "Admonition to Prayer against the Turks" regarding the fear people had of being invaded by the Turks:

> And finally, I strongly urge that the children be taught the catechism. Should they be taken captive in the invasion, they will at least take something of the Christian faith with them. Who knows what God might be able to accomplish through them. Joseph as a seventeen-year-old youth was sold into slavery into Egypt, but he had God's word and knew what he believed. And he converted all Egypt. The same is true of Daniel and his companions.[84]

Thus, each Christian learns to reflect God's love and concern for both the believing and the unbelieving neighbor in whatever situation they might be. Another example comes from Luther's lectures on Genesis, specifically how Jacob speaks both "to his household and to all who were with him" (Gen. 35:2). Luther points out that the author of Genesis "distinguishes between members of the household and outsiders. …By others 'who were with him' he means those whose hearts God had touched so that they joined themselves to Jacob's house. …God gathered a church in the world not only from the one family of the patriarchs but from all nations to which the Word made its way."[85] In this way, people are gathered into the church, the body of believers through whom God works to conduct His mission of seeking those who do not yet know Him. Luther would see the "In" and "Out" relationships as strongly related and integrated, so that the things Christians do with believing and unbelieving neighbors are not completely separated or different, but there is much that overlaps.

Understood from this historical viewpoint, we begin to see that the catechism instructs believers about relationships with others even beyond the church, the "Out" dimension. Pless writes, "The Ten Commandments remain in the life of discipleship not as a path to salvation but

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[84] Martin Luther, *Devotional Writings II*, ed. Gustav K. Wiencke, vol. 43, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 239.

[85] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 6, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 227.

as the concrete way that those who fear, love, and trust in God above all things now live in His world, giving themselves to the service and well-being of their neighbor."[86] The usefulness of the Ten Commandments extends beyond those already in the church, providing the basis and the baseline standard of respect for one another that marks Christians' interactions with their unbelieving neighbors.

Even the Apology of the Augsburg Confession weighs in on the value of the Ten Commandments in teaching how to serve one's neighbor and bearing good fruit for the kingdom.

> Moreover, we have already frequently testified that repentance ought to produce good fruits. The [Ten] Commandments teach what these good fruits are: prayer, thanksgiving, the confession of the gospel, the teaching of the gospel, obedience to parents and the authorities, faithfulness to one's calling, peaceable conduct instead of murder and seeking revenge, the greatest possible generosity to the needy, restraint, coercion and chastisement of the flesh instead of adultery and fornication, truthfulness—not to buy off eternal punishment but to keep from surrendering to the devil or offending the Holy Spirit. These fruits have God's command and ought to be done on account of the glory and mandate of God, and they also have their reward.[87]

Some of the commandments specifically apply to relationships with those who often are not yet part of the church. Take, for instance, the Fifth Commandment:

> The Fifth Commandment turns the heart and hands of the disciple to the neediness of the neighbor's body. Because the body is the place of the neighbor's life, it is not killed, either directly by assault or indirectly by withholding that which is necessary to sustain life. Instead, it is the way of discipleship to care for the body of the neighbor, providing food to the hungry, medical aid to the sick, hospitality to the homeless, and protection to those whose physical life is threatened by violence.[88]

This also reflects what Luther writes concerning the seventh commandment:

> Anyone who seeks and desires good works will find here [in the Seventh Commandment] more than enough things to do that are heartily acceptable and pleasing to God. Moreover, God lavishes upon them a wonderful blessing, and generously rewards us for what we do to benefit and befriend our neighbor, as King Solomon also teaches in Proverbs 19[:17]: "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the

[86] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 44.

[87] Ap XII.174 in Kolb and Wengert, 217–18.

[88] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 36–37.

> LORD, and will be repaid in full." Here you have a rich Lord, who is surely sufficient for your needs and will let you lack or want for nothing. Thus with a happy conscience you can enjoy a hundred times more than you could scrape together by perfidy [dishonesty] and injustice.[89]

By applying God's Word through the catechism to one's life, Christians can grow in the ways that lead to an integrated life, in relationship with God, with fellow believers, and with those who do not yet know Christ.

As Lutherans, we can also find historical precedent for a distinction in relationships defined by "In" and "Out" language. By the middle of the 19th century, Johann Hinrich Wichern's promotion of what was called "inner mission" was sparking interest throughout Germany. Wichern identified a strong need among German Lutherans for social programs to assist the poor, needy, impoverished and orphaned, much along the lines of what Pless earlier mentioned regarding the Fifth Commandment. Wichern was able to make significant headway with his work, causing something of a revival in many churches. He even got the attention of another Lutheran pastor who happened to be born the same year as him: Wilhelm Loehe. Loehe agreed with Wichern's assessment of the dire situation in Germany among the Lutherans and the need for action, but he made some significant expansions on Wichern's definitions. When it came to inner mission, Loehe added "the commission of the Lord to the church that the gospel is to be brought to the already-baptized Christians, to those who went to church, those who have fallen away, or those in the process of falling away."[90]

Loehe's theological insight is important here. "He understood the plight of people to be the result of turning away from God's word and a breakdown in morality. This is why, according to

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[89] LC I.252–253 in Kolb and Wengert, 420.

[90] Klaus Detlev Schulz, "Wilhelm Loehe's Missiological Perspective," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 39, no. 1 (February 2012): 32.

Loehe, inner mission must be concerned for the preaching of God's word and the proper care for souls before it addresses the physical needs."[91] Ultimately, inner mission may be defined as "the entire loving activity of the Christian church towards its members, in order to preserve them in living Christianity or to lead them back to it, thereby freeing them from their spiritual and physical distress and helping and strengthening them in their well-being."[92]

Loehe also added another dimension to Wichern's work: "outer mission." This outer mission is work done with those who are not yet baptized. Loehe realized that Wichern's vision of "inner mission," while necessary, did not include the unbaptized and heathen, especially those abroad. As Loehe explains in his essay "Inner Mission in General,"

> For the work of mission is nothing other than the task to call the church of Jesus, to gather, to enlighten, and to preserve for eternal life.... Outer mission is what can be done to reach the unbaptized,—inner mission comprises everything which is done towards the baptized.... The difference is only the areas: the outer mission operates among the unbaptized, the inner mission among the baptized. The two are not separated, but innermost connected, have the same dignity and honor, love and fidelity, and equal value.[93]

Loehe's choices of the words "Inner" and "Outer" to describe the mission of the church among those who are already baptized and those who are not yet baptized, respectively, show that the contemporary use of the words "In" and "Out" to describe the different dimensions of relationships are well within historical and theological precedent for Lutherans. Furthermore, the work he puts into defining mission helps us to understand the mission of the church today in these "In" and "Out" dimensions in a much fuller and comprehensive way, one which fits into

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[91] Schulz, "Wilhelm Loehe's Missiological Perspective." 32.

[92] Author's translation of Ludwig Droysen, *Die Innere Mission, Ihre Aufgaben Und Arbeiten in Pommern* (Stargard i. Pomm.: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Digitale Bibliothek, 1876), 2, https://www.digitale-bibliothek-mv.de/viewer/image/PPN837924650/12/LOG_0008/

[93] Translated by and quoted in Hermann Vorlander, *Church in Motion: The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Bavaria* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2018), 175.

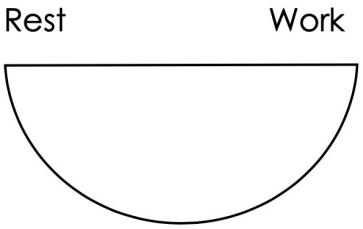
our Lutheran ecclesiology and our understanding of the Lutheran Confessions.

The Up dimension of the triangle corresponds to the vertical dimension of Two Kinds of Righteousness, the relationship between God and man, while the Out and In dimensions refer to our horizonal relationships with our neighbor.

The Semicircle: Rest and Work

God puts rest before work in creation and throughout Scripture, and it is a godly thing to intentionally plan our rest as well as our work, like the pendulum swinging back and forth. This is taught with the Lifeshape called the Semicircle.

Figure 5. The Semicircle.



In Gen. 2:2, God finishes His work of creation and rests from His work and blesses the seventh day, making it holy. Jesus points out in Mark 2:27 that, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." What we see here is that rest is God's starting point for the people He created. We are not meant to begin our days with work, but with rest. This is also reflected in the ways the Jewish people thought about time, that the day starts at sundown, and then after we wake up from our rest, we work. Each day of creation in Gen. 1 reflects this order: "And there was evening and there was morning."[94]

One of the emphases that can be lost in our modern understanding of the commandments is

[94] Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31.

in the Small Catechism's shortening of the third commandment to "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."[95] An unintentional effect of omitting Exod. 20:9–11 is that we can miss the emphasis on rest that was originally intended in it. It is easy to see this commandment as primarily being about worshipping, and only tangentially being about rest. However, resting from work itself is a confession of faith in the God who works even when we are not.

Luther's translation of this reads literally, "Thou shalt hallow the day of rest."[96] Luther's use of the German word *Feiertag*, which is a holiday or celebration day on which one would not work, brings together the two ways of understanding of this commandment: First of all, there should be a day of rest, and secondly, that day should be kept holy. In his *Large Catechism*, Luther explains that in ordinary German vernacular, the idiom for "stopping work" was *Feierabend machen.* This was translated as "taking a holiday," but Kolb and Wengert note that this expression literally means "to begin celebrating a festival on the evening before. Later, it came to mean simply 'quitting time' on any day."[97]

Herbert Girgensohn explains the commandment like this in his book *Teaching Luther's Catechism*:

> A person should make himself free, take time for participation in the worship life of the congregation. The commandment is a judgment upon us in so far as we are so entangled in the tasks of daily life that we leave no room for God either inwardly or outwardly. But God wills that we should be free for him, for his gracious action in Word and Sacrament, and observe the ordinance of the day which makes it possible. … To be sure, in the light of the rest of God even mere rest from labor has its importance for earthly life which is not to be underestimated. For the person who is engulfed in the rush and busyness of everyday life it is simply necessary, if he is not to lose his real humanity. But it has been given to us not only in order to recoup strength for more labor. It has importance in itself, more than ever today, when we all tend to become cogs in the never ceasing machine of our workaday life. It has

[95] Luther, "The Third Commandment" in *Small Catechism,* 13.

[96] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 56.

[97] LC I.79 in Kolb and Wengert, 396–97.

> importance in itself when it is hallowed and given over to the power of God's love. And this does not mean that it must be filled only with religious exercises."[98]

What a blessing! Girgensohn's words proclaim the blessing God provides in love through worship and rest, and these are even more beneficial in an increasingly rushed and busy world. Paul Heintzman, in his book *Leisure and Spirituality,* explains how Luther managed to value rest right alongside of work:

> Although Luther saw work as very honorable, "a most holy thing and, as the means through which God blesses us," the high value he put on rest prevented him from idolizing work. Luther's evaluation of work was based on the Sabbath commandment that not only commands us to work but also establishes the limits to work by commanding us to rest. In Luther's hymn on the 10 commandments, he interpreted the Sabbath commandment in this sense: "From thine own work thou must be free, that God his work have in thee." In a letter of May 12, 1530, Luther exhorted Melanchthon: "We worship God when we rest; indeed there is no greater worship of God than this."[99]

That last quote from Luther clearly proclaims the gospel of salvation by grace alone, not by works.[100] Even in rest, by receiving the precious gifts God gives, Christians worship God and hallow His day. This is just as important today as ever, although Herbert Girgensohn presciently addressed this concern in the middle of the last century when wrote these words:

> The rest of Sunday can really become a resting in the limitless riches of the Father's goodness. The commandment to rest becomes a right and an obligation for a generation so weary and worn that it simply does not know what living means. And here, too, man ignores the will of his Creator at his own peril. Social order, with its rhythm of rest and work, will never become a fundamental reality except as mankind, tormented by unrest, learns again to hallow the day of rest.[101]

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[98] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 65.

[99] Paul Heintzman, *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 71. The Lutheran Service Book translates the hymn as "And put aside the work you do, /So that God may work in you." Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 581, st. 4.

[100] The message apparently did not sink in right away. Melanchthon was so consumed with his work writing the Apology to the Augsburg Confession that he continued writing even at the dinner table one Sunday. Luther was irate and plucked the pen from Melanchthon's hand while chastising him for breaking the Third Commandment. The incident was remembered and recorded by Johannes Mathesius, a student of Luther's in Wittenberg.

[101] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 66.

The world and the modern culture found in the United States sees the practice of making Sundays a day of rest becoming valued and practiced less and less. This can be an opportunity for Christians to act counterculturally by observing and hallowing the day of rest.

Despite the caricature of being a tireless worker, Martin Luther often found ways to rest and to take time for himself as well as taking advantage of opportunities for recreation and time with family. His understanding of the body in relation to oneself is different from both the ascetics, who would deny body pleasures, and the hedonists, who would indulge bodily pleasures. For Luther, the Christian's body is a matter of stewardship and freedom. Ewald Plass describes Luther's understanding that

> the Christian's body [is] the temple of God's Spirit. As such it was to be cherished and cared for, not despised and neglected. Physical exercise, diversions, and amusements were not to be considered a wasting of time. Any recreation that was not sinful in and of itself was allowable and might at times even be required and prescribed as a necessity. Such care of one's body was to be looked upon as a service rendered to God as truly as the care of one's soul…According to Luther the field of recreation was very broad, extending from simple resting…to the strenuous diversion of gardening.[102]

Plass also records a number of Luther's favorite pastimes. He enjoyed gardening and even did some target shooting with Veit Dietrich.[103] He kept honeybees, and, as an indoor activity, he liked chess. E.G. Schweibert also paints a picture of Luther joyfully spending time with his family, one we may not often consider but one which was likely incredibly important in keeping his perspective balanced as a theologian, professor, father, and husband.

> There was also provision for wholesome recreation in the Luther family life. There was a bowling lane in Luther's garden, much enjoyed by the young people and friends of the family. Sometimes Luther himself found time to roll a few balls. The children had ample space for play in the roomy grounds of the Luther House. Music and singing held a favored place in family amusements, and chess was a game much enjoyed by Luther. His delight in these family pastimes was expressed following a

[102] Ewald M. Plass, *This is Luther: A Character Study* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1948), 283.

[103] Plass, *This is Luther*, 284.

> particularly enjoyable hour of singing. "If the Lord God has given us such noble gifts already in this life, which is, after all, a storeroom, what will happen in yonder eternal life, where everything is entirely perfect and most lovely? In this world we have everything only in the rough."[104]

Luther comes to understand that rest and recreation are forms of worship. Paul Althaus sums up Luther's theology of rest and connects it to worship like this:

> God is God and he alone is the creator. We can worship God by resting; indeed in resting we can worship him better than in any other way because it is when we really relax our body and soul that we cast our care on God. We thus honor God as the one whose blessing rests upon and surrounds all our work, and who keeps on working for us even when we rest and sleep. The capacity truly to rest from our cares with our body and soul is a special confirmation of our faith and is related to justifying faith.[105]

It does not take a leap of faith to see how Luther's understanding of justification and God's righteousness seeps out into all aspects of life. All of God's blessings are unmerited gifts, and we have a God who deeply loves us and cares for us, providing everything we need for each day of our lives regardless of our merit or worthiness. This comforting doctrine freed Luther and frees us to truly enjoy God and to abide in Him, even as we rest.

Conclusion

The continuing challenges associated with rightly teaching sanctification are noted in *Confessing the Gospel*. There, we read the following:

> There is more than a little reluctance among some Lutherans to preach and teach sanctification. Some of this grows out of the concern that if Christians are told to amend their lives and to do good works they might count on this for their salvation. This is a valid concern. However, the appropriate response is not to avoid scriptural teaching about sanctification, but rather to present it properly—as a result of God's gift of salvation. Distinguishing between passive and active righteousness as presented in Luther and the Lutheran Confessions is essential for preserving the church's central article of justification by grace alone through faith alone, while also providing space for a lively and relevant declaration of God's will for his people.

[104] E.G. Schweibert, *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective* (St. Louis: Concordia. 1950), 598.

[105] Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 104.

> Lutherans need not fear the call for good works or the claim that Christians are expected to live vibrant and pious lives that flow from faith and reflect the will of God. Such Christian living serves God and the neighbor as a result, not as the cause, of one's salvation.[106]

The teachings and practices taught by PLI in D2MC demonstrate just what is called for here: a "call for good works" and "the claim that Christians are expected to live vibrant and pious lives that flow from faith and reflect the will of God." This is not only solidly grounded in confessional Lutheran theology but is illuminated by what has been taught by Luther and other teachers of the faith throughout history. Approaching the concept of discipleship from a Lutheran perspective brings out some strong flavors and emphases that have deepened the joy and peace of Christians for centuries. The concept of discipleship as imitating Christ as we see Him in the lives of other faithful Christians brings confidence to Christians in a way that can inspire everyone to see their lives as worthy of being followed for the sake of Christ. The application of Covenant and Kingdom gives simple, reproducible, Scriptural verbiage to the doctrine of Two Kinds of Righteousness: an important distinction for any orthodox Christian to be able to share. The *kairos*/learning circle expands on Covenant and Kingdom and gives it a framework for application for oneself and for others. The Integrated Life Triangle then gives a pattern for Christians to understand and grow in their relationships, and the Semicircle reminds them of the foundation of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit from which all these sanctified acts are done.

The next chapter will explore how some of these concepts have been applied in recent research, including several other MAPs and other academic papers, as well as several books relating to discipleship.

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[106] Nafzger, *Confessing the Gospel*, 1108.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENT RESEARCH

In this chapter, I will review several sources that address the topic of discipleship from different angles. Because of the enormous influence of Mike Breen in developing the discipleship teachings and processes used by 3DM and later adopted by PLI in D2MC, I will begin with a PhD dissertation summarizing and critiquing the discipleship methods used by Mike Breen and established at the church he served in the 2000s in Sheffield, England. After that, I will share some reviews of five of Mike Breen's books as well as other books that approach the topic of discipleship from different perspectives. Then I will discuss some recent research including several MAPs.

The Influence of Mike Breen and 3DM

In this section I am reviewing research and literature that is directly related to 3DM and Mike Breen, so the criticisms in this section are not related to PLI or the D2MC program. However, as there have been some churches and pastors in the LCMS who have worked directly with 3DM instead of PLI, it may be helpful to be aware of some of the shortcomings of 3DM and Mike Breen's books in light of Lutheran theology. In addition, a review of this literature is appropriate since the curriculum taught by PLI in the D2MC program is based on the 3DM discipleship training developed by Mike Breen.

In 2012, Nicholas R. Allan submitted a dissertation towards his MA degree at the University of Sheffield titled *Purely Pragmatic? The Understanding of God, Mission, and Church Behind St. Thomas' Church Philadelphia, Sheffield.*[1] In his paper, Allan gives a snapshot

[1] For reasons beyond my knowledge, the original paper has since been edited and republished as Nicholas Allan, "A Theological Critique of the Models of Ecclesiology and Missiology of St Thomas' Church, Philadelphia,

of the organizational structure of St. Thomas' Church in Sheffield, England in the early 2010s. His insights come shortly after Mike Breen's departure for the United States, and the structure of St. Thomas' Church at that time is based on Breen's somewhat idiosyncratic missional ecclesiology. The structure, teachings, and language of St. Thomas' Church at that time form the basis of what Breen taught in the United States and around the world in the early stages of 3DM's work.

The first section of Allan's dissertation describes the organizational structure of St. Thomas' Church, including some helpful background information regarding the founding of the church. St. Thomas' was planted as an Anglican-Baptist Local Ecumenical Project (LEP), and by straddling the denominational lines between the Church of England and the Baptist Union of Great Britain, it was able to grow in a space that did not require strict adherence to one denominational ecclesiology or polity.[2] There, the church was able to develop "vision, values, vehicles, and vocabulary." The *vision* is a call for disciples to grow in "living sold-out lives for, and because of, Jesus' love" at the cost of "time, money and resources" devoted to this cause.[3] *Values* include a theology based on the biblical themes of covenant and kingdom, the principle of low control/high accountability, and the desire to live a balanced life in three dimensions: up, in, and out.[4] *Vehicles* refers to the four different sizes of groups and the different kinds of interactions and outcomes, from large gatherings of 50 or more people, to the missional communities of 15–35 people, to small groups of 4–12 people, and down to two to four person

Sheffield" (master's thesis, University of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, 2012).

[2] Allan, "Theological Critique," 2–3.

[3] Allan, "Theological Critique," 4–5.

[4] Allan, "Theological Critique," 5–7.

accountability groups.[5] Finally, *vocabulary* refers to the use of Lifeshapes, the memorable tools based on geometric shapes which have been introduced earlier in this project.[6]

In the second section, Allan analyzes the theology that underpins St. Thomas' approach to ministry, beginning with the focus on the *missio dei* as articulated by Karl Barth, David J. Bosch, Lesslie Newbigin, C.J.H. Wright, and Alan Hirsch. The ecclesiology of St. Thomas', in the absence of prescribed denominational patterns, is set up to focus on evangelism and contextualization.[7] Allan then lines up St. Thomas' and evaluates it according to what defines the "essence" of church, beginning with the work of Newbigin and Bosch, but then more fully exploring it in light of Miroslav Volf's *After Our Likeness* and Steven Croft's "Mapping Ecclesiology for a Mixed Economy." In the latter application, Allan exposes one of the weaknesses of using Lifeshapes as an all-inclusive theology. Croft adds another dimension to the Up-In-Out "balanced life" espoused by 3DM: "OF," which he lines up according to the Nicene description of the church as "one (IN), holy (UP), catholic (OF) and apostolic (OUT)."[8] By doing this, he shows how Breen's discipleship program has unmoored his church's theological beliefs from a comprehensive, systematic doctrinal tradition. Allan returns to this "of" dimension repeatedly throughout the rest of his dissertation.[9]

In the next section, Allan compares the ecclesiology of St. Thomas' with Stephan B. Bevans's six *Models of Contextual Theology*, remarking that St. Thomas' "does not have a particular emphasis upon either 'Mystical communion' or 'Sacrament' which is a fair critique of

[5] Allan, "Theological Critique," 7–10.

[6] Allan, "Theological Critique," 10–11.

[7] Allan, "Theological Critique," 18–19.

[8] Allan, "Theological Critique," 23.

[9] Allan, "Theological Critique," 24, 49–50, 53, 62, 68.

its ecclesiology, although not surprising given that it sits at the charismatic-evangelical-protestant end of the spectrum, and thus holds a low sacramental theology."[10] I have picked up on this, too, and this manifests in Breen's book *Building a Discipling Culture*, which I review later in this chapter.

The next comparison Allan makes is to the "unity and diversity in the early church of Acts based on the scholarship of Loveday Alexander."[11] Alexander's work demonstrates her contention that there is no prescriptive ecclesiastical pattern of leadership to be found in Acts, but that unity is found in a common home base for ministry, which actively encourages a diversity of expressions, like St. Thomas' model of ministry. This results in an organization that has more in common with a network than a formal, ecclesial body. In fact, Allan points out that the lack of connection that is tolerated between missional communities and the larger church when they meet apart from the sacraments leads to accusations of "lacking sufficient 'marks' to be called 'church' at all."[12] (This is clearest in footnote 111: "Since the sacraments are often absent from MCs [missional communities], they are arguably not local churches."[13]) That's not all. Allan also points out that Breen's devaluing of the pastoral office as opposed to his elevation of the priesthood of all believers leaves the church open to another danger:

> In a church with such a strong missional-incarnational emphasis, the danger is that legitimate pastoral concerns—the issues of loving the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–27)—are undermined or overlooked. It is worth noting that Catholic and Orthodox theology typically focuses on incarnation in Christ, rather than humanity, which raises fair questions as to whether STP's approach is insufficiently sacramental, and whether the high value on lay leadership devalues the role of priest.[14]

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[10] Allan, "Theological Critique," 31.

[11] Allan, "Theological Critique," 32.

[12] Allan, "Theological Critique," 40.

[13] Allan, "Theological Critique," 40.

[14] Allan, "Theological Critique," 43.

As a Lutheran, I would point out that we share that focus on the sacramental presence of Christ with Catholic and Orthodox churches, and we likewise place a higher value on the importance of ordained leadership in the church who deal with such "pastoral concerns." From my experience with 3DM, I believe that Allan's "fair questions" are entirely legitimate, and this devaluing of both the sacraments and clergy is apparent elsewhere in Breen's talks and books, notably in *Building a Discipling Culture* (see below).

Allan comes back to his concern about the church's lack of emphasis on the "OF" dimension by pointing out St. Thomas' "potential" blind spots, namely a lack of catholicity, leaving a void that is quickly filled by their "obvious commitment to 'context'." He writes:

> Ordering a church around what Hirsch calls the 'missional incarnational imperative' also leaves potential for STP's own blind spots. For example, there is a danger that its focus is too weighted to "OUT" at expense of "IN" and "OF". This essay has noted some weaknesses in STP's catholicity because of its large fringe and multiple dispersed MCs, and its slightly diluted relationship to its founding denominations, due to it being an LEP. The essential question is whether or not the "constraints" of Christianity are being applied sufficiently, as well as STP's obvious commitment to "context". This prevents pragmatism above coherent Christianity.[15]

Indeed, pragmatism is undoubtedly favored at St. Thomas. Allan goes on to explain the danger:

> Since STP is so diverse in practice and leadership, it must strive to ensure that *all* of the essence of church remain covered *somewhere* in its practices. Otherwise it may miss some vital elements, not deliberately, but as a consequence of its decentralized methodologies. This is a common critique of fresh expressions of church, which some commentator [sic] like Hull accuse of selling-out to contemporary post-institutional consumerist culture by making church "in our likeness," or of dropping historic practices like frequent Eucharist celebration. A danger lies in STP's Missional Communities becoming too homogeneous, or focusing on certain aspects of the Christian faith and neglecting others, since they are encouraged to foster their own distinct visions and outward actions within what is a very broad vision-framework set by the STP leadership team.[16]

[15] Allan, "Theological Critique," 50.

[16] Allan, "Theological Critique," 51.

The lack of pastoral accountability among the Missional Communities, along with the lack of denominational accountability for St. Thomas as a whole, means that there is danger for those whose only connection to the church is through Missional Communities. Allan points out that Missional Communities already face the temptation to become inwardly focused, just small gatherings of people who are already Christians "recreating their favourite bits of church."[17] Without pastoral accountability and accountability within the larger church and to a denomination, there is less and less of church left. Allan concludes, "STP must be careful to honour its denominational ties through robust accountability, in order to avoid falling into a gap between any formal relationships or catholicity."[18]

This is, I would argue, one of the strengths of PLI. Instead of seeking to create community apart from the church, they seek to work in connection with the LCMS and in full agreement with the Scriptures and Lutheran confessions. We in the LCMS grant upmost importance to the sacraments and emphasize Christ's presence in those sacraments. Furthermore, our polity draws a much clearer line of authority and accountability. While liturgy, doctrine, and sacraments are present in St. Thomas, they are not the unifying principles they are in Lutheranism.

Review of Mike Breen's Books

Since much of the D2MC program is built on and flows from the work of Mike Breen, I will begin this review by looking at some of Breen's books that served as the original basis for 3DM's discipleship model and training. In the early 2010s, before PLI began the D2MC program, the following four books each formed the basis for what 3DM taught in each of their

[17] Allan, "Theological Critique," 63.

[18] Allan, "Theological Critique," 67.

four immersions. These books are *Building a Discipling Culture,*[19] *Multiplying Missional Leaders,*[20] *Launching Missional Communities,*[21] *and Building Kingdom Movements.*[22] In 2013, *Launching Missional Communities* was replaced by *Leading Missional Communities.*[23] Despite the similar title and subject, the content of the latter is markedly different than the former. In 2015, Mike Breen and his wife Sally also came out with their book *Family on Mission*[24] which began to be incorporated in the content taught by 3DM in their immersions. After that, 3DM moved to a program of five immersions, using the *Family on Mission* material throughout the two-year cycle. It was around this time that PLI began their D2MC training with the cooperation and blessing of the leadership of 3DM.

It is important to reiterate that PLI does not teach or unconditionally recommend these books, so the theological issues I point out here in Breen's writings are not reflected in the notes or teachings of PLI or any of the teachers in their D2MC program.

Review of *Building a Discipling Culture*

What DID Jesus do? It seems like a simple question, and yet one that many churches today fail to not only answer, but often even ask. In the quest to grow bigger and better churches to reach more people for Christ, Christians have strayed a long way off from the simple, yet difficult path towards discipleship that Jesus laid out for people who would follow Him. In this

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[19] Mike Breen and the 3DM Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 2nd ed. (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011).

[20] Mike Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2012).

[21] Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM, 2010).

[22] Mike Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2013).

[23] Mike Breen and the 3DM Team, *Leading Missional Communities: Rediscovering the Power of Living on Mission Together* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2013).

[24] Mike and Sally Breen, *Family on Mission: Integrating Discipleship into the Fabric of Our Everyday Lives,* 2nd ed. (USA: 3DM, 2018).

book, Mike Breen revisits Jesus' life and asks, "What did Jesus do?" and more specifically, "How did Jesus make disciples?" This is a book about how to make disciples. There are three main parts: first, Understanding Discipleship; second, Lifeshapes: our Discipling Language; and third, Using Huddles to Disciple People.[25]

First, Breen lays out a summary of his journey and findings regarding discipleship. He contends that Jesus left the church with the one task: to make disciples. However, in recent history, the church has made disciples who look more like church members than followers of Jesus. To be like Jesus, disciples need to act like Jesus, and to make disciples like Jesus, disciples must be made in the same way as Jesus made disciples. Since Jesus made disciples by spending significant portions of His life apprenticing His closest followers, we should do the same.[26]

Jesus used a combination of invitation and challenge, creating a culture that was at once highly inviting and highly challenging.[27] He taught by imparting information, then apprenticing the disciples, and finally letting them be immersed in the culture to which they were sent.[28] The idea presented is to take people through these three phases of learning like Jesus and build a culture around that. In order to do that, a "discipleship vehicle" called a huddle is needed. A huddle is a regular (weekly or bi-weekly) meeting where a leader comes together with people to teach them to live like Jesus and hold them accountable for that growth. Furthermore, the disciples also need access to the discipler's life and a discipling language, called "Lifeshapes."[29]

The second part of the book includes numerous chapters describing shapes that make up

[25] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*.

[26] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 29–31.

[27] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 16–20.

[28] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 21–35.

[29] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 38.

the Lifeshapes discipling language. Breen incorporates years of learning and practice as a pastor and leader to synthesize a memorable and effective set of tools—a language—to help people live more like Jesus did.

The *Kairos* Circle is a tool for helping people to stop and process and learn from what's going on in their life. It helps answer the questions, "What is God saying to me" and "What am I going to do about it?"[30]

The Triangle shows three dimensions of relationships in the lives of Christians: UP to God, IN with other Christians, and OUT to non-Christians.[31]

The semi-circle illustrates the pendulum of life swinging from rest to work and back. It reminds us to take time to rest and abide, to renew our strength in the Lord. This concept of resting to work is a notable shift from what people usually do: working until they need to rest.[32]

The square's four sides explain the four steps to developing leaders: I do, you watch (show somebody what you do); I do, you help (let them help); You do, I help (let them try, with supervision); and finally, you do, I watch (where they begin to take on responsibility).[33]

The Pentagon represents the fivefold ministries of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher, derived from Ephesians 4, and asks "How has God wired me to serve?" Most people center on one, but often move out of that place of strength for a period of time.[34]

The Hexagon is based on six petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and this teaches how to relate to God the Father.[35] Spiritual Health is taught with the heptagon, which shows the functions of a

[30] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 55–66.

[31] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 67–83.

[32] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 85–97.

[33] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 99–112.

[34] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 113–29.

[35] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 131–39.

spiritually healthy body, including movement, respiration, sensitivity, nutrition, growth, reproduction, and excretion.[36]

Finally, the octagon is used for teaching about people of peace: people who will allow you to lead them to Christ: Seven principles are taught about people of peace: presence, passing relationships, permanent relationships, proclamation, preparation, power, and perception. These principles guide Christians in thinking about who in may be open to hearing the Gospel. "Who is God calling me to reach?"[37]

The third part of the book talks about huddles. A huddle is a small group that meets weekly or biweekly as a place for spiritual formation as disciples are made using invitation and challenge. The launch guide in the book talks about what to do before beginning a huddle, then teaches about mission in a huddle, and what to do after all the shapes have been taught.[38] There are also sample outlines for teaching the circle, semi-circle, and triangle.[39]

In many ways this book is revolutionary, helpful, and motivating. It is broken down into logical steps answering the question "How do we make disciples?" That is exactly the question on a lot of people's minds. Another helpful point of this book is the acknowledgment of differences between introverts and extroverts in topics like spiritual gifts and rest. I appreciate the distinctions he makes. They have helped me to see myself and my gifts more clearly.

There are also some significant differences between Breen's theology and Lutheran theology. A disdain for liturgy and rote memorization pops up in the book. Furthermore, there is a lack of interaction with the sacraments, which Lutherans traditionally see as foundational for

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[36] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 141–51.

[37] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 153–63.

[38] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 183–93.

[39] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 195–216.

our faith, and some leanings towards the charismatic gifts which are questionable especially in the section on "power" in the chapter on the Octagon regarding persons of peace. These bring to mind the teachings of John Wimber in books like *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today*.[40] I would recommend handling these sections carefully if employing this book with lay persons.

Breen's contempt for traditional liturgy also appears in quotes like "the familiarity of worship may not necessarily breed contempt but indifference."[41] While I understand his concern—that the repetition of liturgy week after week may seem ordinary and mundane—I think he throws out the baby with the bathwater when he throws out liturgy. It is also interesting how he comes to talk about prayer almost like a sacrament, instead of depending on God's Word and communion as the ways God comes to us. Breen says things like, "Jesus' Up relationship with his Father through prayer was key to his fruitfulness in his ministry and relationships" and "prayer is what believers need most to be effective disciples of Christ."[42]

Other parts of the book, however, correspond quite well to Lutheran theology. When he talks about repenting and believing, Breen writes that repenting is the inner change, whereas believing has to do with actions, acting according to repentance. This actually fits perfectly with the Lutheran Confessions, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. I also appreciated Breen's contention that a Christian's "authority does not come from how smart he or she is but from the Word of God and the power of a transformed life."[43]

Another key assertion of Breen's is that the church has developed a "religious" rather than

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[40] John Wimber, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

[41] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 74.

[42] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 131.

[43] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 122.

a "discipling" language, and that language creates a culture.[44] I find it interesting that this is the opposite of much in the church growth movement. While many churches claim to avoid "Christian-ese," they still have developed their own vocabulary and culture. By doing so, they reflect accepted corporate culture in businesses like Starbucks, which has become incredibly successful at implementing and teaching a specific vocabulary (i.e., "tall, grande, and venti" instead of "small, medium, and large") and creating its own unique culture.

When I first began to read this book in 2012, I was hungry for a plan of discipleship that would be effective and yet one that I could integrate with my Lutheran heritage. For several years prior, I had come to believe that discipleship was the key to ministry. However, there were so many different plans and books and ideas and programs that I felt overwhelmed with the sheer volume of possibilities. On top of that, I wanted something that would not be a simple one-and-done program like a sermon series, but something I could apply and work with and teach for years and even decades. After PLI and a friend of mine in the area both recommended this book and I was invited into a huddle with a local pastor, I began to see that the concepts taught in the Lifeshapes and 3DM were the next step in my ministry. I was brought into a highly inviting yet highly challenging culture where I found a reasonable and familiar parallel to law and gospel, where the challenge of the law and the invitation of the gospel are both seen as good things for Christians and are necessary for salvation.

Review of *Multiplying Missional Leaders*

As the follow-up to *Building a Discipling Culture*, Mike Breen's *Multiplying Missional Leaders* moves beyond giving a language and a vehicle for making disciples to a practical book

[44] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 48.

about making disciples who will, in turn, make more disciples.[45] In it, he asks the questions, "How do we create, shape, train, and multiply missional leaders?" and "How do we release these leaders intentionally and purposefully, under a broad vision, so that God's Kingdom advances as a missional movement begins?"[46]

Breen points out that the Western Christian church has done very little in the way of training leaders to minister to others beyond living a moral life and working in the organization of the church. Often in the church, leaders simply look for people with the skills to plug into the already developed positions. Organizations and plug-and-play programs are not always transportable and frequently do not honor people's strengths. People in these churches have little or no capacity or competence in individually making disciples.[47]

The goal, Breen says, is to develop missional leaders who can mobilize groups of 20–50 people.[48] Leaders must be known for two things: Character and Competency. A person's faithfulness reveals their character, and the spiritual fruit they bear shows competency.[49] In leadership pipelines, there are three filters used to figure out if a person is right for leadership. The first filter looks at four "C"s: Character, Capacity, Chemistry, Calling. This is asking about how the person acts, is known by others, gets along with people, is able to lead other people, and sees himself as committed to the task at hand. The second filter is competency, seeing if the person is both ready for the job and available for leadership. The third filter is "be strategic." Those who seem most likely to lead the most people are given first priority. Leaders then

[45] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders.*

[46] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 6.

[47] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 1–6.

[48] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 7.

[49] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 14–15.

disciple people who disciple more people, which makes much more efficient use of the available time.[50]

From that point on, discipling itself is relatively simple; not complicated, but it is hard. This does not need to be done in the context of a completely new program, and often it is best to invite people into what we already do and make that part of our life together. Using the three main Lifeshapes of the *kairos* circle, triangle, and square, a leadership engine is created, and missional leaders are trained and freed to function without the direct intervention of the initiating leader.[51]

Another big takeaway is the chapter on covenants and capitals. Christians today live in covenants with God, our families, our extended missional families (if we have developed them), and finally, our jobs.[52] How we prioritize these covenants profoundly shapes how we live our lives. Within these covenants, we have five capitals in which we invest. Breen lists them in order from the hardest to get to the easiest: Spiritual capital, Relational capital, Physical capital, Intellectual capital, and Financial capital.[53] Unfortunately, in our lives we often flip the priorities upside down, making sacrifices of spiritual, relational, or physical capital for a higher-paying job or an academic degree. However, the point is not to always sacrifice the less valuable capitals for the ones that are most valuable, but simply to be well supplied in whatever is needed.[54]

Breen should be commended for his desire to remain faithful to not only the scriptures but also the methods used in the New Testament by Jesus and especially Paul for making disciples.

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[50] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 78–83.

[51] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 73–83.

[52] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 101.

[53] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 105.

[54] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 105–9.

He really is practicing what he preaches, as evident by the use of four Vs, which are very close to what Allan points out are used to define St. Thomas'.[55] The only difference is that in *Multiplying Missional Leaders*, Breen puts "vocabulary" as an overarching category, and replaces it with "valuation" as one of four subcategories that influence the culture being created.[56] I also appreciated his hat tip to the value of Holy Communion as a gift that reminds us of our covenantal, God-given identity.[57]

Unlike *Building a Discipling Culture*, there are a lot of tools offered in this book to help guide organizations in mobilizing disciples. While they are helpful, they are not as memorable. Instead of each chapter focusing on one concept or *Lifeshape*, Breen often uses three or more tools and illustrations, and it can be hard to keep track of them. Also, when he addresses Jesus' temptation, he glosses over some of the details of the text in order to make the message fit the three alliterative categories of temptations: appetite, approval, and ambition.[58] Breen also takes similar liberties with his use of Ezekiel 47.[59] Finally, while Breen dismisses the "plug-and-play" approach to getting people involved in ministry, and there is some validity to the fact that some people will not fit into existing volunteer opportunities, there are also some people who need that kind of connection to build relationships and to grow in their faith. Some will grow and mature over the years to the point that they are ready for what this book offers.

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[55] Allan, "A Theological Critique," 4–11.

[56] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 111.

[57] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 42. Breen does, however, say that "we are re-enacting [Christ's death and resurrection] with the Lord's Supper" which is not an accurate description of our Lutheran understanding of what is happening in the Sacrament.

[58] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 24–40.

[59] Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders,* 130–32.

Review of *Launching Missional Communities*

Launching Missional Communities by Mike Breen and Alex Absalom is written in three main sections, sandwiched between an introduction and examples.[60] The authors begin by introducing the concepts involved in missional communities. The first main part, entitled "Key Concepts," lays out the language and philosophical background for missional communities. Second is the "Launch Guide: How to launch a missional community." This section details the steps of preparing for, running, and growing a missional community in the context of a larger church, while including an addendum about planting churches using missional communities as the predominant organizational tool. The third part talks about life in missional communities, talking about who will lead a missional community as well as spending some time exploring how they relate to "Up, In, Out" as a measure of health and how that looks in a missional community. Finally, the addendum gives some examples of churches which have made the transition to utilizing missional communities as a major part of their ministry. The overarching motive behind this book is the belief that the church is the instrument of God's mission. Without a mission, there would be no church. The church is to be an "effective, indigenous witness for Christ."[61]

This book affords a chance to think more deeply about the "attractional vs. missional" dichotomy. Some churches try to be attractional all the time. Other churches fancy themselves as almost anti-attractional, claiming to be solely focused on "being missional" in the sense of sending people out. The truth is that every church needs to be attractional at some level. There is, however, a decision made as to how much of a church's resources will be spent on these attractions, what sort of attractions they will support and how much they will challenge their

[60] Breen and Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities*.

[61] Breen and Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities*, 28.

members to do the work of the church. Most churches, even large ones, cannot afford to focus overwhelmingly on the attractional methods. It's interesting how the LCMS National Youth Gathering makes for an attractional pilgrimage experience, and yet I wonder what the results are as far as mobilizing the attendees for serving in their churches and serving the larger church.[62]

As someone whose "fivefold" spiritual gifts put me in the category of teacher, I appreciated the comment that teachers will often "go into an existing setting where the witness for Christ is struggling or almost extinguished."[63] I feel like this has described both of the settings in which I have been called as pastor. Breen teaches that a leader needs to stay with a person of peace until either the relationship bears fruit or the leader concludes that person is no longer a person of peace. Teachers are explained as those who can stay for an extended period of time but will "eventually begin to look for a fresh context."[64]

Setting the right outcomes is an important value in this book. Those who lead churches do not want to mislead people by setting goals of worship attendance or money, which may lead to a rise in their importance above Scriptural faithfulness or the good of the church at large.

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[62] In the past year, I have seen some fruit of the National Youth Gathering (hereafter NYG) in that one member of my church got married to a young woman he had met at a gathering half a dozen years ago, and another member has started a long-distance dating relationship with someone she met there.

Additionally, research collected by LCMS Research Services regarding the NYG has shown that there is value to these experiences. "These larger events showed up in the data as heavily correlated with strong retention in the church. Feedback from open-ended questions helped explain why the LCMS Youth Gathering and other such events were so important to the young people. While many large-scale events have programming designed to leave a lasting impression, the common reflection from these young Lutherans was much more fundamental. When they were at these events, they had a chance to see that they are not alone. There were hundreds or thousands of other young people, just like them, who believe what they believe. At regional, national, and international events, such as the LCMS Youth Gathering, young people see the breadth of the church. Young people benefit as they see their connectedness to the Body of Christ beyond their local congregation and high school years." in Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Youth Ministry, *Relationships Count: Engaging and Retaining Millenials* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2019), 209–10.

[63] Breen and Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities*, 68.

[64] Breen and Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities*, 68. When I originally reviewed this book, I was in my fifth year at my previous church, longer than I'd stayed anywhere else since childhood. As of spring of 2023, I am in year seven of my next call.

However, the Lutheran measurements traditionally emphasized people receiving the gifts of God, specifically by counting reception of sacraments such as baptisms and the number of times communion is received, in addition to worship attendance and confirmation. Lutherans customarily stayed away from anything which would place value solely on human acts. The attitude seems to be that we can do good works, but we should not count them.

Breen's view of what a pastor is called to do and prioritize is at odds with the views of some in the Lutheran Church, especially those who espouse the view that a pastor's primary role (and sometimes exclusive role) is that of the *seelsorger.* This raises a number of questions for which the answers remain up for debate, including the following: What were the roles of pastors in the first century church especially in light of preaching and administering the sacraments in these early gatherings? How do Lutheran pastors faithfully administer the sacraments in a missional community, especially in light of the historical restrictions that seem to have existed in the first four centuries? Another concern is related to preaching. The Augsburg Confession strongly supports the notion that only a "properly called" pastor should preach.[65] How does this work in a missional community? What constitutes preaching and authoritative teaching in a missional community? While it does not seem like the early church required every pastor to move away for four years to get a seminary education before leading worship, theological education is important, which is why Paul appears to spend three years studying before the bulk of his ministry in Acts 9 and Galatians 1.

Review of *Leading Missional Communities*

Leading Missional Communities[66] was published in 2013 as a significant rewrite of

[65] AC XIV in Kolb and Wengert, 47.

[66] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*.

Launching Missional Communities. On the surface, there are significant differences in the formatting of the book, and the change in emphasis reflected in the first word of the title is explained in the first chapter of the book, which explains that the goal of missional communities is to facilitate the development of a household (*oikos*, in the New Testament Greek). Five characteristics define a Missional Community:

1. 20–40 people.
2. Clear Mission Vision—focused on sharing the good news of Jesus and making disciples.
3. Lightweight/Low Maintenance—inexpensive, easy to plan, and not bound by a building.
4. An Accountable Leader—supported by the leadership of a wider church.
5. Up/In/Out Rhythm—focused on growing in these three dimensions.[67]

Breen adds some teaching here that builds on themes that were introduced in previous books. He does not bring in the triangles that were used to introduce Covenant and Kingdom, but spends several pages showing how the themes of Covenant and Kingdom manifest in a Missional Community as the themes of Christ's substitution and Christ's victory.[68] In addition, the Up-In-Out triangle[69] and Persons of Peace[70] are also described in this new context. Breen adds that missional communities are to be both organized and organic. They can be both structured and spontaneous. Discipleship is a lifestyle, not an event.[71]

The nearly 50-page "Launch Guide" included in *Launching Missional Communities* is distilled into two short chapters, explaining that the key ingredients for a starting a missional community are vision and prayer, followed by three examples of different size starts for missional communities from a dozen or so down to what a couple can do. The rest of the book,

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[67] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities,* 7–11.

[68] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 22–30.

[69] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 19.

[70] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 31–34.

[71] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 35–39.

then, deals with the continuing growth and maintenance of a missional community.

One of the helpful paradigms that is explained in this book is the idea of "evangelism as a community." Especially in a culture as individualistic as that of the United States of America, we are heavily influenced by both our national culture and religious fundamentalism and thus think of evangelism as being something tantamount to a personal decision that comes about because of a one-on-one experience of "being led to Christ." Breen pushes back on this idea of evangelism as being something personal and instead describes evangelism as when "we take the People of Peace we have as individuals and introduce them to an entire community."[72]

This revision also paints a much clearer picture of what a missional community looks like in connection with a larger worshipping body, so that this is more than a small group but not a replacement for the local church. Being connected to a local church and even a denomination builds in a means for accountability, which is essential in creating the ideal "low-control, high accountability environment" in which missional communities thrive.[73] As Lutherans, we must be clear that any Word and Sacrament ministry must be accountable to those called to the Office of the Holy Ministry. Breen also encourages financial connection to the greater church in the form of tithing.[74]

I also appreciate that Breen encourages missional communities to "gather with the wider church at a service no less than once a month,"[75] but I can't help but wonder why they cannot meet at some other time of the week for their missional community get-togethers in addition to Sunday mornings. To me, that seems like selling out to the culture of busyness as opposed to

[72] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 72–73.

[73] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 75.

[74] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 98.

[75] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 129.

being a truly counter-cultural, Christ-following discipling movement.

One last gem is found in the conclusion, titled "Small things with great love." Breen takes this from a quote by Mother Theresa and then highlights how the early Christians, when faced with epidemics, simply "extended care and love beyond the boundaries of family and tribe and took care of any sufferers they came across."[76] I think that Martin Luther would chuckle knowingly at this description of what he would call vocation, as Breen's conclusion is much the same as much of Luther's messages to simply care for and love one's neighbor in whatever way is needed.

Review of *Leading Kingdom Movements*

Leading Kingdom Movements is the capstone of the four-book series by Mike Breen, continuing on the theme of making disciples and expanding to give a rationale for all his work through 3DM (which begins to stand for "Three Dimension Movement" shortly after the time this book is published in 2013) and his life's ministry.[77] This book provides an overview of how all of the previous books and the tools and techniques therein are aligned for this one purpose.

There are two major parts of this book. First, Breen writes about his own personal journey as a leader, though from the perspective of how God has shaped his character as a leader and as a movement catalyst. The second part then chronicles what it takes to lead a movement, this time from the Biblical perspective of St. Paul.

Breen begins by talking about the cultural landscape in which we find ourselves today, including the growing feelings of uncertainty and the retreat of a dominantly Christian culture. The response is not so overwhelming: as we follow Jesus, we can meet people by offering

[76] Breen and Team, *Leading Missional Communities*, 109.

[77] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*.

compassion, community, a connecting story, and a compass to provide direction even when the old maps are no longer useful.[78] In order to let God work in us, we need to acknowledge our brokenness.[79] Once we do that, we learn to rely on God's Spirit, because He can work miracles and make us a part of a new community, a family of soldiers.[80]

It is important, Breen writes, to take account of our current situation, and where we find battles, those places of high opportunity but in which we are not well equipped, to answer them with grace.[81] In those situations we are to search for the ways God is already working.[82] At the same time we respond to failures, those places where opportunities can be met with our strength, by stepping forth to action in faith.[83]

Breen contends that faith communities should no longer be resourced solely by the usual plate offerings collected in worship. They need to take advantage of opportunities to share with other communities and to create wealth through other opportunities, such as utilizing bi-vocational workers and leveraging the resources available to us in order to fund and support what the community needs.[84]

After a short chapter where Breen talks about building and developing a team and the growth of missional communities,[85] he concludes the first section by telling a story about how he was oblivious to how influential his church was until they all got together to pray after 9/11.

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[78] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 8–9.

[79] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 27–36.

[80] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 42–43.

[81] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 48.

[82] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 49.

[83] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 50.

[84] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 59–67.

[85] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 72–76.

Hundreds of people, many of whom were not known to be connected to the church, showed up at the prayer service. This was an eye-opening moment, because he realized that the church had been growing and reproducing as a kingdom movement.[86]

The next section, on Paul's ministry, begins by retelling the story of Paul's call into ministry by highlighting his brokenness and how it turned it into the humility needed to give him God's mission. This mission led to a movement. Paul's message needed to connect the text to the context. Breen contends that our message must also do so.[87] Paul's method involved working not only publicly, in the temple but even more so in the home, among the extended family which Breen calls *oikos*.[88] Paul was assisted by miracles of the Holy Spirit to serve as the catalyst for a movement that was sustainable and scalable.[89] He taught information, led through imitation, and released for innovation.[90]

Breen demonstrates that Paul was simply following on the heels of Jesus, but as time went on, he needed new terminology. The Greeks and Romans were not familiar with the relationships between a Jewish rabbi and a student, so Paul begins talking about following Jesus using the example of a parent and child model, echoing the apprenticeship model of a rabbi and student but which was culturally relevant to the people to whom he was ministering and teaching.[91]

Breen points to three times in our lives when God's work in Christians can be very clear: Eruption (when we have mountaintop experiences and find ourselves bursting with the Holy

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[86] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 79–80.

[87] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 113–15.

[88] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 117–37.

[89] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 144.

[90] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 148–50.

[91] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 151–53.

Spirit), erosion (when we suffer trials), and earthquake (when a catastrophic event changes our lives).[92] However, the important work is done by excavation. By engaging in spiritual disciplines, we create channels to keep us connected to God's Spirit and through which He will flow into our lives even when in unhappiness.[93]

Breen's final section is called "The Mechanics of a Movement." In it, he explains that in order for a "sustainable Kingdom movement"[94] to be built, Jesus must be at the center. If Jesus truly is at the center and God's mission flows out from this center, then two characteristics will be apparent. First, this center will be fully charged with people who are living and growing in the three dimensions of up, in, and out. Second, people will leave and return, establishing a sort of orbit to their lives.[95] People are welcomed into an *oikos*/missional community, then brought into a discipling relationship in a huddle, and then in time, as they are called out again, move to create a new *oikos*/missional community of their own. In all of this, there is still a relationship maintained with a mission-sending center, the local church, but everything revolves around bringing people into relationships with God and other Christians for the sake of sharing with others, making disciples.[96]

One of the biggest positives about this book comes from Breen's honesty and humility in not lifting himself up as a hero, but instead pointing to his struggles and then to the grace of God working both around and through him. Some examples of this include the experience that Breen shares in chapter 2, "Breaking," as well as Paul's experiences that Breen relates in chapter 7,

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[92] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 158–63.

[93] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 163–65.

[94] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 167.

[95] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 169.

[96] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 174–76.

"Paul: A Man with a Mission," and then ultimately in chapter 11, "Navigating the Spiritual Terrain." By bringing out the lowlights of ministry in these chapters, Breen seems to be talking about the *tentatio* or *Anfechtung* that Luther considers as essential for the making of a theologian. Luther says about his own experiences that "through the devil's raging, [my opponents] have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much. That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have become otherwise."[97] Breen declares that "excavation" is how Christians find value in these experiences. "Spiritual disciplines are what we use for excavation," he says.[98] While Breen then points to books by Dallas Willard and Richard Foster to guide us as we develop these disciplines,[99] as Lutherans, we know of no better or more fruitful spiritual disciplines than *oratio* and *meditatio*—prayer and meditation. As usual, let the reader be aware of the varied influences on Breen when he quotes different authors, some of which lie outside of Lutheran orthodoxy.

Books Written by Others

Over the course of my time in the program, I was also assigned a several books which significantly influenced my thoughts on discipleship. These included *T4T,*[100] *Simple Church*,[101] *Exponential*[102] and *Church Unique*.[103] They share some concepts with D2MC, and PLI

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[97] Martin Luther, *Career of the Reformer IV*, ed. Lewis W. Spitz, vol. 34, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 287.

[98] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 163.

[99] Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, 164.

[100] Steve Smith and Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011).

[101] Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: B & H, 2006).

[102] Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

[103] Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create*

recommended them as supplemental texts to be read with a discerning eye, as they are not coming from a Lutheran perspective. These books each deal with the topic of making disciples but approach it from different perspectives. I will be identifying insights from each of these books that have been useful for my project as well as critiquing elements in them which are problematic.

Review of *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*

While the title *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* struck me as being a little cheesy and dated, it proved to be very insightful. *T4T*, or "Training for Trainers,"[104] tells the story of Ying Kai and the church planting movement he started in an unidentified Asian country. In it, co-author Steve Smith describes the disciple-making process Ying used to train new believers to form new communities where discipleship would be passed on from generation to generation.

The biggest contribution that this book makes, one that is not found in many other books, is that it gets to the heart of how disciples are taught. In a sense, it is an example of how to reverse-engineer the kinds of disciples we want to see. Instead of treating catechesis like a set of doctrines to be memorized, it treats it like a set of skills to be taught, which creates the kinds of disciples that will organize themselves into a church planting movement.

The process Ying Kai uses to teach new believers puts the disciple-reproducing imperative right on the front end, making reproduction the primary objective. As disciples are made, they are encouraged to first find new believers. This is in stark contrast to many other churches and teachers, who often call people out of their settings to leave behind those on whom they could

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Movement (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

[104] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 22.

have the biggest impact.[105]

As the book progresses, the authors talk about how important it is to have a personal and movement-focused vision, being ready to see a movement begin. Simple, reproducible steps are also necessary as discipleship is being taught, so subsequent generations of believers will be able to share what they learned with people who will also share what they learned, and so on. There also needs to be a system of accountability to make sure that people continue to grow in their faith.[106]

While there were a lot of similarities to the huddles used by 3DM and D2MC for discipleship, *T4T* filled in and expanded a lot of the discipleship strategy and philosophy. By putting reproduction and witnessing at the front of the discipleship model, it gives a higher priority to growth, which seems to be the tack taken by D2MC. Like 3DM and D2MC, there is accountability built into the discipleship meetings.[107] Also, some of the language was similar to 3DM and D2MC, such as the use of "persons of peace"[108] and *oikos* in talking about extended families or utilizing connections with people with whom we already have personal relationships.[109] This is also similar to what was used by the cell church movement and espoused more recently in books like *Sticky Church*.[110]

As is common in non-Lutheran Protestant theology, the book treats Baptism as an ordinance of initiation instead of a gift.[111] In addition, the word "go" in the Great Commission is

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[105] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 97–98.

[106] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 127–29.

[107] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 129–33.

[108] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 61.

[109] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 97.

[110] Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids.: Zondervan, 2008). This book promotes the sermon-based small group model of ministry used by Osborne at North Coast Church in San Diego County, CA.

[111] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 225, 239–47.

repeatedly mistranslated and construed as an imperative.[112] I would contend that Christians can make disciples "as they are going" just as well. One of the hardest changes for lifelong Christians is introducing those who grew up in Christianized cultures or even cultural bubbles to think of people of peace who would be receptive to the Gospel but who do not yet live lives of discipleship. The danger here is that people will implicitly hear that their faith is not enough, or that what they have been taught all their lives is inadequate or wrong. This may cause some people, especially those who are comfortable in their faith, to react harshly against this "new" teaching.

Review of *Simple Church*

Many churches, including those I have served over the course of my ministry, have gone through significant periods of numerical decline and often have an aging membership. As a result, the volunteers serving in these churches were often stretched too thin. In time, volunteers became harder to find and soon only a few people were available to keep programs going.

From this standpoint, I believe that Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger have a lot to offer in their book, *Simple Church.*[113] In this book, they suggest an "extreme makeover" for the church.[114] Instead of trying to be all things to all people, which often leads to a complex hodge-podge of loosely connected programs, they suggest that churches adopt a simplified but comprehensive discipleship plan. This plan, when developed, can then focus the energies of the church on a few essential activities.

Rainer and Geiger use four words to describe the steps that need to be followed: clarity,

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[112] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 35, 96.

[113] Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church.*

[114] Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church,* 57.

movement, alignment, and focus.[115] Clarity means that the process needs "to be communicated and understood by the people."[116] Movement means the process needs to sequentially move people "to greater areas of commitment."[117] Alignment consists of arranging "all ministries and staff around the same simple [discipleship] process."[118] Finally, focus is "a commitment to abandon everything that falls outside the simple [discipleship] process."[119]

The examples of transitioning to a Simple Church were helpful. It really does take all four of the aforementioned elements, and a lot of discipline, and a commitment to these changes that will last for years. In the examples given, the process took over four years with one church and at least two years of aligning the programs in another church.

All the beginning steps are important, but the step that may be the hardest is focus. Most churches do not do anything to focus their ministry on a few essentials that they can do well. Many churches labor for years and even decades under the delusion that to be successful they need to offer many different programs catering to peoples' different needs. In addition, it can be hard to shut down programs because good people are often involved, and feelings may be hurt. The authors believe that the sequential steps in a discipleship plan should be short-term, which reflects the understanding that many people in our culture are very busy and do not want to make long-term commitments.

The authors also offer a step-by-step process that walks through how to determine the kind of discipleship program needed. The additional hints of having a visual illustration that helps the

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[115] Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church,* 68.

[116] Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church,* 70.

[117] Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 72.

[118] Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 74.

[119] Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 76.

discipleship process stick in people's minds and measuring the steps in order to show short-term progress towards a long-term goal are also helpful. Finally, the process needs to be discussed and communicated until it becomes a part of who people are as church members.

The goal of *Simple Church* is to get all of the discipleship programs and the various activities together under one plan. This can be especially effective in small churches where there is no longer the manpower available to lead all the programs which accumulate and for which people ask and expect in churches.

Review of *Exponential*

How do you start a movement? Dave and Jon Ferguson believe that anyone can start a missional church movement. They explain how to do just that in their book *Exponential.*[120] Their book is divided into four sections that deal with reproducing the different sizes of groups of people. The first section lays out the first steps of leaders and the path of leadership, describing a model for apprenticeship and what is needed to reproduce leaders and artists.[121] The second section deals with reproducing groups of 10–100, including missional teams and coaches of these teams and groups.[122] The third section moves on to more of a how-to for reproducing sites for a church and planting churches.[123] Finally, the fourth section describes building an infrastructure for networks that will institutionalize a movement in order to accomplish Jesus' mission.[124]

While this book holds up peer-to-peer accountability as the premier way to motivate people and help them grow and lead, it can be difficult to establish. The authors talk about feedback as if

[120] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*.

[121] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 17–83.

[122] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 87–131.

[123] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 135–77.

[124] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 181–207.

it will always be welcomed and accepted, but that may not be the case. Not everyone will be motivated, and not every leader will accept responsibility and be willing to be held accountable. Unlike 3DM, D2MC, and *T4T*, the authors of this book are focused on one-on-one meetings for leadership development. While this allows for a lot of personalization, it is a more time-intensive approach than developing groups of leaders in a huddle.

The authors idealize artists as important people through which the church can work to influence the culture, while denigrating conservative, traditional churches. They say churches that would rather be right than risk failing will not attract artists. This seems like a false dichotomy. While there are many churches who are confident in what they teach and believe that they teach truth, the manner of how they teach can often work to either welcome people or put people off. There is something to be said for joyful, humble confidence.

There was a distinct lack of clarity between small groups and missional communities in the book. It is not clear where one ends and another begins, and what sizes of groups work best.[125] Regardless, there were important several points that this book taught and reinforced. The authors make a big deal of reproducing everybody, not only the up-front people, but also the behind-the-scenes people like those who work with technology. Any organization looking to grow, whether in discipleship or teaching specific skills utilized in the church, will be well-served by developing a system to recruit and train people to take part in that work.

There were some good suggestions in the book, such as the call to spiritual journaling, or the idea of reading until you find something that is interesting or relevant. Then write out those

[125] For anyone looking for a book that deals with this topic, I would suggest Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

verses with your observations in a journal.[126] The summary of the five steps of leadership development is also a helpful guide.[127] One of the biggest emphases throughout the book is the importance of leadership in all contexts, large and small. The authors admonish the reader to remember that a small group is not necessarily ready to split when it gets to a certain size. It is only ready to split when a new leader is ready to take the reins and people are ready to follow. This really applies to all new ventures; if there is no one willing to take responsibility and be held accountable for something, the group is not ready to start existence on its own.

Many of the stories and examples in this book reinforce a fundamental theological problem with this book and others like it. If a non-sacramental mission becomes the only important thing, the goal of connecting people with Word and Sacrament ministry in order to worship and serve God gets pushed aside in favor of a simplistic push for growth and reproduction. It is difficult to reconcile this the LCMS's traditional emphasis on raising up a well-educated, Synodically-certified clergy. There is no simple shortcut to ordained ministry that does not leave the door open for unfaithfulness and heresy.

It is also worth mentioning that much of what is espoused in this book regarding church planting and the multisite idea can work in suburbia and maybe even exurban and some urban settings where there is a plentiful supply of educated people to tap into as volunteers. However, the main philosophy seems to be to start big, avoiding the problems and difficulties of a small church, limited membership, or dealing with challenging individuals. The section "Four Lessons to Save You Four Years" in the "Reproducing Churches" chapter quite blatantly suggests that the best way to reproduce a church is to start by moving to a fertile location with a leadership team

[126] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 53.

[127] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 64.

ready to go.[128] Unlike 3DM and D2MC, there are few answers offered in this book for places where churches are not multiplying programs and large numbers of people. You will have to look elsewhere to learn about reproducing disciples one by one or two by two, not for leadership in a church which does not yet exist but for a life that glorifies God in the midst of existing connections and relationships and families.

Review of *Church Unique*

Will Mancini's book *Church Unique* is a well-organized, thoughtful, and practical guide to ministry planning and organization.[129] While he includes some significant critiques of the church growth movement and the way strategic ministry planning has been done in the past, he owes a lot to both movements for their work, without which this book would not be possible.

There are many helpful parts of this book. Mancini understands the work that needs to be done in churches (or any organization, for that matter) to affect meaningful, lasting change. He also seems well-read, citing many books which may be used for further, more in-depth study about some of the specific aspects of ministry planning. He criticizes church growth, including calling out the sin of "growth idolatry."[130] He also gives some helpful critiques of the multi-site model. One of the most damning critiques he gives is through the words of Gordon McDonald: "I have wondered if our evangelical fervor to change the world is not driven in some part by our inability to change ourselves."[131]

In addition to these responses, Mancini also has some helpful insights about clarity and

[128] Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 171–72.

[129] Mancini, *Church Unique*.

[130] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 36–39.

[131] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 38.

communication, commenting that a leader's role is to communicate in "granite and sand"[132] and to know the difference between the two. When a vision is focused and Biblical, it will be a lasting guide and inspiration for people. However, the methods used to achieve the vision must always be evaluated and subject to change.[133]

There were a lot of similarities in Mancini's work to 3DM and Mike Breen's work. Mancini talks about humankind's relational capacity and ruling capacity, calling to mind Covenant and Kingdom.[134] Several of the churches have, as part of their vision, pictures or definitions of discipleship that align with the Up-In-Out triangle.[135] He also refers to the leadership roles of APEPT (APEST), the so-called five function ministry derived from Eph. 4:11, pointing out that Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists will lead progress, while Shepherds/Pastors and Teachers will bring order to the organization.[136]

One of the most important points he makes is the statement "Programs don't attract people; people attract people!"[137] This is a hard shift for many people who have been in program-driven churches for decades, but an important shift in mindset. Perhaps most importantly, Mancini clarifies that discipleship has to be defined and measured by "Missional Life Marks."[138] This helps people to move away from "a knowledge-centered spirituality… and constitute the foundation for systematic teaching."[139] The engine for that is in training and leading leaders,

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[132] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 47.

[133] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 46–47.

[134] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 70–72.

[135] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 141, 177, 240, 242, 245.

[136] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 174.

[137] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 225.

[138] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 152.

[139] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 156.

much like the huddles espoused in 3DM and D2MC.

Mancini warns that discerning each church's unique vision and calling will be a lot of work and will require a significant cost in time and energy.[140] One has to wonder if it is really worth it for every church to figure this out for themselves. Many discipleship programs already exist, and, to paraphrase G.K. Chesterton, it's not that discipleship has been tried and found wanting, it's that it hasn't really been tried.

Much of what Mancini says, especially with overworked terms such as "missional" and "vision" and "movement," seems clichéd. In cases where churches are overprogrammed, there needs to be a standard set so the church can again regain her focus. However, that focus needs to be on discipleship. Unfortunately for Mancini, discipleship becomes one measure or program among many, many possible foci for churches. He gives the impression that he cannot help but overthink the organization of the church, and following Jesus may be much simpler but personally harder than the intensive process he lays out.

Churches are naturally unique because the people that are in them are unique. However, one has to question why Mancini seems to think it is such a bad thing to be alike. Chain restaurants like McDonalds, Starbucks, and In-n-Out may only do one main thing, but they're also so strikingly similar no matter where the location that you can go to restaurants hundreds or even thousands of miles apart and order off the same menu and get food that will be indistinguishable. Churches may distinguish themselves with distinct styles of music and liturgy, yet churches hundreds or even thousands of miles apart, even on different sides of the world, present remarkably similar experiences, sing identical songs, speak identical creeds and confessions, receive bread and wine and be baptized in water. One has to wonder if that really is

[140] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 11–15.

so bad. After all, did not Jesus pray for unity for those who would believe in Him?

While Jesus was truly a visionary especially in using his parables to paint a verbal picture of the Kingdom of God, there is little precedent for vision casting in the early churches of the New Testament and beyond. Instead, the focus is on making disciples, being and becoming more like Jesus, and working together, in fellowship, to be the church.

Recent Research

One of the earliest influences on my project was when my brother in ministry and fellow circuit pastor David Moore completed his MAP in 2013. I was able to be a part of the discipleship workshops he led for his project, and he was one of the first people to help me communicate the significance of the Two Kinds of Righteousness in the context of parish ministry and discipleship. In his MAP, he devotes several pages to this topic and how it relates to Christian discipleship. He writes,

> Christian discipleship is not based on man's own ability to justify himself before God…As those who are converted, Christians then have a new life, new will, and new mind. This new life, now in the power of the Holy Spirit and in cooperation with the Spirit, produces good works which benefit, and show God's love to others whether family, friends, strangers, or fellow Christians. Thus Christ's own definition of his disciples is shown to be true, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."[141]

Another related project, in a sense, is Kent Pierce's MAP, titled, "Spiritual Leadership Training Model: Using Learning Communities to Disciple Leaders in a Congregational Setting," which explores some of the same topics as mine. However, his project focused on the direct application of these concepts to leadership training in a small group in which Pierce incorporated

[141] David Moore, "A Discipleship Workshop for Trinity Lutheran Church, Walnut Creek, California" (DMin. MAP, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2013), 124. 39–40.

some of the ideas I am addressing in order to make disciples.

Among the related themes, Pierce emphasizes that discipleship and leadership are related. He contends that leadership in a church setting can and should be equivalent to making disciples. Spiritual leadership consists of inviting people to follow one's own godly example of living, which is lived in imitation of Jesus Christ. Pierce also teaches the tools of the Learning Circle and the Integrated Life Triangle in a session titled "Up. Out. In."[142]

Kevin Tiaden's MAP, to which I referred earlier while discussing a definition of discipleship, also comes from much the same perspective as Pierce. He also gets into the integrated life triangle (up-in-out) and talks about imitation on page 27: "Disciple-making in Acts is always in close relation with an experienced disciple. This shows us that the life of discipleship follows the way of the Master." He points out that in the book of Acts, "the plural for disciples and church become practically interchangeable in Acts."[143] However, it's important to note that Tiaden doesn't stick to the common PLI definitions with the terminology he uses. He also incorporates many other ideas from authors in the missional movement like Jeff Vanderstelt and Caesar Kalinowski.

One example of this is found in his congregation's mission statement which is based on the integrated life triangle. His understanding of "UP," worshipping God together, would actually be a combination of up and in since it involves both relationships with God and other Christians. Likewise, their definition of "IN," growing in spiritual maturity, relates primarily to a relationship with God. And their "OUT," to live lives of service and increase the number of believers in Christ, is more of a combination of out and in since it involves service to one's

[142] Kent Pierce, "Spiritual Leadership Training Model: Using Learning Communities to Disciple Leaders in a Congregational Setting" (DMin. MAP, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2017), 111.

[143] Tiaden, "Examination," 30.

neighbor without distinguishing whether the neighbor is a believer or an unbeliever, and not just relating to unbelievers but also bringing them into the church. He also talks about the relationship between rest and work and the learning circle in Appendix 5 of his MAP.

Rance Settle, in his MAP, includes some helpful background on Luther's understanding of hospitality as an extension of God's welcoming nature in creation. I appreciated that he focuses on and fleshes out the family and household context in which Luther did much of his discipling. Luther's approach to hospitality and his willingness to welcome others into the Luther family home, Settle points out, stands out from the peasants of his day who considered hospitality to be a good work. Before the Reformation, hospitality was generally considered to be a good work meriting salvation. After the Reformation, however, the peasants did not need to earn any more merit and hospitality was therefore deemed unnecessary. But Luther found value in practicing hospitality out of love for Christ in service to one's neighbor.[144]

Settle then goes on to describe the hospitality that marked the Lutherhaus. The home of the Luthers was formerly a cloister, which meant that there were ample rooms for welcoming others to live with them. This often meant welcoming travelers from places as far as England, Hungary, and Africa, as well as Martin and Katie Luther's blood relatives. Settle points out that over 6000 entries in Luther's Table Talks discuss visitors to the Lutherhaus.[145]

Finally, Brian Stolarczyk's MAP includes a well-researched summary of the two kinds of righteousness framework developed by Luther, including a short history of what brought Luther to understand righteousness in these ways, the different words Luther uses throughout his life to describe the kinds of righteousness, the effects of our baptism on our identity, and the modern

[144] Rance Settle, "Deepening Our Welcome-Embracing Relational Hospitality in our Homes," (DMin. MAP, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2020), 71.

[145] Settle, "Deepening Our Welcome," 73–75.

nuances described by Robert Kolb and Charles Arand. While Stolarczyk took the paradigm in a very different direction than me, dealing with the budgeting process in a church, the framework he has laid provides a useful foundation for both our projects.[146]

I am thankful for the ways that Moore, Tiaden and Pierce all began to wrestle with these themes as they began to incorporate this approach to discipleship in their ministry and were able to write about it in their MAPs. In addition, the deeper dives done by Settle and Stolarczyk were also instructive for me by digging deeper into what life was like in Luther's home and the two kinds of righteousness framework.

Conclusion

As you can see, many of the discipleship methods and concepts employed by PLI are rooted in a much greater body of work. Nick Allan's PhD dissertation provides an introduction by grounding it in a particular model of ministry from a specific time, and this is expanded upon in Mike Breen's books. However, Breen's ideas are both part of a larger body of work addressing a number of different approaches to discipleship, some of which align with his philosophies and some of which do not. However, Breen's influence is undeniable, as is the continued appetite for more practical instruction regarding discipleship.

In the next chapter, I will outline my own project addressing a Lutheran approach to discipleship and demonstrating how the D2MC program offered by PLI constitutes a faithful approach to this need for better instruction in the LCMS.

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[146] Brian Stolarczyk, "Theological and Financial Integrity in Church Budgeting: A Study of the Effects of Budget Theory Education Using a Two Kinds of Righteousness Framework," (DMin. MAP, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2019), 15–21.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This project began in earnest in January of 2016 as I took Project Research and Writing with Drs. Tony Cook and Wally Becker. By that time, I knew that I wanted to incorporate something with 3DM's discipleship model for my MAP. In June of that year, I finished my final coursework for my DMin., and Dr. David Peter agreed to work with me on my MAP.

However, the project changed significantly as I took a call from Concord, California, to Carson City, Nevada, that spring. Thankfully, I was able to get back on track after a few years, completing my CITI Program for Human Subjects Research, and my project proposal of writing and field testing a companion guide to PLI's D2MC program was approved by PLI leader Jock Ficken and the Concordia Seminary Doctor of Ministry Program in the fall of 2019.

Research Design

The initial phase of this project, which I conducted in the fall and winter of 2019-2020, involved conducting bibliographic research using PLI and 3DM's teaching notes and viewing recordings of some of the teachings. I was specifically looking for ways to connect some of the concepts taught by PLI with foundational concepts of Lutheran doctrine.

While I had some familiarity with the material through my experience with PLI and 3DM, I owe a debt of gratitude to the leaders of PLI for making the official unpublished teaching notes available to me so that I could utilize PLI's latest iteration of their vocabulary as I put together my companion guide. I found that there were a few cases where my usage of the vocabulary did not match up with current practice. In order to avoid confusion and to be of greatest service to PLI, I made sure that all my language aligned with PLI's contemporary usage as of 2020.

In this project, I was specifically looking at a few main tools and paradigms pertaining to

prominent concepts used in PLI's D2MC track. These included those I listed in chapter 2: "Discipleship," "Covenant and Kingdom," "Imitation," "The Learning Circle," "The Integrated Life Triangle," and "Rest and Work." I had been noticing connections and similarities between what PLI and 3DM taught and traditional Lutheran theology, so my primary goal was to connect the dots showing that what PLI has been teaching is grounded in confessional Lutheran theology.

"Discipleship" goes beyond the question and answer form of classroom-based pedagogy, which Lutherans traditionally call "catechesis." The difference is that in addition to the information that is taught, there is also a practical, lived-out, imitable dimension. In D2MC, this is taught in the sense of spiritual parenting as opposed to what are called "guides" in 1 Cor. 4:15.[147] This hearkens back to Jesus' words about the Son only doing "what he sees the Father doing" in John 5:19. Luther picks up on this concept of spiritual parenting in places like the Large Catechism, where he includes in his discussion on the Fourth Commandment a definition of spiritual fathers: "those who govern and guide us by the Word of God."[148]

"Covenant and Kingdom," along with related word pairs used by PLI such as "invitation and challenge" and "relationship and representation" were also important in my study. I explain in the companion guide how I initially tried to shoehorn these terms into a "law and gospel" paradigm. However, after a few years, I realized that "Covenant and Kingdom" more closely embody a "Two Kinds of Righteousness" paradigm. Where the Reformation focused on justification and emphasized the distinction between law and gospel, the prevailing theological winds have shifted. Among the contemporary Lutheran church bodies in North America, there is a significant challenge having to do with the way sanctification is being taught. There has been a

[147] PLI, Unpublished PLI Teaching Notes, "Imitable Life–Immersion 1—Day 2, Teaching Input #3," (n.d.), 1.

[148] LC I.158 in Kolb and Wengert, 408.

lot written on the two kinds of righteousness by authors such as Mark Mattes, Robert Kolb, Charles Arand, and Joel Biermann that address the need for understanding this paradigm. However, part of the challenge has to do with teaching these concepts in a way that is understandable and memorable.

As for using the words "covenant" and "kingdom," this was popularized by Mike Breen's 2011 book *Covenant and Kingdom: The DNA of the Bible*,[149] which codified this particular hermeneutical frame for understanding the Bible. When 3DM's intellectual property was shared with PLI in the mid-2010s, this frame of understanding came with it. However, the terms he uses are Biblical, so it was not surprising to me when I discovered a paper by Erich Kiehl from several decades ago where he talked about the Bible needing an overarching viewpoint that actually focuses on "covenant" as a paradigm and mentions "kingdom" also. Kiehl originally shared this paper at The Lutheran Congress held in 1970, and along with several other essays it was published in a volume called *Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church.*[150]

"Imitation" and living an imitable life was drilled into me by Art Barrett, the pastor who discipled me in California. Art taught me that I should seek to imitate Christ. I should not be afraid to ask people to follow me because they should see Christ in me and follow Him by what they see in me. The incident in Scott Rische's class, which I relate in chapter 4 of my companion guide, also helped me to put this into perspective. He asked the class who would say they have a life worth imitating, and I was the only student to raise a hand. Again, this was something I learned more about by looking through Luther's writings as I pursued the ways Luther talks about imitation in our lives as Christians.

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[149] Mike Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom: The DNA of the Bible* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2010). A review of this book is included in Appendix 2.

[150] Kiehl, "Christian Education," 100–107.

"The Learning Circle" was one of the first things I learned as Art discipled me, and it would later find connection in covenant and kingdom. However, the 3DM/Breen words "repent and believe" from Mark 1:17 gave me some handles in understanding this in traditional Lutheran terms of what it means to repent and believe, or to have faith and act according to that faith. My discipling with Art also showed me that this was not about manipulation or shaming people into behaving better. Art showed me a way of interaction where I was invited to consider the gospel, put in the light of how God sees me, and to adjust my way of living accordingly. If I failed, I was still loved and invited to come back. Mark Mattes' article[151] gave me the words to describe this kind of encouragement. The word of God is the only power we may legitimately use to make disciples. Behavior modification and manipulation through guilt and shame have no place in the sanctification of God's people.

"The Integrated Life Triangle" is an example of where PLI has moved on out ahead of 3DM. In 3DM, this is still called the "up-in-out" triangle, but for PLI the goal has shifted to thinking about this in terms of an integrated life, where we have all three of these dimensions integrated into our lives. This was emphasized for me in one of the interviews I did.

The up-in-out/integrated life is solidly biblical, especially in light of Jesus' activities in Luke 6. It somewhat exists in the catechism, although I felt compelled to note that Luther didn't make such a clear distinction in his conception of people outside the church as what we conceptualize today. There are definitely roles or vocations of humans with each other and our vocations as church members and with God. Luther's "evangelism" or "outreach" activities were not talked about so much as those people who were "in" or "out of" the church, but the concept seems to be there when we learn about those who did not have as much connection with the

[151] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective."

church, like his barber, Peter, for whom Luther writes, "A Simple Way to Pray." I heavily relied on Pless's book *The Small Catechism: Manual for Discipleship*[152] for this.

I also felt compelled to write about rest and work. While that is not as much of a standalone emphasis with PLI currently, I felt like it was important enough from my learning when I started PLI in 2010 that I wanted to reemphasize that concept of resting in a healthy way. I think that there is plenty here that we can trace back to Luther, as I do in the companion guide in a couple places. Again, this emphasis on rest is not explicitly taught in the Small Catechism, but it does rely on several commentaries on the catechism and especially the third commandment, including the meanings of the words *sabbath* and *holy*.

I did a lot of biographical work specifically looking at Luther's family and his home. I had kind of an idea of Luther's home from before, but one of the benefits of this was seeing how Katie's boarding of students and sometimes wayward, itinerant preachers constituted a constant stream of disciples who ate and drank with Luther, learning from his example and from the way he taught his family.

To be honest, because Luther embodies these values or, maybe I should say, because I see Christ in Luther in these ways, it gets kind of difficult to systematize each of these topics. They are interconnected. As we look at Luther's life, we see Christ in many different ways, in a multiplicity of vocations. When we imitate what we see of Christ in Luther's life, we imitate his hospitality, his rest and work patterns, his family, his catechesis, his marriage, his theology, his love for his neighbor, and his love for his wife and children. We see him repenting and changing his behavior in faith, so we imitate that, too. We see covenant and kingdom as a theological paradigm, lived out in our identity, in our integrated life, even in the way we make disciples—

[152] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*.

not by manipulation or force, but through the often gentle, loving persuasion of God's law applied amid a thorough dousing of the gospel. In order to do this, I used a number of different sources on Luther's life including *Luther and His Times*,[153] and *This is Luther*.[154]

With this information, I wrote a companion guide showing how the teachings of PLI's D2MC track reflect confessional Lutheran theology. I also included practical suggestions for use of language for LCMS leaders who would like to grow in their ability to make disciples through these methods so that they will be able to speak in terms that are both theologically faithful and understandable to laypersons. Jock Ficken and David Peter considered and approved this guide with a few minor revisions, and I began working with PLI in order to conduct my in-person research to solicit feedback on my companion guide. The draft of this companion guide that I distributed is included as Appendix One.

In March of 2020, just as I was about to begin my field testing at a couple of immersions in Illinois and Virginia, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a switch to all online meetings. This actually helped to simplify the recording of the interviews and focus groups because I was able to conduct these remotely with Zoom instead of travelling to the locations to conduct interviews and focus groups in person. Jock Ficken was gracious to help me by giving me access to a distribution list of pastors, who were currently enrolled in the D2MC program, as well as allowing me to use a mailing address with the "plileadership.org" domain name and recording a short introduction video. In this video, he encouraged the participants to read my companion guide and to participate in my research by giving their time as part of a feedback session where I would solicit and record their opinions and suggestions based on five feedback questions (see

[153] Schweibert, *Luther and His Times*.

[154] Plass, *This is Luther*.

below). I initially planned for three options for feedback sessions, but the participants only signed up for the first two sessions.

I emailed a copy of my companion guide along with the five feedback questions I planned to ask to all pastors enrolled in D2MC, a total of 50 men, in early June. Also, with Jock's blessing, I encouraged them to share the companion guide with laypersons in their church who they believed might be interested in participating. See Appendix Four for this letter. There were two lay people who contacted me as a result of talking to their pastors, and one participated in the second feedback session.

All those who expressed interest in joining a feedback session were emailed with more information and a link to electronically sign an informed consent form using the Zoho application. The form used is included in Appendix Three.

Additionally, I was able to separately interview two other pastors in July of 2020 who are heavily involved in leading the D2MC program. I selected them because of their influence in the continued development and updating of D2MC and together conduct a majority of the teaching for D2MC. They also took the time to read my companion guide and I sent them the same five feedback questions to guide our interviews, and they were both extremely valuable in offering feedback from a more-informed perspective.

In June and early July of 2020, I conducted two focus groups. The first included five pastors, and the second consisted of three pastors and one layperson who had been selected by her pastor from my initial email solicitation in June. These focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes each.

During the interviews and focus groups that made up the qualitative portion of my project, I began by reviewing the purpose of my project and again gaining verbal consent for recording

them. I followed by asking the following five feedback questions:

1. What did you find in the companion guide that has been helpful for your understanding of discipleship, especially from a Lutheran perspective?
2. Is there anything in the companion guide that has not been helpful for your understanding of discipleship? If so, what?
3. Has there been anything that you have learned in your studies or experiences that you would like to add? If so, what?
4. Is there anything that is still unclear to you that could be further clarified?
5. Is there anything else you would like for me to know about the companion guide or this process?

In some cases, the participants felt more comfortable going through the chapters of the companion guide and offering feedback in that order.

In order to analyze their insights, I first transcribed the recordings of the interviews and focus groups. I then went back through the responses and organized them into four specific groups: Affirmations of the Companion Guide's Value, Criticism of the Companion Guide's Design, Recommendations for Additional Material, and Possible Avenues for Further Research and Writing. From these lists I compiled the results that are included in chapter 5.

Population Sampling

Those who participated in my research were all rostered pastors in the LCMS, with the exception of one woman in my second focus group who is a rostered teacher in the LCMS and holds a master's degree in theology from Concordia University—Irvine. They fell between the ages of 30–60.

Assumptions, Limitations and Role of Researcher

I am approaching this study as a pastor in the LCMS, and as such I believe, teach, and confess the doctrines of my church body as they are drawn from the Scriptures and the Book of Concord.

I also assume that the Lutheran pastors and participants in the project seek to undertake disciple-making processes that are consistent with the Lutheran Confessions.

Lastly, I assume that since the 3DM materials were not originally designed by Lutherans, some of the original materials may not align with Lutheran theology. However, since the originators sought to communicate concepts and practices from the Scriptures, I assume that many sound insights may be gleaned from the 3DM material. I also assume that as these materials have been studied and taught by pastors in PLI who are rostered members of the LCMS, these are to be taken in a way that reflects confessional fidelity and sound theology.

Implementation Timeline

After some unavoidable delays due to family and congregational issues that led to my project being put on hold for most of 2016–2018, I was able to finally focus my project and submit a proposal in 2019, getting the project "on the clock" so to speak. Here is a timeline of my activities for the project.

2019	
Oct	Submit MAP Proposal, IRB application for approval
Nov–March	Conduct initial research using D2MC teaching notes/videos
	Conduct further research in Lutheran theological writings
	Develop an outline for the companion guide
2020	
March–May	Develop participant and leader contact lists
	Submit companion guide to PLI leadership and my advisor for approval
June	Distribute companion guide to participants and leaders
	Develop questions, script, and rules for focus groups and interviews
	Prepare consent forms for focus groups and interviews
	Invite potential participants to focus groups and interviews
June–July	Conduct two focus groups online
	Conduct two interviews with leaders
	Collect results
August	Begin project analysis and report

2021–2023
June–March Finish project reporting and write up findings.
April Proofreading for the Dissertation Secretary

Conclusion

While this project took much longer than I anticipated, I am thankful that it came together as a result of hard work and perseverance. It was a productive exercise for me to use some of the ideas I have recorded over the past decade or so regarding discipleship, and while it was a bit scary to put my thoughts out there on paper and open myself up for criticism, it was a worthwhile process.

In the next chapter, I will summarize the feedback I received in the interviews and focus groups, highlighting points of agreement and suggestions for additions and clarification.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA

In this chapter, I will summarize the feedback I received in the interviews and focus groups, highlighting points of agreement and suggestions of where I could add or clarify with quotations as examples of the feedback I received. In addition, I will include a list of further ideas for more writing in the future.

Coming into this project, I expected that my companion guide would be helpful for participants in PLI's D2MC Learning Communities, particularly those who, like me, were raised in Lutheran churches and educated in Lutheran schools. I hoped that those who were enrolled in D2MC would find an expression of Lutheran theological beliefs that give voice to both a sense of freedom and a sense of calling in the Gospel, all while experiencing accountability, belonging and encouragement. I also expected that my supplement to the PLI tools will enhance and elucidate the discipleship and catechetical methods used by the participants.

The feedback I received on my companion guide was helpful and insightful. The respondents did not "pull any punches" but gave some strong and direct criticism where needed. I am thankful that they would give of their time to both read the companion guide and to talk to me about what they had read.

Insights and Feedback

Affirmations of the Companion Guide's Value

It was clear in the interviews and feedback groups that the participants appreciated the guide, showing approval of its purpose and content in quotes such as the following:

> I think all of us have experienced some unfortunately belligerent members of congregations who have looked quite askance of some of the things we're learning and again say all this has all the markers of Evangelicalism or church growthy-ness

> [sic] and "I've heard all this stuff, all you need is Word and Sacrament." I'm really glad you addressed that.[1]
>
> This is something that I've been hoping we would come across or develop inside of PLI because as a Lutheran Christian I personally resonate with so much of this stuff because I am Lutheran and there's so much gospel-centered stuff in what we're teaching. What you've really done is put a lot of meat on the bone around why so much of this is sound, theologically and Biblically, so first off, major kudos to you.
>
> In section 5, where you talk about "How We Talk is Important," you hit on something that goes by fairly quickly but when I read it I was like, Yes! … Lutherans have a tendency to say God has saved us without talking about how that looks in our lives. And I highlighted that and starred that… that is huge, and to me that is what D2MC and PLI is trying to address… We're justification people and we've not always done a very good job preaching sanctification and saying, "Okay, what does this look like now?" So I think that's a great little thing that kind of slips in and slips out, but it's really important that you've captured it there.

Their responses indicate that they found the following elements most valuable, affirming the usefulness of them in the guide:

1. Covenant and Kingdom. This takes up several chapters, but it was noted several times that the way the language of covenant and kingdom was connected to justification and sanctification and specifically Luther's two kinds of righteousness was helpful for people to see. They also affirmed my discussion of the Lutheran understanding of "obedience" in light of sanctification, as the following comments bear out:

> You did a good job sourcing things not just as far back as Luther but even as he points to Augustine and as you bring in some other more recent sources into the body of the paper.
>
> You do such a good job of laying out that sanctification and justification should not be separated from each other. They go hand in hand.
>
> When you break down [Covenant and Kingdom] and redefine it through that idea of two kinds of righteousness, that was really helpful for me to see… everything comes out of identity, so our baptismal identity then rolls into our sanctification, and so you did a good job at emphasizing that and bringing that.

[1] This and all additional block quotes in this chapter are quotes from feedback groups and interviews.

I think you developed early on, through the two kinds of righteousness in Covenant and Kingdom, a really strong and highly reproducible kingdom of God language especially on the kingdom triangle.

I want to say, leaning back to the covenant and kingdom stuff, two kinds of righteousness, I thought you developed that stuff so, so well.

As someone who's a pastor [and] who's a regular practitioner who has had a deep learning in both seminary education as well as within the work with PLI/D2MC, this was helpful to connect the dots.

I think that the direct connections, the applications of the tools within the doctrinal pieces, especially two kinds of righteousness again, I really hadn't run that whole system with covenant and kingdom, so I thought that was good.

I'm really liking the second page of chapter 9. I think you did a really good job of wedding heavy theological terms with something that might be new for some for the first time and showing how they really do fit together. It's not too difficult. You did a great job of keeping it accessible. It was affirming for me because initially when I heard this I was like, "Hey, this is two kinds of righteousness, this is passive and active, this is coram deo." Then, when you threw those words in there it was like okay, someone's picking up what I'm picking up. But you were able to do it without saying, "Alright, let's back up and take 15 minutes to get to the point." Jed cut through the crap and just went right to it.

The fact that you call out that discipleship is not progressive sanctification, I think is big, so the people see this is very much growth in the gospel. It's not Jesus-AND type stuff. And then, it was impressive, you pulled the Apology to the Augsburg Confession. Faith is not just knowledge, but it's willing to receive or take hold of those things that are offered in the promise. At the end, basically, obedience is a very good thing and [this is] just reframing our understanding. That was good, especially knowing that it was a five-year process for you to condense that into a page and a half, that's no small feat.

You write, "As such, we do not rely on emotional manipulation." Very good calling that out, because I think a lot of people, when they hear some of this, if they don't know the full context or the story or as what you do give the scriptural backing to it, they really think it is just a revamp of some pietistic, emotionally-laden, feel-good stuff about Jesus.

Covenant and Obedience, chapter 11. I'm really glad you addressed it because that, I think, for a lot of people who are steeped in Lutheran theology, you hear the word "obedience" and it's like, "oh, that's bad."

But I love the stuff that you wrestle with especially like "obedience." You know, we're anti-Calvinists so we hate that word but the idea of the obedience is the fruit of grace and that's just natural, so I think you touched on some things really well.

This seems like a good companion for pastors who are trying to defend to their sometimes pointed or even belligerent members of the congregation, 'Oh, this doesn't seem Lutheran," to make those connections for those of us who are pastoral theologians and looking for those academic underpinnings.

This was more of the reassuring people that this is okay. We're not going off the deep end or careening off the road that's been laid out before us for 500 plus years, but this is just deeply Lutheran and we can hear all these voices throughout our history.

You helped me put a finger on something that has been sitting out there for a while…why these Lifeshapes engender so much opposition from certain people…Perhaps these Lifeshapes get so focused through a law-gospel dynamic that it's almost like you're on two different playing fields. It feels like it actually levels the playing field, gets everybody on the same playing field.

2. Imitation and Identity. A highlight, cited in all four feedback sessions, was chapter 4 about imitation and identity. It was one of my autobiographical chapters, and several people said that they found it to be very encouraging.

I thought it was a great job, framing it in our Lutheran context.

It's very confessional, it's very historic in a lot of ways…what you've done here is brought a lot of that historical context.

If you're writing a book I'd put this in a box: Page 8, in the invitation and identity piece, the quote from Mark Mattes: "It is because we are adopted children of God that we can imitate Christ, not vice versa." That speaks so much into D2MC language, so beautifully: identity and calling, and putting them in their proper places and making connection to Lutheran theology and catechesis, this just really jumped off the page at me.

Chapter 4, it's a Luther quote, "It is not the invitation that makes us sons, it's the sonship that makes us imitators." I had never heard that quote. That was a really powerful quote to understand identity and baptismal identity, which you go into! So well done finding that one! That one definitely is gold.

In the LCMS particularly it's been hard for us to talk about good works except in saying, "Well, they're not part of our salvation." To encourage people to volunteer, is it pushing people to good works? It's kind of a delicate dance even to talk about it, so I like the idea of discipleship for that reason because that is what it's talking about, going and doing good. That's what Jesus did, too. So I have especially appreciated where you were defending the idea of imitation and bringing that up in scripture. That's one of the things I have never looked at or noticed before and I appreciated that.

If you think of it as a bridge and you're going to walk me over that bridge, this piece does that really well.

I really appreciate the justification for sanctification.

I appreciate the honesty and the whole concept of what you introduce, it's a great wrap-up from your illustration at the beginning of a life worth imitating. It's just right at the end, "You're simply showing them Christ in you." You're really succinct and I like how you entered that, began that chapter and that quote in the middle [about sonship and being imitators]. Yeah, that's one of my favorite chapters.

3. The Kairos Moment. Three of the sessions mentioned chapter 15, about the *kairos* moment. It was a short chapter, only one page, but grounded the concept of a "*kairos* moment" as something that is both soundly scriptural and was a part of the life of Martin Luther.

I appreciated your assessment of Luther's life and *kairos*, that's the circle piece, chapter 17, pages 32 and 33, and you do a really great job tracking him through observe-reflect-discuss.

I appreciated Luther's story to show us those steps.

I really like the [use of] Galatians 6:10. That was really helpful and new for me.

In section 15 when you highlighted that Galatians 6:10 translates the word "*kairos*" as opportunity and not just time or moment that was very enlightening to me. I'd never seen that.

4. Connections. The respondents independently and without prompting cited helpful aspects of all but one of the chapters, oftentimes expressing gratitude for the connections I drew between different facets of Lutheran theology with what is being taught and highlighted in D2MC.

It is key to make sure there's an operating definition of discipleship. I'm finding that there are a good number of people who equate discipleship with strictly evangelism. I'm glad you put that in there. Anything you do to punch that up, make it even more distinct, it makes sense. I know exactly what you're saying there, so props for putting that in.

The way you wrap up chapter 3 at the end is the perfect segue: “Here’s the terms we use and here’s how we unpack it,” was brilliant. It’s a brilliant lead in [to say] there’s probably less burdensome language to use. I really like that at the end of chapter 3.

Chapter 18, Integrated life. You pulled out Pieper. The “His account, their own account, on account of the world,” I felt that was a mic drop moment.

Chapter 19, I love how you bring in the Lord’s Prayer here and illuminate it in the way that you title this section: “You’ve been praying for this.” That is just so strong and it helps people who up to this point feel like, “I haven’t been doing any of this. I don’t know how to do any of this. Nobody’s modeled this stuff or me.” Here, they can just hook onto this and say, “Yes, I pray that all the time, but I didn’t understand it could have meant something like this!” I love that.

I think one of the most provoking statements for me in just a really powerful way was at the end, in the context of Luther’s family on mission, you said, talking about being disheartened that we can’t pull off this family on mission lifestyle that Luther seemed to have, but we can be encouraged by the fact that our spiritual DNA is wired for discipleship. I just love that. It’s a great punch at the end and I really appreciated that and I want to hear more of what made you say that.

I’m really impressed by the amount of time that you put into it and I didn’t know there are as many Luther quotes that would fit as well as they did.

5. Ease of Readership. Several made comments about how it was easy to read.

I love the formatting of one to three pages for each of the 26 chapters of the document. It’s something that can be consumed a little bit at a time without feeling overwhelmed and yet it takes the lay person to a deeper place, but you don’t leave them lost. You write in a way that it explains unfamiliar or lesser used terminology.

I love the index of Covenant and Kingdom that you put together. There are so many ways that we see that play out throughout scripture and I love how you’ve really started to highlight that in an index. What a useful tool that helps people see that there’s a lot more at hand here and it really does play throughout all of scripture, this theme of Covenant and Kingdom.

Maybe it’s helpful to think in terms of the D2MC stuff brings out these flavors of our theology, gives it seasoning in the same way that salt works. So it’s not adding to something that isn’t already there but it’s bringing out something that is deep and significant and important. This has been with us all along, even if we haven’t necessarily framed it in this way before.

Criticisms of the Companion Guide’s Design

The participants provided constructive criticism of the guide, identifying aspects of it that

were unhelpful. There were several major criticisms that came to light in my interviews and focus groups, and they are closely related. The responses of the participants indicate that they found the following elements of the guide to be problematic and in need of revision:

1. Unclear Audience/Lack of a Defined Purpose. One of the major problems with the companion guide was a result of my approaching this project with a bit of a "kitchen sink" mentality. I included different insights and ideas that I had come up with for this project. While what I wrote was often helpful for people, there was a lack of clarity and cohesiveness which detracted from the usability of the document. One such problem was that I did not have a clear definition of a disciple or discipleship as I wrote the companion guide. Another problem was that I never identified a single focus or purpose for the project, nor did I narrow down an intended audience. This was pointed out to me across several responses during each focus group and interview:

> So what's the purpose? Who's your audience? Who do you want this to be for? Because in a narrow sense I could see this companion guide being helpful to bring people to the table that I know, like I want to use this and go through it with some people I know who just don't even want to have the conversation… I just wonder, what's the target?
>
> Who's your target audience for this document?
>
> Would you see this work as being apologetic in nature?
>
> I had the same question as far as audience.
>
> I really do think the audience is pastors. I think it'd be most helpful for pastors… because I felt like I needed to know a lot of the terminology on both sides of the house to be able to connect the dots, but that's good, because it was helpful for me. It did serve that purpose.
>
> When I first heard that language "companion guide" I was thinking, "Okay, what additional information is this going to add to me, or add for me, to actually doing discipleship, which it doesn't really do. There wasn't anything in here that when I sit down and I do discipleship in huddle, I have some more tools at my disposal.

There's a playing field out there where this fits that it's going to bump up against something else besides the [friendly] people you've got sitting here, that may press in on some harder angles just because of where they're coming from. … The real test is, is this going to stand up against critics?

If you imagine, "What is the problem I'm trying to solve?" how would you define the problem? I think it's a helpful question because it drives focus. Is it for lay people, is it pastors, is it apologetic? I think if you can drill down then and say "Here's the problem I that I see, that I'm trying to solve with this," I think that'll help your focus a lot.

I'm just going to go back to [chapter] 22, I think that again like clarifying your audience…do you need to have an apologetic to defend the use of having groups or not? I think that if you do, you're going to have to do more throughout the paper to demonstrate that.

I heard you say something about this is an opportunity to help bring people to the table and conversation who might otherwise not want to engage in this. I'm just wondering, is the purpose of this for that group? Is it broader than that? Because I think there's probably a lot more you could put in.

I think that a simplified version, simpler terms, explaining even more PLI stuff would be helpful. But I don't think you want to change that for the audience that's your primary audience. That's exactly what this is for. It's not even so much defending discipleship as it is defending the PLI terms and images approach to discipleship and that's exactly what needs defending. It's a good base from which to go to the person that doesn't have the Lutheran background and is wondering about it, the person that doesn't have theological training.

2. Order and Nature of the Material. Another criticism of the companion guide was that I did not make a clear delineation between what is academic and apologetic in nature and that which is devotional. I tried to do too much. Some of the chapters were better suited as an academically rigorous theological defense for D2MC's methods, others were more devotional in nature and were more appropriate and more accessible to laity. In addition, there were also some suggestions regarding the arrangement of the material. Here are some of the quotes that reflected those suggestions:

There are places where it reads like an academic paper and I found myself wondering if this was the actual thesis itself because it reads very much that way and then there are places where it gets very much more relaxed and you start talking in the first

person and there a couple places where you even try to make some jokes or at least I took it that way…

I like the way you've laid it out, little chapters at a time, and you answer questions, but maybe raise the question and then answer it…so maybe a catechetical kind of approach.

It might be more helpful to arrange the material in the order that it's covered in D2MC.

At the end you catalog a list of Covenant and Kingdom ideas, but maybe that would be a helpful thing to toss into [the invitation and identity piece] as well. Maybe just make it an excursus on technical terms.

3. Inconsistent or Awkward Written Composition. Several reviewers also pointed out that my writing style and the tone I used varied significantly between the different chapters. Some sections seemed formal and academic. Others were at times autobiographical, conversational, humorous, and devotional in nature.

You use a lot of shorthand as Lutheran theologians like any trade does. To a certain extent that's helpful, it makes conversations less cumbersome, but at the same time it can also be confusing.

Chapter 14, "Covenant and Kingdom in a Perfect World," I wondered why that was there. It just kind of plops there and I thought, "What's the purpose of chapter 14?"

There were times when you had quotes at the beginning of the section that you attributed to folks, and then there were times that you had quotes that just didn't have that and I'm going okay, so how does this all kind of fit and play out and what are you trying to do here? So that was a little problematic, so just that kind of consistency, but that will come when you know what you're shooting for.

Chapter 9, at the very bottom of the page, when you quote the teaching notes of D2MC, if there's any way that you can emphasize how that quote is basically stating the wrong view of it: D2MC is showing how this is the BAD example. At first I was confused.

Recommendations for Additional Material

The participants proactively offered ideas for improving the companion guide through various additions. Their responses recommended that the guide be augmented or expanded with the following elements:

1. More Scriptural Support. The respondents suggested a number of additional scripture references to go with the information presented.

Chapter 14, 'Covenant and Kingdom in a perfect world,' would it be helpful to look at the Revelation picture of eternity, like Revelation 7 or like 22, 21? Kingdom and Covenant still last. It was in the beginning, the new Eden, the new paradise, is there a connection there?

I think there are a few scriptures that might help you in different places. I think about Deuteronomy 7:12 where it's Moses about these commands that keep you, and you were talking about the obedience, right? And so the idea of obedience is growth but it's also fruit. And then John 15, what's the fruit that the vine dresser is looking for again? These are questions to say there's an expectation of a life that reflects this out of grace! So it builds on the justification, the sanctification stuff and the Ephesians 2 we know 8 and 9 but we always drop 10! So sprinkle a few of those in there as well that give that hook right to the Word as well.

I think that there would be a tie for me there in that learning circle/*kairos* space for you to revisit or reinforce some kingdom of God principles and concepts. Maybe that is referenced back to Mark 1, the kingdom of God breaking into time.

2. Additional Concepts. There were also times when additional concepts were suggested to be added and addressed.

When you start to define what a disciple does, you really come to the conclusion of someone who is [in] worship and service of the Father, of worship and service of God. I wonder if the word 'service' could be expanded upon a little bit, because I think every Lutheran knows what worship looks like, or at least we have a very Sunday-centralized idea of what worship looks like. But I think there's a lot of little nuances under the word "service" that could be expanded upon. If they hear worship and service, they're thinking Sunday morning and doing something nice for somebody. Yet that still falls short of what we see Jesus having, right? He lives with a focus on people as he's going somewhere else. That focus is more important than the act of serving.

In Chapter 2: The Why and How of Discipleship, I would add something about how the life of a disciple also has the same focus that Jesus did. His focus was on his mission.

I think if you in this chapter [5] talk about D2MC as a delivery vehicle for our theology to be understood and lived, that would be helpful, because I always think "What if… what if there was a way that my people could actually live this?" There's the question the pastor has: how do I get this into the hearts and minds and lives of my people? What if there was a system and these symbols and this language that helps deliver that?"

In chapter 8, your Koester quote… this might be in the second volume of Gibbs' Matthew commentary where he describes "the kingdom of heaven" as the active reign of God in the world. That might help bolster that understanding of kingdom as well, that it's this representation and restorative nature of God at work.

On the last paragraph of the first page of chapter 15, you said, "If genuine terror of the conscience is not a *kairos* moment, I don't know what is." I'm wondering if it would help if you add a positive aspect to that, because it is striking, "a genuine terror of conscience" and there would probably be multiple places where you can find quotes from Luther on that, but maybe offering one too where there's an affirmation of grace or the gospel that grabs someone's attention, too. So it's not just a "shock and awe" type of grabbing your attention. I think it would help further illustrate your point that it's any type of moment that grabs ahold.

In chapter 15, it might be helpful to note the practical application of the first half of the circle, that observe, reflect, discuss, and this comes out of recognizing after leading a bunch of huddles, everyone's propensity to skip the first half of the circle and just start making a plan.

Does Luther's father confessor, Staupitz, count as accountability? I was trying to think if there was anyone else who would even serve as more of a kind of that partner, almost mentor role for Luther.

A lot of what you write, especially in your opening couple of articles, highlights what happens when we don't do the second half of the circle. We get the paths of righteousness thing and we're so addicted to that and beautifully so, but we overshadow the active righteousness of "so now what?" Because the Spirit of God lives in us, how do we respond? How does this get played out in our lives? First we need to hear from God, so I think that could play into the themes that you've already started to flesh out in the opening articles in here.

[In chapter 17 on Luther's life and *kairos*,] you're lumping plan-account-act all together and saying it is just going to happen. I think that's one of the weak spots. If the whole thrust if your paper is God's calling us to active righteousness, to sanctification, it's not just "You're saved from something" but "You're saved to something," then part of the big thrust of your paper should be now what does it look like to make a plan, and how can those plans be guided and put forward by the work of the Holy Spirit, by Word, by Sacrament? I think you could do your reader a disservice by not tracking that out a little more for Luther.

At the end of chapter 18, I was wondering if we could talk about our relationship to our neighbor as a reflection of God's mission. The church is a byproduct of the mission of God. I felt it could be more explicitly clear that we are talking about mission here, that we are living as sent people.

I state in chapter 18 that the Ten Commandments aren't just useful for those already in the church, but they provide "the basis and perhaps the baseline standard of respect for one another that should mark our interactions with our unbelieving neighbor." What can be added here is how the Ten Commandments inform our Out posture just as they do our In relationships, and they help us to live in a way that focuses us on and aligns us with Christ's mission to the world.

> In chapter 22, you might want to help bring further clarity to missional communities that the purpose they fill is to be mission-focused. One of the biggest things we bump into and why missional communities flop is because we've just taken the word "small groups" and transposed them to missional communities and they're the same thing. So we tell folks, "Focus on the mission." Just find a way to be good news to somebody and invite people who don't know Jesus to help you bring some good news.
>
> If you were to make [chapter 22] more connecting dots for people and helping them understand the benefits of [small groups], then I would make sure to highlight reclaiming spaces to have conversations in an individual context. And these spaces offer that. If you want to use Lutheran language like confession and absolution, invitation, challenge, all that stuff happens within the context of huddle or missional community space where you just have people connected. So maybe [write about] more of the positive aspects and trying to find that of community instead of assuming that people would be against that, depending on the reader.

Twice comments were made inline to touch on subjects that were actually addressed in subsequent chapters.

> The other thing I would say is in chapter 8 maybe say something like, "But that's not it! Keep reading and go to whatever section is that you talk about power." [Chapter 12-The Fatherhood and Kingship of God]
>
> When we talk about "integrated life" we're really trying to help people see that you don't have to have "Jesus time" and "Christian friend time" separated from each other and "time with non-Christian friends" separated from the other two. The Spirit of God is at work in all three of those relationships and actually the mission of God is richer when we see all three of those relationships at play at the same time.

Overall, the feedback was supportive and positive, and I was thankful to find readers who were interested in what I had to write and were helped by the connections I made. It was

encouraging to me to know that I could encourage and affirm their understanding of discipleship by what I wrote. One final comment which reflected this and showed me that my endeavors had amounted to at least some success, at least for this participant, was this one:

> One of the things I noticed was that in each of your chapters I was looking for more. You could have gone on and quoted other people and gone into more detail…so that was a good balance between covering it and not going into too much detail.

Possible Avenues for Further Research and Writing

Some of the possible themes for expanding on and adding to the companion guide included the following suggestions:

- "No Fear of Failure." when it comes to following Jesus and making disciples, failure is inevitable, but it is not to be feared. Failure is part of the process of learning to rely on God. We are not perfect, so we should expect the process to be imperfect. As it was put in one of my interviews:

> When people start to put this stuff into practice, the most paralyzing thing for them is a fear that they're not going to do it as well as their pastor would have done it or a professional church worker would have done it or as their mentor would have done it. One of the things we coach all the time is people don't need a perfect example, they need a living example. And with that comes, "Don't be afraid of failing!" Jesus is made perfect in our weakness. This expectation of perfection just squashes people readiness to jump in to the mission or God… Paul, the dude who says, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ," is also the guy who says "I'm the chief of sinners" in 1 Timothy 1. But he essentially says, "Even though I'm the chief of sinners, I'm now able to live as an example of just how good God is—his unlimited patience. Because if He can work through the chief of sinners, than anybody can get on this!"

- Another request was to add more content from the Book of Concord. While there was a fair amount that I found especially in regard to righteousness, justification, and sanctification, the request was made to add more which would supporting the use of "covenant" and "kingdom" language. Another area where more could be added would be

in Luther's writing about the fourth commandment in the Large Catechism, relating the concepts of spiritual parenting and family on mission.

- It was also suggested to study Rev. 7 and 21–22 to describe eternity in light of Covenant and Kingdom.
- A couple interesting questions that were asked in one of the focus groups included: "How are *kairos* plans inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit? What is the role of Word and Sacrament in these plans?" This would be a noteworthy topic for research in both the Book of Concord as well as Luther's Works.
- PLI practitioners often use the term "breakthrough" to refer to a situation where someone is given hope, learns a different mindset, or comes to a realization that leads to godly change or growth. Where does that fit in our Lutheran theology? What does it mean and correspond to?
- Caesar Kalinowski, an author who has done some work with 3DM and writes and blogs extensively on the area of missional communities and discipleship, has some podcasts with the theme "The Power and the Purpose of the Gospel." These were mentioned in one of the interviews. How do they correspond with Covenant and Kingdom and the two kinds of righteousness? Is this something that can be added to the index?
- How do Lutherans understand "people of peace"? This is a concept based off a quote from Luke 10:5–7 where Jesus, sending out the 72, says, "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in that same house, eating and drinking what they provide…Do not go from house to house." This comes up in Immersion 1 of D2MC, the second teaching on the first day. In D2MC, it is taught that the "person of

peace" is someone who likes you, learns (to be like Jesus) from you, and lightens your load in the sense that they will serve you and make your life better in some way. This is not something that I explored in this companion guide, but it is a rather foundational teaching and could be explored from a Lutheran perspective.

- Another comment I received was the following:

> I noticed that there was a lot of Luther's commentary on Galatians in your academic citations. It would probably be a good place to drive people who are really looking, like, "I want to look at Luther's words myself and make sure you're not just making all this stuff up. Were there any other portions of the confessions or were there Luther's Works, specifically, that to me would be a good, helpful piece for the more academic minded pastoral type who wants to be the theologian?

Which was followed by: "The more you can cite the Book of Concord directly, the more that'll help your case, especially if you're thinking in terms of the apologetic piece. Some of the contemporary theologians you've quoted are good, but they don't necessarily carry the same weight." The challenge in that comment is to find where Lutherans can look in Luther's writings and the confessions to read some more primary sources that can inform our discipleship processes and programs.

- In chapter 18 of the companion guide, I mention how giving and receiving forgiveness is the key to growing in the "in" dimension of the integrated life. In his book on Discipleship and the Small Catechism, I quote John Pless about how the essence of Christian community is found in forgiveness, not merely as a way to relieve guilt and shame, but more importantly as the righteousness Christ gives. I would like to break out and expand this section, adding something about receiving forgiveness within a Christian community.
- One participant made the following observation concerning chapter 23: "Huddles for Advanced Discipleship."

It almost felt like it was running towards "this is a group for dealing with sin issues" and I know that huddles and missional community is so much more than that. I think the huddle/missional community experience is so much more and richer than being able to have sin or baggage called out by my huddle leader. That's one thing, and that does happen, but so much more happens. So I was going, "Oh man, I'd love to hear a little bit more there," so what does that look like?

I think that this is a fair observation that I am missing a facet of discipleship, one that doesn't have as much to do with avoiding sin as it does with doing good in the vein of Heb. 10:24, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."

- A repeated theme is summed up with the comment, "You could probably flesh out a bit more when it comes to that Out dimension." I mention that this lens, which makes a distinction between relationships that are "in" with other believers and "out" with unbelievers" was not a lens through which Luther or many early Lutherans considered the world. However, it would be worth further study to explore this concept in Lutheran thought in the confessions and in Luther's own works.
- One final suggestion was an overall comment on the companion guide: "Could there be questions that raise the application or practice of these 26 chapters? Or give highlights from each section. They could read the 'here's one or two or three things that you should walk away with' from this article." Having a short summary and some application questions could be very helpful in sharing these concepts with laymen and also to help them grasp these concepts as they make disciples.

Conclusion

I am thankful for the feedback I got from all those who took the time to review my companion guide. Through this project, I have learned a lot about my own writing skills and the ways I can grow, but also it has given me confidence that I have a perspective which is helpful

and edifying to others. I will definitely work to be more focused when I write projects like this in the future and will take into account many of the suggestions offered here.

I am also grateful for the number of ideas that I have for further writing. I would like to continue my research and writing when it comes to discipleship, and I believe that while I have a good start with what I have written in the companion guide and in this MAP, there is much more than I can do. As the Preacher points out at the end of Ecclesiastes, “Of making many books there is no end” (12:12).

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

At the beginning of this school year, my oldest daughter was asked in one of her high school classes what book she would like to be written. She answered, “My Dad’s doctorate, because he’s been working on that basically my entire life.” It has been some thirteen years since I began the Doctor of Ministry program with Dr. Andrew Bartelt’s presentation at our PLI gathering in 2010. I have looked forward to earning a doctorate. I never doubted I could do it, but I am still tempted to see myself as an underachiever since my father has a DMin and a PhD and my younger brother got his Doctor of Physical Therapy while I was still in seminary.

Writing the companion guide was a helpful exercise for me, but I do not see it as the end or the goal. It was much more of a beginning, a wellspring from which a whole lot of ideas come. I am thankful that God has led me this far, and that I am able to close the chapter on this project. I have learned a lot about writing and about myself as a writer. Trying to do a DMin MAP through a global pandemic has been exhausting. On the upside, I learned a lot and I have a lot of direction for future writing ideas. The good thing is I have some experience with this and am a more focused writer now. I have a clearer picture and a tighter focus on where I want to go with these ideas.

At this point, I can see myself starting from the ideas in this companion guide and taking parts of it in three main directions, being more careful about writing for my intended audience in each context. Here are the three main categories with questions that help me to discern what should go where.

1. What is apologetic in nature? Where am I defending things in an academic way? This would be written especially for pastors, church workers, those with advanced

theological degrees, and those with a need to mount a rigorous defense of the strategies and terminology used by D2MC/PLI/3DM in whatever context they might be in. I started to do this in the places where I defend small groups and other Lifeshapes.

2. What is devotional in nature? Where am I writing primarily for encouragement and, secondarily, edification? This would be chapters like "Covenant and Kingdom in a Perfect World" which applies the idea of Covenant and Kingdom to the pre-fall garden of Eden and "You've Already Been Praying for This," which is a meditation on how we see the three dimensions of Up, In, and Out (from the Integrated Life triangle) in the Lord's Prayer. I think that for me personally what is apologetic and what is devotional can run together if I am not careful. I wonder if part of that has to do with the sources I am using for my apologetic writing. I think that quotes from the Book of Concord are necessarily defensive and apologetic in nature, while stories about Luther's life are more devotional. However, these topics are not exclusive.
3. What is practical in nature? Where am I giving "nuts and bolts" advice and direction? Where do I put a Lutheran spin on things in a necessary way? I see this in things like talking about the nature of huddles and the use of the *kairos* circle in discipleship, keeping a close watch over the use of law and gospel in that context.

In addition to these three streams of thought, the topic of rest and work is one that continues to fascinate me and which I think could very well be explored from a Lutheran perspective. I would like to incorporate more to promote what Luther says in the Large Catechism about rest and then add some practical ideas for how that looks. I think that Mike

Breen has some good insights about rest in *Building a Discipling Culture*.[1] The recent pandemic, with the enforced rest that was imposed on many people and the long time it took to get to our "new normal", gave our culture a new perspective which will continue to inform our understanding of health and wellness. I still wonder whether we as a nation are still barreling forward at an unsustainable pace. I'd like to look more at Luther's work ethic and figure out some more things. From the sheer volume of writing we have from him, it is easy to imagine he spent twelve hours a day writing and never took much of a break. However, I know that is not accurate. He also rarely traveled far from home, and devoted much of his time to lecturing and writing and preaching. In fact, those seem like the major things he did. He also makes some comments on doing a lot of praying, which leads me to wonder about the intersection of prayer and rest.

I think that my biggest takeaway from this project is being able to articulate two kinds of righteousness in different ways, seeing how that all fits together. It really is amazing at protecting us from both bad theology and, on a practical level, from unhealthy ways of living. The more I read about Luther, the more I appreciate his wholly Biblical, grace-filled approach to life and vocation, not just for the breadth of his writing but also for the cohesiveness of it, with the gospel of Christ in the center, offering freedom and joy. As much as that can shine through in me and my work, this will all be worth it.

[1] Breen and Team, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 85–97.

APPENDIX ONE

COMPANION GUIDE

1. What is Discipleship to a Lutheran?
2. The Why and How of Discipleship
3. Justification and Sanctification, or Two Kinds of Righteousness
4. Imitation and Identity
5. How We Talk is Important
6. Two Kinds of Righteousness, or Covenant and Kingdom
7. Why Use "Covenant" and "Kingdom" Language? Part 1: Covenant
8. Why Use "Covenant" and "Kingdom" Language? Part 2: Kingdom
9. Covenant and Identity in Baptism
10. Covenant and Identity in the Creed
11. Covenant and Obedience
12. The Fatherhood and Kingship of God
13. Power and Authority
14. Covenant and Kingdom in a Perfect World
15. The Kairos Moment
16. *Kairos* and Good Works in the Confessions
17. Luther's Big *Kairos*
18. The Integrated Life Triangle: Up, In, and Out
19. The Integrated Life: You Have Been Praying for This
20. The Semicircle: Hallow the Day of Rest
21. The Semicircle: Martin Luther and Abiding in the Body
22. Huddles and Missional Communities: Kairos in Community
23. Huddles for Advanced Discipleship
24. *Kairos* in Community: Jesus Redefines the Family
25. Luther's Spiritual Family on Mission
26. Index: Where We See Covenant and Kingdom

1. What is Discipleship to a Lutheran?

Our mission as the church is to make disciples. Jesus' final recorded words to His disciples were His Great Commission in Matt. 28:18–20, a directive to "make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Even The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 2019 resolved to make "Making Disciples for Life" her conventionally mandated theme for mission and ministry emphasis for the 2019–2022 triennium.[1] This is leading to conferences and websites that proclaim this theme and provide resources for congregations and districts.

It seems like it would be fairly obvious, then, that baptism and teaching people to obey everything Jesus commanded must be the essential elements of discipleship. But what Jesus commanded, taught, and modeled fills up four separate books in the Bible alone, and this has led to countless writings explaining and expounding on the words of Scripture.

Luther cites the Great Commission with a warning in his treatise "A Reply to the Texts Cited in Defense of the Doctrines of Men." There he puts limits on what the disciples can teach. "'Go and teach 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.' See, here again he does not say, 'Teach them to observe what you invent,' but what I have commanded you."[2]

There is a very real danger for us in the present day that we as disciples would teach people to observe what we invent instead of sticking to what Jesus has commanded. PLI has, for a number of years, included a learning track called Discipleship to Missional Community (D2MC). This has grown out of the discipleship methods Mike Breen has put forth in his book *Building a*

[1] https://lcms.app.box.com/v/2019-Todays-Business-2b, 259. 2019 LCMS Convention, Resolution 4-03A.

[2] *LW* 35:148.

Discipling Culture. However, the methods and tools that are used in D2MC are not new inventions, they are firmly rooted in Lutheran theology and practice. D2MC teaches tools for helping us to live the sanctified life that Christ has commanded and empowered through His Spirit. I hope that you will see what we are calling discipleship is simply applying what Christ has taught for ourselves and encouraging each other to live out that life in our daily lives.

For the past several years, I've dreamed about writing something to help disciples of Jesus by clearly drawing the lines from some of the big ideas you have been learning about discipleship to some of the major teachings of Lutheran theology and giving you some keys to help you understand these practices. I believe Lutheranism, at its core, is a solid and comprehensive theology and a remarkably freeing and joy-giving way of thinking and living. I have always appreciated how everything that I believe as a Lutheran must be based on Scripture and sound reason. Over the decades and centuries, different generations continue to come up with their own doctrinal emphases, often in response to prevailing cultural challenges, but no matter what happens or what questions we ask, we keep on returning to the Bible to understand and make sense of our world. Taken in light of Scripture, the tools taught by PLI in D2MC are good and helpful and meet and right and salutary. Unfortunately, they can also be twisted and misunderstood. And thanks to the internet, misunderstandings and slander can be amplified for the whole world.

My goal over the coming pages is to show that this discipleship program which PLI has adopted and adapted is solidly grounded in confessional Lutheran theology, and to point out some specific examples of how and why. However, everything that I write here comes from my own understanding. Any errors or misrepresentations are my own and should not be attributed to PLI as their teachings. I take full responsibility for any errors that may be found.

As I am writing this, I am operating with the understanding that you have been to at least a couple of the D2MC immersions and that you are familiar with the basic language and tools used in this program. I am also writing with the assumption that you are acquainted with Luther's Small Catechism and at least know that Lutherans subscribe to the writings in the Book of Concord as our means for understanding the Bible, because the documents in the Book of Concord accurately reflect what God's Word says.

In order to form an orderly account, this companion guide is organized into three main sections. The first covers key Lutheran doctrines that impact D2MC, and includes Discipleship, the Word of God, Two Kinds of Righteousness, and the Christian Life. The second section gives a background for our vocabulary and looks at several of the "Lifeshapes" that are taught in D2MC. Those shapes include the Covenant and Kingdom triangles, the Kairos circle, the Integrated Life Triangle, and the Semicircle. The third section touches on the key gatherings taught in D2MC, including huddles, which serve as the vehicle for teaching advanced discipleship, and the context of the family as a venue for making disciples.

I have been looking forward to sharing these observations and practical insights for a long time. These discipleship practices have meant so much to me, and writing my Major Applied Project and completing my Doctor of Ministry has given me an opportunity to gather and refine all of these insights. However, it is still a work in progress, and the feedback you provide will help me, PLI, and disciples of Jesus for years to come. So please, do not hold back!

And one last thing. Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope and pray that what you read in here will be used in service of the gospel by the Holy Spirit to work sanctification in our lives and to share Christ's work with all nations!

2. The Why and How of Discipleship

All Christians are creatures of God, and have been commissioned by the ascending Savior of the world "to go and make disciples of all nations…"[3]

As we begin looking at some of the doctrines that impact discipleship for Lutherans, I would like to briefly touch on the general topic of discipleship. Making disciples is, as "Confessing the Gospel" points out (above), the commission of all Christians straight from the mouth of Jesus. We do it because Jesus said it. However, that does not make things easy or simple.

Ernie Lassman points out that discipleship "is not simply head knowledge, although that is included, but this teaching involves the whole person; intellect, heart, and will. Such teaching includes the good news of Jesus Christ as savior from sin, death, and damnation. But, of course, such teaching involves learning to live 'a life worthy of the gospel' (Phil. 1:27). To be a disciple of Jesus Christ includes both what to believe and how to live."[4] That can be a tall order, especially for a bunch of sinners. We are tempted to immediately jump to the conclusion that we need to make ourselves holy, or at least holier than our neighbor, in order to have this worthy life. However, our Lutheran faith gives us a starting point, a direction and a means for discipleship that distinguishes us from other belief systems.

As Lutherans, we bring a specific, particular theological perspective with us as we make disciples. At the forefront is our hope to rightly distinguish Law and Gospel. As such, we do not rely on emotional manipulation or techniques of behavior modification to make disciples. Instead, we trust in the power of God's Word. Mark Mattes explains, "The Lutheran tradition

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[3] Samuel Nafzger, ed., *Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 339.

[4] Ernie Lassman. "Making Disciples." In *Formation: Essays for Future Pastors* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2008), 51–52.

continues to approach discipleship in the tradition of Isaiah and Jeremiah's confidence in the power of the Word of God alone to make disciples."[5] He goes on to explain what this looks like: "[The church] is a community established through the Word, a recipient of grace given in the proclaimed gospel and administered in the sacraments. Its life is grounded in God's truth and generosity; its mission consists of sharing this truth and generosity with others."[6]

Mattes proposes a solution in the form of a few questions: "Can we trust the Word? Will we tend to it and preach it—*let it have its way* with us? We have lost confidence in both tending to the Word and preaching it. By tending to the Word, we must seek to cultivate a renewed catechesis." (Emphasis original)[7]

St. Paul reminds us that "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17) Our confessions explain this further:

> Because we are speaking about the kind of faith that is not an idle thought, but which frees us from death, produces new life in our hearts, and is a work of the Holy Spirit, it does not coexist with mortal sin. Instead, as long as it is present, it brings forth good fruit—as we will discuss later. What can possibly be said more simply and clearly about the conversion of the ungodly or about the manner of regeneration? ... God cannot be dealt with and cannot be grasped in any other way than through the Word. Accordingly, justification happens through the Word, just as Paul notes [Romans 1:16]: the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."[8]

Every good thing we do as Christians should be ultimately traced back to the Holy Spirit working through God's Word. That is the only power wielded by the church, but it is enough for us to live faithful lives that reflect God's sacrificial love for each of us which He manifested in

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[5] Mark Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," in *Law and Gospel in Action: Foundations, Ethics, Church*, (Irvine, CA: 1517, 2018), 162.

[6] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 163.

[7] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 178.

[8] Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV (II) 64–65, 67 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 131.

the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

> *"First of all there is God's Word. After it follows faith; after faith, love; then love does every good work, for it does no wrong, in deed, it is the fulfilling of the law." - Martin Luther, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church.* [9]

[9] *LW* 36:39.

3. Justification and Sanctification, or Two Kinds of Righteousness

The Lutheran confessions teach us that we need to get justification right before we move on to sanctification, and to keep on reinforcing justification so we do not fall back into our old patterns of living. If we emphasize justification without sanctification, in an effort to avoid legalism, we get "antinomianism," a lawless form of Christianity (from the Greek words *anti-* meaning "against" and *-nomos* meaning "law"). As great as "life without limits" sounds, there is real danger in not following the Lord's good law. However, if we emphasize sanctification without being clear on justification, we can fall back into the trap of trying to justify ourselves by the law. This will ultimately lead either to an unattainable set of standards or a "new and improved" law that coincides with our growing sense of self-righteousness and looks exactly like we would if we were gods (but imperfect gods, less worthy of worship). Walking the tension between the two is difficult, and at different times in history and culture, one is often emphasized to the exclusion of the other.

Chuck Arand writes, "Lutheranism in the twenty-first century…fell into its own form of one kind of righteousness whereby our passive righteousness before God became all we needed. And so active righteousness in conformity with the Law was left unstressed or was transformed into Gospel ways of talking."[10]

Jordan Cooper sees the solution as follows: "The solution to this dilemma is to recapture the historical Lutheran distinction between the two kinds of righteousness: active, and passive. The passive righteousness of faith in justification is determinative for the divine-human relationship, and this fact distinguishes Luther from his medieval forebears. This does not,

[10] Charles A. Arand and Joel Biermann, "Why the Two Kinds of Righteousness?" *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 2 (April 2007): 126.

however negate the importance of the Christian's active life of obedience under God's law. This reality, often terms [sic] 'sanctification,' is an essential teaching of the Christian faith which is an important factor of historic Lutheran theology."[11]

So what are we talking about when we mention "sanctification"? Luther scholar Ian Sniggins explains: "Sanctification for Luther normally does not mean the process of moral purification or improvement in virtue, which is its chief connotation in post-Reformation theology. Rather, in the biblically strict sense, that is holy which is set apart for the worship and service of God."[12]

That is ultimately what we are getting at. What does it mean to live a life that is set apart for the worship and service of God in all things that we do? That is discipleship! More recently, Hal Senkbeil puts it this way: "Justification (God's action to save us) and sanctification (our life of service to him) are to be clearly separated temporally and theologically, but not essentially. Like the proverbial horse and cart, they can neither be unhitched nor rehitched. Putting sanctification before justification is an affront to God's grace and a stumbling block to faith. Holding to justification without sanctification leads nowhere, for 'faith without works is dead' (James 2:26)."[13]

Justification inevitably leads to sanctification, and that is where the doctrine of the Two Kinds of Righteousness can be helpful. This distinction is so important that Luther refers to this as "our theology."

> This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and

[11] Jordan Cooper, *Hands of Faith: A Historical and Theological Study of the Two Kinds of Righteousness in Lutheran Thought* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 2.

[12] Ian Sniggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 153–54.

[13] Harold L. Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action—Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response* (Milwaukee, WI.: Northwestern, 1989), 120–21.

> grace, secular society and religion may not be confused. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their limits. Christian righteousness applies to the new man, and the righteousness of the Law applies to the old man, who is born of flesh and blood. … He must not enjoy the freedom of the spirit or of grace unless he has first put on the new man by faith in Christ, but this does not happen fully in this life. Then he may enjoy the kingdom and the ineffable gift of grace. I am saying this in order that no one may suppose that we reject or prohibit good works…"[14]

I believe that this is the most important teaching that is not only addressed in D2MC but which flows through every immersion, every teaching input, and every huddle. By embracing this theology of two kinds of righteousness, we properly distinguish Law and Gospel in Scripture and we apply God's Word to our lives. In order to do that, we need to get our terminology straight. We need to translate this message and help people to understand it in a way that remains faithful to the text of Scripture and in a way that is simple and memorable. To do this, we use the terms "Covenant" and "Kingdom," and we explain it with the use of a couple triangles. We get to this in the next section, about Lifeshapes.

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[14] *LW* 26:7.

4. Imitation and Identity

A few years ago, I took a class at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis for my Doctor of Ministry degree. I signed up on the recommendation of a few people who had known the professor, a missionary and church planter who recently moved from southern California to Shenzhen, China. The class turned out to be an incredibly affirming experience of what I had been learning about discipleship and it also challenged me in a number of new ways. One moment that sticks with me was when the professor asked who in the class thought they had lives worth imitating. I am still not sure if he meant it as a rhetorical question, but I do remember feeling a little awkward when I was the only one who raised my hand in the affirmative. Here I am, one of the youngest men in the class, with pastors from across the United States and two other continents, some of whom had been physically tortured for confessing their faith, and I am the only one who says I have a life worth imitating?

I should probably give a caveat here. I do not believe that my life is any better than any of the other men who were taking the class. I am no less a sinner than any of them, nor any member of any of the churches I have served. But I hope that I can be bold in this way so that you can be bold, too.

St. Paul talks about imitation throughout his letters in the New Testament: he seems bold when he says in 1 Cor. 4:16 “I urge you, then, be imitators of me.” But a few chapters later, in 1 Cor. 11:1, he clarifies this, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” There is the essential qualification. Paul calls people to imitate him, but only insofar as he is an imitator of Christ.

That is important for us. We can and should be careful about the people we imitate. Sports figures and celebrities are often good examples in some ways and can be very inspirational, but we often find that they have their own rough edges and faults. And how often do those we esteem the most fall from grace? It turns out to be a pretty regular occurrence, not that it should

surprise us. People sin. We do not want to imitate that. But we can and should imitate what we see of Christ in others, and we can and should call other people to imitate whatever of Christ they see in us.

It turns out that this is a concept with strong Biblical backing. In a number of Paul's letters, he tells people to imitate him. In Phil. 3:17, Paul writes, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." In his first letter to the Thessalonians (1:6), Paul commends them, saying, "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit." This is essentially the same thing Paul also tells Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:13: "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." We also see this in the letter to the Hebrews (13:7), which says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

This is big for Luther. He points out that Abraham's faith is passed down even to Gentiles, "not because they will imitate him, but because they have received the promise … It is not the imitation that makes sons; it is sonship that makes imitators."[15] As Mark Mattes puts it, "It is because we are adopted children of God that we can imitate Christ, not vice-versa."[16]

Luther later writes:

> We do not deny that the example of Christ should be imitated by the godly and that good works must be done, but the pious do not become righteous in the sight of God on this account. Paul is… discussing how we are to be justified. Here nothing but Christ dying for sins and rising again for our righteousness should be set forth. He must be grasped by faith as a gift, not as an example…
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> It was certainly an outstanding ground for boasting that Abraham accepted circumcision when God commanded it, that he was provided with brilliant virtues, and that in everything he was obedient to God. Thus it is a laudable and happy thing

[15] *LW* 27:263.

[16] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 166.

> to imitate the example of Christ in His deeds, to love one's neighbors, to do good to those who deserve evil, to pray for one's enemies, and to bear with patience the ingratitude of those who requite good with evil. But none of this contributes to righteousness in the sight of God.[17]

I love how Luther goes back to pointing out that we imitate the example of Christ in Abraham, not just Abraham's good deeds. I think that unfortunately many of us as Christians have been deluded into thinking we have nothing to offer of our faith, or we are not good enough to imitate, or we can only learn directly from Jesus. If that is still what you think, remember this: in your baptism, Jesus has forgiven your sins, and He has given you the gift of His Holy Spirit so that you can live a new, sanctified life. In the power of His Spirit, you can follow Him. It is true that we continue to be both saints and sinners, at the same time. That will be the reality as long as we are on this side of heaven. But you are not calling people to be like *you*. You are simply showing them *Christ* in you. And He is always worth imitating. May others see Him in us.

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[17] LW 26:246–47.

5. How We Talk is Important

"Christ spoke most simply, and yet He was eloquence itself. Nor do the Prophets use high and heavy language." — Martin Luther[18]

About 15 years ago, as a young seminary graduate working as a hospital chaplain, I jotted down some thoughts for a blog post.

> It had to be a surreal experience, to say the least. All of the disciples were together in that house, without their master who had led them for three years. Who knows what they would have been doing…sharing their experiences, talking about what they want to do next, wondering what the future holds? Then suddenly they hear a sound like the wind blowing violently, and it looks like there are tongues of flame coming to each of them, resting on them. Before they knew it, they were speaking in different languages. Now they could share the experiences they had with Jesus with those around them, with the people who were in Jerusalem to celebrate the holiday.
>
> We as Christians have received that same Spirit. As Lutherans, we know that we received that same Holy Spirit in our baptism. It's interesting that the first gift of the Spirit that the disciples received was the gift of translation, to be able to bring Christ to people in a way that they understood. And so now, even though we may not know foreign languages, we each speak a language that reflects our own experiences, our culture, our traditions. And it is crucial that in order to reach those like us, those around us, we must translate God's words for our culture around us.
>
> … It's our calling as baptized, Holy Spirit-filled Christians, to bring this faith that we have made our own to the world. We assimilate this ancient faith into our own personal stories, let it pervade us and shape us and mold us into followers of Christ, and then bring that message to the world. We then take the languages of our culture, whether it be through reinterpretation of advertising clichés, visual arts, authentic personal stories or multimedia experiences and captivate them, making them obedient to Christ.[19]

I still stand behind those words, and I still get frustrated at how typically and easily Lutherans default to "philosophical" and "academic" language. This should not surprise us, since Lutheranism was founded in German universities through the work of professors like Luther, Melanchthon, and Chemnitz. We could rightly say that discipleship flows from the *Articulus*

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[18] Ewald M. Plass, *This is Luther: A Character Study* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1948), 336.

[19] http://emerginglcms.blogspot.com/2005/02/part-1-new-translations.html

Stantis et Cadentis Ecclesiae to the pedagogy of expounding on and explicating one's ontological union with the incarnate Christ, but most people in the United States in the 21st century have not been educated in German universities of the 16th century and therefore have little to no idea what that sentence means. (Full disclosure: I looked up some of the words I just wrote in that sentence.)

It is not just academic jargon that can be problematic. Jordan Cooper points out that "Contemporary Lutheranism has—in many cases—been reduced to a theology that emphasizes justification to the exclusion of sanctification, and to an unreasonable emphasis on the law-gospel schema, to the exclusion of proper exegesis in preaching and other theological pursuits."[20] He's saying that Lutherans have a tendency to talk about how God has saved us without talking about how that looks in our lives. Part of the reason for that is we preachers can get caught in a familiar rut: we pull out the convicting words of the Law to accuse churchgoers of their sin, then make them feel better by preaching the Gospel, and at that point consider our work done. I think Cooper is right, and for decades now many churches have reduced the message of the Scriptures down to a Law-Gospel dichotomy that speaks only to justification and has led to accusations of antinomianism and even the reactionary retort "Weak on sanctification." There is the challenge for not just pastors, but all Christians: How can we get the concepts we believe, teach, and confess to connect?

The simple answer is "through the power of the Holy Spirit," but as we see in Scripture and especially at Pentecost, this is where the translation work of discipleship comes in. It was, after all, the Holy Spirit who was at work at Pentecost where the gospel was translated for people who spoke numerous languages. As much as we can, we want to use Scriptural terms, because "All

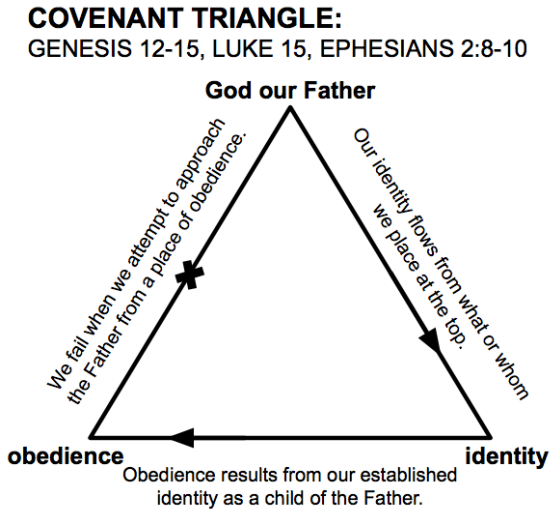
[20] Cooper, *Hands of Faith*, 1.

scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16) By sticking with not only *what* Scripture says but, as much as possible, *how* the Holy Spirit's inspired Word speaks, we come to understand and we help others understand these concepts in ways that can help us to know God and His grace and mercy for us and to be able to share that grace and mercy with others through our words and works.

I have found in my experience with discipleship and in learning the material that is taught in D2MC that for many people, teaching concepts with the use of shapes can be a means to making them memorable and reproducible. What follows are a number of my theological findings and reflections on concepts used in D2MC that are illustrated with shapes: the Covenant and Kingdom triangles, the Kairos circle, the Integrated Life (Up-In-Out) triangle, and the Semicircle.

6. Two Kinds of Righteousness, or Covenant and Kingdom

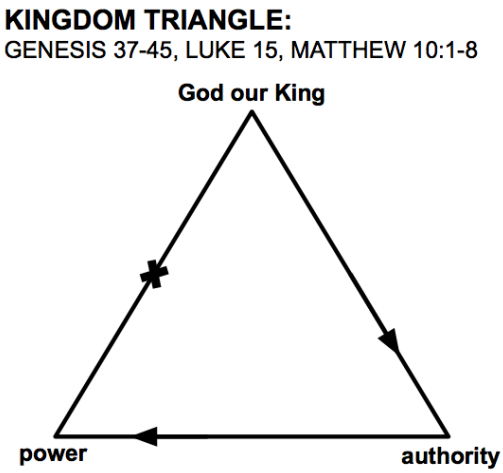
One of the most important concepts taught in D2MC is the idea of a "grounding point of Scripture" that we find in the dual themes of Covenant and Kingdom. These are taught together, and are introduced with the stories of Abraham to illustrate Covenant and Joseph to illustrate Kingdom, and then bringing both together in Jesus.



"Covenant" refers to the way Christians know God as a loving Father, who has given His identity to His children in baptism. From that identity we are blessed to obey our Father and follow His will, because He only wants what is best for us. We cannot obey our way into our identity. This is about "relationship".

We are also a part of God's "Kingdom." Our heavenly Father is also the King of the universe, and He has dominion over all things. As we grow in our Father's identity, He gives us His authority to act in His name, whether that would be in forgiving sins or serving others, and we have all of God's power behind us through His Spirit as we serve Him in His stead and in His name. This is about "representation."

When I began learning about Covenant and Kingdom as an overarching paradigm for theology, there was something familiar in the Covenant and Kingdom language. It didn't necessarily line up with Law and Gospel, though there were some similarities. The biggest challenge for me was that it seemed to be backwards from the Law and Gospel paradigm I had



learned as a little Lutheran. I knew that the Law "Shows our Sin" and the Gospel "Shows our Savior." But on its own, that simple dichotomy led to a tendency to see God's Law as only good for accusing people of sin, and not as helpful guide or "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" as the Psalmist says.

I also began to see something more clearly that I likely knew more intuitively up until that point: grace. This grace made a big difference in the lives of church workers who were used to striving and working and attempting to fulfill all (proper) righteousness through their own work in ministry. I began to see that more than any other church program or philosophy of ministry I had ever known, the language of Covenant and Kingdom helped people to see the depth and far-reaching ramifications of the freedom we have received in the grace of God offered in Jesus Christ. Christians who went through the learning communities such as D2MC learned to apply that grace and accompanying freedom to their own lives and ministries.

In time, I began to see that Covenant and Kingdom more closely paralleled the Two Kinds of Righteousness first put forth by Luther in his introduction to his commentary on the Galatians. This was a key to discipleship, and it can be found widespread in many of Luther's writings. Mark Mattes picks up on this when he writes, "[Luther's] positive teaching on discipleship can best be seen in his reinterpretation of Augustine's view that Christ is both *sacramentum* and *exemplum*."[21] He is hearkening back to Luther's words in his early lectures on Galatians in 1519. Luther writes,

> In the fourth chapter of the third book of his *On the Trinity* St. Augustine teaches that the suffering of Christ is both a sacrament and an example—a sacrament because it signifies the death of sin in us and grants it to those who believe, an example because it also behooves us to imitate Him in bodily suffering and dying. The sacrament is what is stated in Rom. 4:25: "Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for

[21] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 167.

> our justification." The example is what is stated in 1 Peter 2:21: "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps."[22]

The death of sin that is completed in Jesus' death on a cross is prefigured in the covenant that God makes with Abraham. As Abraham walks through the blood of the sacrifice, he is "born again" into a new relationship with God. We can also see in Joseph's life a prefiguring of Christ's rescue mission, a mission we are called to join as we follow in Christ's steps and heed His example.

Why do we use these words "covenant" and "kingdom" to help us understand the Bible? These words and what they convey expand on the two kinds of righteousness, our righteousness "before God" (in Latin: *coram deo*), and our righteousness "before the world" (*coram mundo*). Covenant is your righteousness before God, or to put it another way, being in a right relationship with God. It is God the Father who gives us our identity in Baptism, and then we move forward into our obedience. We'll see more on the nuances of what that means coming up! And next is the kingdom, your righteousness before the world and being in a right relationship with your neighbor. Our Father is also our King, who gives us the authority to act on His behalf, like Joseph, with His power. That's "Covenant and Kingdom" in a nutshell.

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[22] *LW* 27:238.

7. Why Use "Covenant" and "Kingdom" Language? Part 1: Covenant

In 1970, future Concordia Seminary professor Erich Kiehl presented an essay at "The Lutheran Congress," which talks about the goal of Christian Education and suggests a solution that involves approaching the Scriptures from a particular perspective. Despite being half a century old, his choice of verbiage for proposing a "unifying theme" of "Covenant" undergirding Scripture is remarkably timely for us today.

Kiehl makes his first point, about the goal of Christian education, with an appeal to God's Word:

> It is this ageless Word, applicable to the needs of every age, which the Holy Spirit uses to lead men to faith, to nurture and to stimulate their growth in faith so that they may through the Spirit's power witness through their life and with their lips to their faith relationship with God. …
>
> Dr. Randolph Crump Miller in *Christian Nurture and the Church* echoes a similar view but from a Christian perspective when he says, "The crucial factor is not information as such, not the capturing of the mind, and not the passing of an examination. The significant factor in Christian education is helping the individual, by God's grace, to become a believing, committed member of the community of the Holy Spirit, obedient to Christ as his Lord and Master, and living as a Christian to the best of his ability in all his relationships."[23]
>
> Thus, in Christian education, we strive through the Spirit's power to change attitudes on the basis of a clearer understanding of Scripture and its meaning and message for us. We also strive to motivate the learner to express his attitude in terms of relationships—his relationship to God and with his fellowmen.[24]

This is the same challenge we all face in translating our timeless faith for current times. Kiehl then goes into some of the problems, taking from his experiences teaching at Concordia College-Ann Arbor (which would have included my parents): students know a little about the Gospel, but can't articulate overall themes, their understanding of the Old Testament is law-

[23] Randolph Crump Miller, *Christian Nurture and the Church* (New York: Scribner, 1961), 4.

[24] Erich Kiehl, "Christian Education," in *Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church,* eds. Erich Kiehl and Waldo Werning (Chicago: Lutheran Congress, 1970), 102.

based, and they have kind of a “fantasy-land” thinking about it, and they are confused about Law and Gospel. Unfortunately, over the past 50 years, these problems have not gotten much better. One solution, Kiehl proposes, is to approach the Scriptures from the standpoint of a unifying theme. The theme he proposes is “Covenant.”

> Through the Scriptures runs the unifying and integrating pattern of the covenant theme. In the Old Testament the key word is "covenant," in the Gospels "kingdom of God," and beginning with the Book of Acts the two terms in sequence “believers” and “church.” Please note that the inner core of this unifying covenant theme is the redemptive, sacrifice, and life-giving role of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This role is carefully foretold and describes in the Old Testament beginning with the *Protevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 and sees its fulfillment in the mission of Jesus Christ and its aggressive proclamation by the apostolic church.
>
> … A simple definition of covenant is God's arrangement of grace in choosing Israel to be His Chosen People. [25]

Kiehl goes on to trace this theme of Covenant throughout the Bible in various events and passages, pointing out that “God's covenant with His people involves relationships with God and with people.” As an overarching guide to the Old Testament, Kiehl points out that

> Judaism has a saying, "The *Torah* is the supreme rule of faith; the rest is commentary." Just what does this mean? Judaism would say: The *Torah* or Pentateuch tells about God's making His covenant with His people and spells out its relationship implications for His people. The books from Joshua to Malachi merely comment on what happened to Israel in each age, depending on whether or not they lived in covenant relationship with God.

In regards to the New Testament, he says, “Jesus the Messiah [comes] as the fulfillment of the inner core of this theme,” and are followed by the Epistles, which “stress not only the fact of the how of salvation but also always the relationship implications of salvation.”[26]

Kiehl concludes: “The tightly integrated covenant theme unifies the Scriptures and always forms the theological setting for its message. It is of crucial importance that this be understood

[25] Kiehl, “Christian Education,” 102–3.

[26] Kiehl, “Christian Education,” 104.

by those who prepare curricular materials so that they faithfully and knowledgeably reflect this theme and its relationship implications. All involved in the education process also need to know and understand this unifying theme and its all-embracing implications."[27]

I am amazed that these words can still be so timely. PLI looks to be doing just that, embracing the theme of covenant in much the same way as Kiehl suggested several decades ago and expanding on it in its curricular materials and educational processes so that Kiehl's proposal finds fulfillment in the lives of disciples today.

[27] Kiehl, "Christian Education," 104.

8. Why Use "Covenant" and "Kingdom" Language? Part 2: Kingdom

Kiehl does not stick solely with covenant language in his essay. He picks up on the kingdom language, too, noticing that there is a connection. Two of the characteristics he points out in the covenant relationship between God and Israel in the Old Testament are "the will of God as the theocratic king to be supreme and lived out in Israel's covenant relationship with Him and expressed in their relationship with their fellowmen" and "God's desire that his covenant people be a special, select people: 'a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, my own possession' (Exod. 19:5–6)"[28]

The relationship God has with His people is also to be "expressed in their relationship with" those with whom they come into contact, the world around them. They are chosen to represent God in this world. The ones who were chosen foremost to represent God were the covenant kings God anointed. He explains: "Crucial in the whole covenant concept is the role of the covenant king in the theocracy. He served as God's representative. Both the kings of Israel and of Judah were judged by God from the viewpoint of the covenant perspective. To them, God sent His prophets to lead and guide them so that they would remain faithful to their role as covenant kings." The covenant kings were to represent him.[29] So here we see that Kiehl already has an idea of the importance of representation (as is taught in D2MC) that is connected to the kings who live under God's covenant.

Kiehl then moves on to the New Testament, where he asks, "What is meant in the Gospels by the term "kingdom of God" and does it fit into the covenant theme of the Scriptures?"[30] Unfortunately, Kiehl does not dive into what this means as much as he does with the theme of

[28] Kiehl, "Christian Education," 103.

[29] Kiehl, "Christian Education," 103.

[30] Kiehl, "Christian Education," 104.

covenant, but other Lutherans can help us with what this means.

Robert J. Koester, In his book "Law and Gospel: Foundation of Lutheran Ministry," traces this theme of God's kingdom through the Bible. He writes: "In the Bible, the 'kingdom of God' is synonymous with the gospel of God's forgiveness working in the hearts of its hearers. The value of studying the meaning of the gospel under the heading of the kingdom of God is that this term denotes something that God is doing among us."[31]

God's kingdom probably comes up the most frequently when we pray in the second petition of our Lord's prayer "Thy kingdom come/May your kingdom come." What is the kingdom of God? Luther answers this exact question in his Large Catechism:

> Namely, that God sent His Son, Christ our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, to bring us to himself, and to rule us as a king of righteousness, life and salvation against sin, death and an evil conscience. To this end he also gave his Holy Spirit to deliver this to us through his holy Word and to enlighten and strengthen us in faith by his power.[32]

Luther goes on to say that we ask for God's kingdom to come "both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and also in order that it may find approval and gain followers among other people and advance in power throughout the world. In this way many, led by the Holy Spirit, may come into the kingdom of grace and become partakers of redemption, so that we may all remain together eternally in this kingdom that has now begun."[33] That is His mission, and the mission to which we are now called.

The essential distinction is this: "Luther is clear that the fruits of the kingdom are not the kingdom itself."[34] This is incredibly important for us. "Note the distinction. The kingdom of God

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[31] Robert J. Koester, *Law and Gospel: Foundation of Lutheran Ministry* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1993), 55.

[32] LC III.51 in Kolb and Wengert, 446.

[33] LC III.52 in Kolb and Wengert, 447.

[34] Koester, *Law and Gospel,* 58.

produces sanctification, but is not the sanctification itself."[35] We are not building an earthly kingdom or a civil realm for Christians, nor do we depend on the signs of sanctification (good works) as proof for one's conversion or that God's kingdom is truly present. Christ states plainly to Pontius Pilate "My kingdom is not of this world." We ought to keep that in mind as we seek to represent Him and in claiming His authority and power. So Luther rightly says in commenting on Jesus' actions in John 8: "Thus the kingdom of Christ concerns itself with sinners who feel their sins and are tortured, tormented, and frightened by them, with those whose heart feels death."[36]

Koester continues, "Luther understood the kingdom to be God's working with his grace by winning salvation, bestowing salvation on his people, and judging the guilty, [not] as the effects of God's overcoming the results of sin according to his power as King [nor] interpreting the results of the kingdom as if they were the kingdom itself."[37]

What is important is that we come to realize, as we learn in the Small Catechism, that in addition to Christ's work which makes us His own, we now "live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." And this has a tremendous effect on our lives. Our perception of the world is shaped by our knowing that God's present and coming kingdom of grace transforms us by Christ's power and gives us the authority to use this power in our lives for His glory. As Girgensohn puts it:

> Everything is seen in the light the coming kingdom casts ahead of it. The coming world is already determining the present. The great hope is already drawing the present into its spell. It becomes a 'living' hope, no longer merely a dream of a future at the end or on the margin of our present life. It presses in upon us, becomes highly real and actual, and confronts us with the inescapable question that demands an answer, as to whether we belong in the coming kingdom, whether we are citizens of

[35] Koester, *Law and Gospel,* 59.

[36] *LW* 23:317.

[37] Koester, *Law and Gospel,* 69.

> the kingdom, children of the Father's house, or whether we belong to those who will be cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.[38]

As D2MC teaches, we who are citizens of the kingdom and children of the Father's house represent the Father as His kingdom comes even in this world.

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[38] Herbert Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959), 248–49.

9. Covenant and Identity in Baptism

"Because of the identity of Christ and faith, the believer must necessarily perform good works because it is Christ performing good works for the neighbor through the one who believes."[39]

Who am I? What is my identity?

We find in Scripture that our place in this world is inseparable from our place in relation to God. God has established a "covenant," a promise or an agreement with us that helps us to see and understand who we are because of our Baptism into God's name. The covenant God makes with us connects us with Christ's identity, and that forms the basis for who we are as Christians.

Hal Senkbeil says that Baptism

> means that there is now a whole new dimension to the Christian life. Now as we live in the real world, Christ actually lives within us (Galatians 2:20). The new life we live is really Christ's life, after all, we have been joined with him by baptism into his resurrection (Romans 6:5). Now, since we have been raised with Christ and he is actually living within us, we set our sights on heavenly matters, where Christ reigns in ascended glory. … Baptism is a continual reminder that God does not leave us to fend for ourselves in the Christian life. We say with the apostle Paul: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2:20). We are not left to our own devices in doing battle against our sinful nature, Satan, and the world around us."[40]

Luther exhorts us to hold fast to the covenant we have in Baptism in a sermon he preached in 1534:

> Therefore, learn that Baptism is nothing temporary, as the world sees it with carnal eyes, imagining that Baptism only avails once. But know that by Baptism you enter into an eternal covenant, and even if you sin, you have Baptism behind you. Go back to it. Christ does not fall from His throne even though you sin. Be afraid because you have fallen from Christ, but enter into the covenant again, and do not say, "I will take up a new order in which I will do many good works so that God will forgive my sin." No! You must return to the covenant of your Baptism and say, "I fell out of it, but I will take hold again of the ship that does not break apart."[41]

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[39] Cooper, *Hands of Faith*, 17–18.

[40] Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action*, 156–57.

[41] Martin Luther, "Sixth Sermon on Holy Baptism, March 3, 1538" in *Luther on Holy Baptism: Sermons to the People (1525-39)*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: CPH, 2018), 97.

This baptismal covenant is where we find our identity in Christ. It is an identity we can return to no matter how often we stray from it. Baptism, then, also becomes the event through which we find our purpose. As Mark Mattes summarizes, "This Word proclaimed in preaching or the sacrament grants us a new identity and a shared life not only with Christ, but with those in need."[42]

When we learn about the covenant triangle, we are warned not to go backwards, not to try to gain our identity in the family through our obedience to the Father and skipping the identity step. As the teaching notes for D2MC put it, "We can go from Father to Obedience to Identity, the belief that we will finally be loved and accepted if we are good girls and boys. This is the way of law, not grace."[43]

That really is at the crux of covenant and kingdom and ultimately of all Lutheran discipleship. If we are attempting to earn anything or get anything through obedience or discipline or mortification of the flesh or anything else we do, we are going the wrong way. That was really the point of all of Luther's talk about righteousness. By placing this at the forefront of this Covenant triangle, front and center, as one of the most important things we do, we are remaining faithful to the intent of our Lutheran forebearers and ultimately, faithful to the Gospel itself!

One way to remember our identity in Christ in a kinesthetic way is by making the sign of the cross as we remember our baptism. Hal Senkbeil writes, "It's significant, for example, that along with suggested prayers for morning and evening [Luther's] catechism prescribes the signing of the cross. This was no mechanical formalism, nor some sort of superstitious magic.

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[42] Mattes, "Discipleship in Lutheran Perspective," 147.

[43] PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, Becoming a Discipling Leader (Immersion 1), "Covenant and Kingdom - Immersion 1 - Teaching Input #4," 3.

This action was a vivid reminder that each day is begun, continued, and ended in the death and resurrection of our baptism. Our whole life is a life under the cross of Christ."[44]

Even a little gesture like making the sign of the cross helps us to remember and understand our relationship with the God who called us into His covenant in our baptism. This promise gives us our purpose as we return each day to the identity we find in Christ.

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[44] Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action*, 182.

10. Covenant and Identity in the Creed

We can also see this covenantal, baptismal identity in the Apostles' Creed. In the Creed, we confess not only who God is but also, underneath the words about the God we believe in, the Creed tells us who *we* are in relation to God. This gets to the heart of the second danger we learn about in relation to covenant and kingdom in D2MC. It is the temptation "to replace the Father with something else that is a shakeable reality and get our identity from that: Money, success, affirmation and approval, status, etc. But what happens when those things disappear? Suddenly, we have no idea who we are. We need an immovable presence to give us our Identity."[45]

In order to know who we are and in order to protect us from falling prey to these temptations, we also need to know whose we are, and that is what we learn and are reminded of as we confess our faith in the timeless words of the Apostles' Creed and in Luther's explanation of the Creed in his Small Catechism.

In the Apostles' Creed and in Luther's meanings in the Small Catechism, we find that God…

…has made me

…has given me body and soul, et al., reason… and still takes care of them… all I need to support this body and life.

…defends me against danger/guards and protects me from evil.

And why does he do this?

Out of <u>Fatherly</u>, divine goodness and mercy.

[45] PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, Becoming a Discipling Leader (Immersion 1), "Covenant and Kingdom - Immersion 1 - Teaching Input #4," 3.

So what is my sanctified response to knowing this about our Father?

I should *thank and praise, serve and obey Him.*

What's my relationship to Jesus?

Jesus…

… is my Lord.

… has redeemed me, purchased and won me from all sins, death, power of the devil

Why?

That I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him…

What's my relationship to the Holy Spirit?

He…

… has called, enlightened, sanctified and kept me in the true faith,

… also gathers the church on earth and keeps it in the one true faith.

… in the church, forgives my sins and the sins of all believers.

… will raise me and all the dead on the last day and give all believers eternal life.

By confessing this creed and the meaning which we find in Luther's Small Catechism, we remember the God who protects us and provides for us, our loving Father. This confession shields us from seeking provision and protection outside of Him and trusting in things that are created instead of the Creator. We also remember Jesus as our Savior, the One who has redeemed us from sin so that we do not have to strive to make things right in our relationship with God, and who gives us the purpose of being His, living under Him in His kingdom, and

serving Him. And we are also shielded from the temptations to build our own church and to find forgiveness and life on our own, since it is the Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies all believers in the church, forgives us, and raises believers to eternal life.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism, "The Creed brings pure grace and makes us righteous and acceptable to God. Through this knowledge we come to love and delight in all the commandments of God because we see here in the Creed how God gives himself completely to us, with all his gifts and power, to help us keep the Ten Commandments: the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts."[46] In confessing the creed, we learn to let God be God, our Father and King, and we can receive and accept the gifts He gives to us.

[46] LC II:68–69 in Kolb and Wengert, 440.

11. Covenant and Obedience

When I first started learning about Covenant and Kingdom, I was a bit put off by the use of the word "obedience" in relation to this concept of Covenant. I was not sure that it belonged on the side of Covenant, since it sounded more like a "law" word, and Covenant seemed to be all about the "gospel." I understand that our Father is the one who bestows our identity in baptism. In D2MC, we learn that "our identity is secure as God loves us as his kids unconditionally. And it is out of that secure place that we can live out that identity in Obedience to our Father. Not because we are trying to earn something, but because we are now living out who we were created to be."[47]

However, it took me some further reading (thanks largely to Jordan Cooper's book *Hands of Faith*) before I could see that there is a necessary relationship of obedience that flows out of our identity. Cooper notes that through faith, the Christian's unity with Christ is "increased and strengthened as the Christian participates in the sacramental life of the church and it is demonstrated through growth in holiness."[48]

Growth is nearly always synonymous with vitality. We like to be a part of things that are growing. We like to see our wealth and knowledge grow, and we like the organizations and activities we are part of to grow. We want our children to grow (like Jesus did in Luke 2:52, "in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and with man.") Oftentimes our success is measured in growth, whether in productivity or sales or efficiency. People in the church often look for growth, too: growth in numbers of worship attenders, offerings, buildings, growth in our

[47] PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, Becoming a Discipling Leader (Immersion 1), "Covenant and Kingdom - Immersion 1 - Teaching Input #4," 3.

[48] Jordan Cooper, *Christification: A Lutheran Approach to Theosis.* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 19.

number of good deeds, and, for some, even growth in suffering.

This preference for growth has the potential to be dangerous, and, if left unchecked, even deadly to our faith. Discipleship is not progressive sanctification, as if we are on a smooth graph arcing towards godliness. Our lives are marked with fits and starts when it comes to our good works, and at times, all of us feel like we are going backwards. If we look for comfort in our actions and growth in good deeds, we end up with either smug, ignorant and oblivious self-righteousness or despair.

So what should we look for regarding our growth in holiness? One sign is freedom. How free are we in asking God in the words of Luther's Morning Prayer, "and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you"? The way Cooper breaks this down helps us see where this growth happens in both Covenant and Kingdom. When he says that the Christian participates in the sacramental life of the church, that's the Covenant. And when he says that it is demonstrated through growth in personal holiness, that's the Kingdom.

This is what we find in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, too, where this growth in personal holiness is shown to be what the Scriptures call "Sacrifices of praise," "Spiritual sacrifices," and "Spiritual worship."

> "Sacrifices of praise," [are] the preaching of the gospel, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the afflictions of the saints, and indeed, all the good works of the saints. These sacrifices are … performed by those who are already reconciled.
>
> These are the sacrifices of the New Testament, as Peter teaches [1 Peter 2:5], "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices." … "Spiritual" refers to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Paul teaches the same thing in Romans 12:1: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." "Spiritual worship" refers to worship where God is recognized and is grasped by the mind, as happens when it fears and trusts God. … The Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13:15, teaches the same thing, "Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God," and it adds an interpretation, "that is, the fruit of lips that

> confess his name." He commands us to offer praises, that is, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, and the like. These avail not by the outward act but on account of faith. This is stressed by the phrase, "through him let us offer," that is, by faith in Christ.[49]

In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, things are even more clear. "Faith is not just knowledge. But it is willing to receive or take hold of those things that are offered in the promise about Christ. Furthermore, this obedience toward God (i.e. to want to receive the offered promise) is no less a divine service than is love. God wants us to believe Him and to receive from Him blessings. He declares this to be true divine service."[50]

Obedience to God is a very good thing. In fact, it is helpful to reframe our understanding of obedience in light of the covenant He has established with us in giving us our identity in Baptism, so that we can see that even in our obedience our God gives us the means to grow in holiness and our relationship with Him.

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[49] Ap XXIV.25–26 in Kolb and Wengert, 262–63.

[50] Ap V (III).106–7 (227–28), in Paul T. McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions,* 2nd ed., (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 116. Paragraph 227 is significantly different than and paragraph 228 is not included in the Kolb-Wengert edition.

12. The Fatherhood and Kingship of God

We can see the themes of Covenant and Kingdom coming together in the Lord's Prayer and in the implications which that prayer has for us when we pray. By understanding who God is from both the perspective of Father and King, we come to deeper faith in a God who both cares for us personally and who has the means to move the heavens and the earth and will do exactly that if it is for our good.

In the Lord's prayer, we confess that God is our dear Father who would give and has given what is most precious to Him for our sake. We also remember in it that our Father in heaven is the King of the kingdom that is coming, and He already has the kingdom, power, and glory over all things in this universe. T. C. Appelt writes,

> In this kingdom of God, the heavenly Father is the King, the believers in Christ are the subjects. As such they do the will of their King; they lead a godly life. This obedience to the commandments of their heavenly Father is the result of their faith; for when they entered this kingdom of God through the work of the Holy Spirit, they were born again, they entered a new, spiritual life. Their faith and their godly life are as inseparable as cause is from effect. Therefore the kingdom of God comes "when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life.[51]

Herbert Girgensohn explores the connection between the Fatherhood and kingship of God in his explanation of the Second Petition. He writes, "The future kingdom is the kingdom of the Father. At the same time he is the King who wages his kingdom's war."[52] He continues:

> The real goal and end of all the ways of God [is] understood and laid hold of in faith, and absolute trust in what is implicit in the name Father. It is the Father who rules. Thus it is a matter of a trust which really takes seriously God's Fatherly, saving love and learns to look at all the future from the point of view of the disclosure of God's fatherhood in Jesus Christ even though many things are still incomprehensible and cloaked in mystery. The kingship and the fatherhood of God belong together. It is

[51] T.C. Appelt, *Catechetical Preparations. Part III* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1935), 21.

[52] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 247.

> only from the word "Father" in the address that the second petition acquires the tone it should have and all its yearning urgency for us men.[53]

Girgensohn points out something important here. It is our trust in God as our Father, who loves us and saves us, that gives us the proper perspective on life and guides us in how to represent him. Conversely, he also says, "the fatherhood of God derives its true meaning from the kingship of God. Our Father is the royal ruler of the world actually allowing his kingdom to come."[54]

This dovetails with what is taught in the first teaching input on Covenant and Kingdom in D2MC, which reminds us, "What we have to recognize is that it is all connected. The Father is the King, we receive authority only when we ground our identity in him, and we have power when we are obedient to him. Notice how it all hinges on identity. If that isn't grounded, if we don't get that, everything else is lost."[55]

We first see God as *our* Father. He calls us by name in baptism to be His children and loves us and wants what is best for us, which He showed us in the cross. This all is understood before we can we see Him as the all-powerful and sovereign ruler of the world. Koester points out the importance of this subtle difference between a theology that places Christ's cross at the center as opposed to a theology that focuses on God's sovereignty. "A person who is concerned with becoming holy in this life will automatically place a greater importance on submitting to the will of a Sovereign God than he will place on Jesus' sacrifice for him. … God's kingdom is revealed to us—not based on his sovereignty but on his atonement for our sins."[56]

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[53] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 247.

[54] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 247.

[55] PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, Becoming a Discipling Leader (Immersion 1), "Covenant and Kingdom - Immersion 1 - Teaching Input #4," 4.

[56] Koester, *Law and Gospel,* 62.

Girgensohn continues on this vein and explains the distinction in this way:

> "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13–14). God's acceptance is already in effect because Jesus forgives sins. This acceptance of God is not merely an isolated act that squares up individual sins; rather God accepts the whole sinful man, who is thus removed from judgment, received into gracious fellowship with the Father, and made a citizen of his kingdom and a child of the Father's house, in which he can now live his life in fellowship with the Father and in the spirit of the Father's house.
>
> It is men under the power of Jesus who pray the petition. They are the ones to whom it was given. They are the only ones who can pray it; for it is their Lord they expect, and their Father's house they yearn for, and the kingdom whose blessings they already know.[57]

One of the benefits of understanding covenant and kingdom as the overarching themes of the Bible is that knowing God's roles as both our Father and our heavenly King helps us to more clearly understand the God to whom we pray. It is no wonder Luther writes: "with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father." We are blessed to pray with boldness, knowing our heavenly Father will give us whatever we ask, and the confidence of faith that He, our King and the ruler of all things, "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." (Eph. 3:20)

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[57] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 250.

13. Power and Authority

"We do not need to look elsewhere for the Spirit if we have the Sacrament of Baptism, since we have Christ's words and institution that the name of the Holy Spirit is present along with that of the Father and the Son, (that is, of the whole divine Majesty)."[58]

Hal Senkbeil writes, "The gospel is not only a message; it brings with it a whole new way of looking at life and living it. It is lifestyle Christianity, but it's a lifestyle freed from the constraints of the legal demands and the plastic superficiality that characterize too much of American Christianity in our day. This lifestyle is nothing less than Christ in action. It is Jesus Christ living out his life in his people!"[59]

Authority, in the Bible, refers to the right to do something or to tell someone to do something. In D2MC, we are reminded that we have been given the authority to represent God in our lives. Jesus is the one who

> dispenses all his authority and power to his disciples, essentially saying, "You've seen me push out the Kingdom and represent the Father. I've taught you to do everything I can do and I'm telling you, you'll do even greater things."[60]

This authority is like having a badge that signifies that we carry official status and have rights ordinary citizens do not. Since God has given us authority to represent Him, He also gives us extraordinary powers, in the same way that peace officers and military personnel may have weapons or other tools that give them powers beyond what ordinary citizens may do. This is what it means to be a part of God's kingdom.

The greatest authority and power we have as Christians is given to us in the office of the keys, or the authority to forgive sins. Luther explains the keys "are an office, a power or

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[58] Luther, "Sermons on Holy Baptism 1534," 27.

[59] Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action*, 182–83.

[60] PLI, Unpublished D2MC Teaching Notes, Becoming a Discipling Leader (Immersion 1), "Covenant and Kingdom - Immersion 1 - Teaching Input #4," 3–4.

command given by God through Christ to all of Christendom for the retaining and remitting of the sins of men."[61] This power has been given "to all of Christendom," to all those who have been baptized into the name of the triune God. "The keys belong to the whole church and to each of its members, both as regards their authority and their various uses. … In all of these declarations we find established the fullest authority and the most immediate exercise of the right to bind and to absolve. … The ministry of the Word belongs to all."[62]

It is rightly not us who have the authority in ourselves, but "God through Christ" in us who does these good things through us and, we must remember, by His authority. That may seem subtle, but it is incredibly important. Christ says He is with us always (Matt. 28:20), and God has given Him the authority (Matt. 28:18), so God works in us and through us as He shares that authority and gives us power to forgive sins in John 20.

That's not all, though. This authority Christ gives to us also conveys to us the power to live out a life of love for our neighbor as part of Christ's kingdom and to lead others to this kingdom. Luther summarizes Christ's message as saying

> "I give you the kingdom of heaven, power over the devil, and no matter how much you die, I keep you from perishing." Of course, we do not do this with our own strength; but we do it by virtue of the authority and command of God, who has given men the power to lead one another to eternal life through the priesthood of Christ. … we have the Son of God Himself… saying: "I absolve you, I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power to baptize, to save, to tread demons and hell underfoot. I give you this divine power in order that you may do the same works that I do, and greater works than these" (cf. John 14:12).[63]

Christ's promise is this (as paraphrased by Martin Luther) "I will so exercise My authority in you that you will do the same works that I do, and much greater ones. Whatever you ask, I

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[61] *LW* 40:366.

[62] *LW* 40:27–28.

[63] *LW* 5:141–42.

will do." [64] Even though Christ is no longer physically present with us after His ascension into heaven, His presence through His Spirit through our Baptism emboldens us to keep claiming His authority and exercising His power in our daily lives.

[64] *LW* 24:183–84.

14. Covenant and Kingdom in a Perfect World

We do not live in a perfect world. It is not a sinless world. Frankly, this world can be horrible. We have got sin, death, and the devil nipping at our heels constantly, so it is easy to think that our theology is a consequence of sin and the fall, as if everything is part of a world where there is both good and evil.

There is a very brief picture in Genesis, not much more than two chapters long, that describes life before Adam and Eve's fall into sin. It is a glimpse into a perfect, sinless world. In those chapters, we can see Covenant and Kingdom relationships as they were truly meant to be.

It all starts out with a formless, void, and dark world, called into being in the beginning for the people who would soon inhabit it. Over six days, God speaks this world into existence: night and day are distinguished, the heavens and the earth are separated, the waters are gathered so that dry land may appear and covered with plants and trees. Then another round of creation and definition: day and night are filled with lights: the sun, moon, and stars. The heavens and the earth are filled with creatures that fly and swim, and then the land is filled with all kinds of creatures. And this was all good.

Into this good world, God places Adam. Everything Adam receives is a gift, from his body and breath, to his wife, to the land and animals he cares for in the garden God planted for him, to the holy day of rest God had blessed. Adam receives these gifts as we do: "all this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him."

Martin Luther, in this explanation, clearly lays out the idea of Covenant: We, like Adam, have a heavenly Father. He has called us and given us a world and a place in it, an identity. Because of that identity we have received from Him, as His children, it is our duty to respond to Him with our obedience by serving Him and offering Him our thanks and praise.

But there is more:

> And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

God gives Adam and Eve instructions about how to live in the kingdom He created for them. By following these instructions, Adam and Eve show mankind's place in this world, how to relate to the rest of creation. God, the Creator and King of the universe, delegates His authority to the man and woman. He provides them with food, but does not stop there: He also gives them the power to feed the beasts and birds and creeping things, "everything that has the breath of life." God gives gifts to His children, and they are to take those gifts and use them to serve all creation.[65]

We can see both Covenant and Kingdom in the world God has created, as it was truly supposed to be. Adam and Eve have perfect relationships with each other and with God and with all of creation, as they serve Him, each other, and the entire world He has created for them.

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[65] This chapter was inspired by the appendix titled "Two Kinds of Righteousness in Scripture" in Jordan Cooper's *Hands of Faith,* 135–38.

15. The *Kairos* Moment

In D2MC, one of the helpful tools taught is called the "*kairos* circle." At its core, this is a series of steps for reflection, discussion, and action based on applying God's Word to our lives. These steps are plotted around a circle known as the *kairos* circle or learning circle.

When we talk about a "*kairos*" moment, we are grabbing onto a scriptural concept that has been around for a long time. Back in 1920, Louis Wessel, a professor of theology from Concordia College in Springfield, Illinois, pointed out that a "*kairos*" is a different measure of time than "*chronos*." He comments, in reference to Gal. 6:10, that a *kairos* is a moment representing an opportunity, specifically an opportunity to act, to do good.

> Galatians 6:10: As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
>
> The word correctly rendered opportunity, *kairos*, is the present period of time with its peculiar circumstances, while *chronos* is time conceived as a line extending through a series of periods. The question, who is my neighbor? must be answered in consideration of times and circumstances, all men being our neighbors as we have opportunity to do them good. At the same time, however, the apostle points out a category of fellow-men in whose favor we should discriminate, when he says: Especially unto them who are of the household of faith, our brethren in Christ, the members of Christian congregations. In a similar way St. Paul points out such as should be provided for before others, when he says, 1 Tim. 5:8: But if any provide not for his own, and especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith. But while it is proper that we should exercise due discrimination in doing good, the text before us at the same time teaches that we should not restrict our benevolence to the members of our natural and spiritual household when we find opportunity to do good to others besides and beyond them.[66]

By using the learning circle to talk about our *kairos* moments, we are taking advantage of these opportunities where we see God breaking into our lives with these opportunities and His Spirit working through the Word, which we apply to our lives and which teaches us to act in ways that serve our neighbor. Even our confessions talk about these moments. We read in the

[66] A.L.Graebner, W.H.T.Dau, and Louis Wessel. *The Proof Texts of the Catechism with a Practical Commentary* (Springfield, Ill.: Concordia Supply Co., 1920), 36.

Apology of the Augsburg Confession:

> We say that contrition is the genuine terror of the conscience that feels God's wrath against sin and grieves that it has sinned. This contrition takes place when the Word of God denounces sin, because the sum of the preaching of the Gospel is to condemn sin and to offer the forgiveness of sins, righteousness on account of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, and so that having been reborn we might do good.[67]

If "genuine terror of a conscience" is not a *kairos* moment, I don't know what is. However, as the Apology points out, the goal is not to simply have a *kairos* moment or some kind of experience that feels meaningful. A *kairos* moment ought to be an opportunity taken where we apply God's Word as the Holy Spirit leads us to change in our lives, turning away from sin in repentance ("having been reborn") and acting according to what we believe (doing good).

[67] Ap XII.29 in Kolb and Wengert, 192.

16. *Kairos* and Good Works in the Confessions

The Lutheran Confessions (as they are collected in the Book of Concord) devote a huge amount of time and space to the proper distinction of Law and Gospel, which then leads to the proper place of repentance and good works in the lives of Christians. Before we go out encouraging each other to do good works, we ought to be careful to know that we are motivating people to do these good works for the right reasons.

Throughout the Confessions, we read time and again how God works in us not only to save us (our justification) but to solicit a response in the form of good works in the lives of those who have faith (sanctification). One such example comes in the Formula of Concord, the final authoritative statement of faith adopted in the Book of Concord.

> Similarly, love is a fruit that certainly and necessarily results from true faith. For all who do not love surely indicate that they are not justified but rather are still in death or have lost the righteousness of faith, as John says in 1 John 3[:14]. When Paul says [Rom. 3:28] that we are "justified by faith apart from works," he is indicating that neither the contrition that precedes nor the works that result from faith belong in the article or the treatment of justification by faith. For good works do not precede justification, but result from it. People must first be righteous before they can do good works.
>
> Likewise, too, although renewal and sanctification are a blessing of our mediator Christ and a work of the Holy Spirit, they do not belong in the article or in the treatment of justification before God but rather result from it since, because of our corrupted flesh, they are never fully pure and perfect in this life, as Dr. Luther writes in his wonderful, exhaustive exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, "We concede that good works and love must also be taught, but this must be in its proper time and place, that is, when the question has to do with works, apart from this chief doctrine." [68]

This is arguably the most essential doctrinal distinction in Lutheranism. To understand the difference between justification and good works is to get to the heart of the gospel. As we coach and huddle those with whom we are in discipling relationships, it is absolutely essential to get

[68] SD III.27–29 in Kolb and Wengert, 566–67.

justification correct, that it is a gift given as an alien righteousness, a righteousness that comes from outside of ourselves, a gift received from God alone, and for which we take absolutely no credit.

So why is this so important? Why is this such a big deal for Christians, those who are making disciples, to get this distinction correct and not to mingle sanctification and justification? The Formula of Concord gives us two reasons.

First of all, we give credit where credit is due, along with the glory and honor for our salvation. Christ is our redeemer, and in order to ascribe all the glory rightly due to Him, we cannot take any credit for that.

There's another reason, too, and it has to do with our own spiritual and emotional well-being. Each of us is tempted to trust in ourselves, as if the works we do could make a difference when it comes to our own salvation. If we begin to develop that kind of trust in our own works, and then we sin, it can put our salvation in doubt and lead us to despair. This is what we read in the Formula of Concord:

> Therefore, even if the converted and believers have the beginnings of renewal, sanctification, love, virtues, and good works, yet these cannot, should not, and must not be introduced or mixed with the article of justification before God, so that the proper honor may continue to be accorded our Redeemer Christ and (because our new obedience is imperfect and impure) so that the consciences under attack may have a reliable comfort.[69]

Luther himself also warned us against this in his lectures on Galatians:

> It is also [the devil's] habit to set against us those passages in the Gospel in which Christ Himself requires works from us and with plain words threatens damnation to those who do not perform them. If here we cannot distinguish between these two kinds of righteousness; if here by faith we do not take hold of Christ, who is sitting at the right hand of God, who is our life and our righteousness, and who make

[69] SD III.35 in Kolb and Wengert, 568.

> intercession for us miserable sinners before the Father, then we are under the Law and not under grace, and Christ is no longer a Savior. Then He is a lawgiver."[70]

Thankfully, from the beginning, our Lutheran forebearers have given us faithful examples to follow in how we speak about our justification by faith and the good works we can perform through Christ. This distinction is at the heart of all we do as Christians and what empowers us to make disciples who cling to Christ and the grace He has earned for us.

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[70] *LW* 26:11.

17. Luther's Big *Kairos*

We often trace the beginning of the Reformation to the posting of Luther's 95 theses on the eve of All Saints Day, 1517. However, there was perhaps an even more significant *kairos* moment in Martin Luther's life, one that he writes about in the preface to the authoritative edition of his Latin works. In that preface, Luther recalls how disturbed he was by the phrase "righteousness of God" in Rom. 1:17, "For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed…"

Luther ascribed this as formal or active righteousness, "with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner." He says, "I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously… I was angry with God." He draws up this comparison: "As if it weren't bad enough for God to crush sinners already burdened with original sin now with the 10 commandments, now He adds pain by the gospel and the gospel threatens us with his righteousness and wrath." That made his "fierce and troubled" conscience furious. "Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted," Luther writes. [71]

What happens next, I would argue, can rightly be called a *kairos* moment. In D2MC, we learn to work through six steps in the learning circle: 1) Observe, 2) Reflect, 3) Discuss, 4) Plan, 5) Account and 6) Act. While Luther does not have somebody specifically working around the learning circle with him, we can see the general pattern, which we could attribute to the Holy Spirit, as he recalls these events.

[71] *LW* 34:334–35.

Observe:

It was while meditating on God's Word that Luther figured these things out, and it began with him considering the context of the verse: "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" At this point in his life, Luther knows that indulgences are wrong, but his big *kairos* that changes everything is that the Gospel reveals what he will come to call "passive righteousness." That is how God justifies us, by faith: "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

Reflect:

This new understanding is an amazing, eye-opening, paradigm-shifting moment for Luther. "Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me."

Discuss:

Luther rightly does not want to be a heretic with his "new" understanding of this verse, so he compares what he is wondering about to what he already knows from the Bible, just as we would often do with others in a huddle.

> Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God. … Later I read Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter*, where contrary to hope I found that he, too, interpreted God's righteousness in a similar way, as the righteousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us.[72]

Luther hits upon another principle of Biblical interpretation here, one that Lutheran

[72] *LW* 34:337.

theologian Erich Kiehl also remarks upon many years later:

> The Word of God in its total setting must be the content of Christian education. If we are serious about saying that all the Scriptures are God's Word and that through this infallible Word God speaks to us, we need to listen reverently and carefully to what God has to say in His Word in its original setting. This means that through a careful study of the theological and historical setting we need to learn *what* God was saying to the people of *that* time before we seek to say what He is saying to us today. This has always been a basic principle of Biblical interpretation.[73]

This principle of interpretation is important for our discipleship as the curb that keeps us as individuals from making Scripture to be whatever we wish. By making sure we include this step of discussing our *kairos* moments with other faithful, trustworthy Christians, we protect ourselves from poor decisions that arise from novel interpretations and, in some cases, heresy.

Plan/Account/Act:

This new knowledge is not something that Luther can simply sit on or be content to know for himself. He feels he must act on it, and he does. “Armed more fully with these thoughts, I began a second time to interpret the Psalter.”[74] Luther, having worked through the *kairos* circle, comes again to the place where he was before. This time, however, he views it from a different perspective. He must act on the opportunity before him! The righteousness he has uncovered must bear good works. What a *kairos*!

[73] Kiehl, "Christian Education," 102.

[74] *LW* 34:337.

18. The Integrated Life Triangle: Up, In, and Out

"Love has infinite offices outwardly toward humanity."[75]

What does a life of sanctification look like? We learn in D2MC that Jesus invests in relationships in three different directions. Jesus has a relationship "UP" with His heavenly Father. Jesus also grows "IN" as he develops relationships with those who believe in Him and follow Him, especially with the twelve disciples. And finally, Jesus has relationships "OUT" with the people around Him in the world, people whom He encountered and served and ministered to in His everyday life. We call this an "Integrated Life," and use a triangle to remind us of the three dimensions.

It should not surprise us when Lutheran dogmatician and former LCMS Synodical President Francis Pieper's[76] book "Christian Dogmatics" mentions that Christians should lead holy lives for God, for one another as Christians, and for others.

> When Scripture speaks of the necessity of good works, it means that we must perform them. It is the clear teaching of Scripture that God has commanded them. …God commands Christians to lead a holy life 1) on His account. He does not want His children to serve sin and Satan. He wants them to serve Him, their rightful Lord, who has created them and then dearly purchased them by the blood of His Son. He redeemed them for this very purpose that they should lead a holy life. … 2) Christians should perform good works on their own account. Sanctification and good works are to be for Christians the external testimony of their state of grace and their possession of salvation. 1 John 3:14: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 3) Christians live a holy life on account of the world. By their holy life they should prove the truth of the Gospel to the unbelievers and thus induce them to hear the saving Word.[77]

We learn more about this in Luther's Small Catechism. Much of the Small Catechism teaches us how we are to live in relation to God, or what we would call the "Up" dimension of

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[75] Ap V (III).105 (226) in McCain, 116.

[76] Pieper served as President of Concordia Seminary beginning in 1887 and as synod president from 1899-1911.

[77] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:29.

our lives, how we lead holy lives on God's account. The Ten Commandments teach us how "we are to fear and love God." The Creed teaches us to know God. The Lord's Prayer and the Daily Prayers teach us how we talk to God. And the sections on Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar teach us where we can find God and His spiritual blessings for our lives.

Another benefit of the catechism is that it describes how we are brought into community in the church, the "In" dimension of our lives, or how Christians perform good works on their own account. John Pless writes, "Created by the Word of God, the Holy Christian Church is the place of disciples. … Called by the Gospel, disciples are gathered in Christ's Church, His "holy community" as the Large Catechism calls it."[78] He then goes on to quote Luther's description of the church:

> In this Christian community we have the forgiveness of sins, which takes place through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel. This encompasses everything that is to be preached about the sacraments and, in short, the entire gospel and all the official responsibilities of the Christian community. Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God's grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet we are never without sin because we still carry our flesh around our neck."[79]

However, the key to growing in this "IN" dimension of our integrated life is found in the forgiveness of sins, which we have received from God and which makes up the foundation of Christian community:

> The forgiveness of sins is not simply the initial activity of the Holy Spirit as though our justification before God was a beginning stage that we now move beyond to a higher level called discipleship. No, disciples live in the community of God's church by the forgiveness of sins. We cannot live without the forgiveness of sin. The life of the disciple is constituted in the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ. The forgiveness of sins is no mere psychological device for living with one's sense of

[78] John T. Pless, *Luther's Small Catechism: A Manual for Discipleship* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2019), 66–67.

[79] LC II.54 in Kolb and Wengert, 438.

> guilt and shame; it is the reality of God's righteousness for us in Christ. As such, it is the air that the disciple breathes.[80]

In the Small and Large Catechisms, Luther does not make much of a distinction between the In and Out dimensions in Christian living. To be fair, treating people as decent human beings is applicable to both those who are Christians and those who are not. In the context of a very churched culture organized by parishes, the distinction between churched and unchurched would not have been on Luther's mind as it is for us today. Simply doing good for one's neighbor, regardless of church attendance or affiliation, is what Luther is concerned with. This is why Pless writes, "The Decalogue can be embraced… as the path that the disciple walks within this fallen creation, fearing, loving, and trusting in the triune God above all things and serving the neighbor in love according to the will of our Creator."[81]

When we start to understand the catechism as coming from that historical viewpoint, we begin to see that much of it also relates to our relationships with others even beyond the church, or what we would call the "Out" dimension. Pless writes, "The Ten Commandments remain in the life of discipleship not as a path to salvation but as the concrete way that those who fear, love, and trust in God above all things now live in His world, giving themselves to the service and well-being of their neighbor."[82] The usefulness of the Ten Commandments is not limited to those already in the church, but also provide the basis and perhaps the baseline standard of respect for one another that should mark our interactions with our unbelieving neighbor.

Even the Apology of the Augsburg Confession weighs in on the value of the Ten Commandments in teaching us to serve our neighbor and bearing good fruit for the kingdom.

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[80] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 69.

[81] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 45–46.

[82] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 44.

> Moreover, we have already frequently testified that repentance ought to produce good fruits. The [Ten] Commandments teach what these good fruits are: prayer, thanksgiving, the confession of the gospel, the teaching of the gospel, obedience to parents and the authorities, faithfulness to one's calling, peaceable conduct instead of murder and seeking revenge, the greatest possible generosity to the needy, restraint, coercion and chastisement of the flesh instead of adultery and fornication, truthfulness—not to buy off eternal punishment but to keep from surrendering to the devil or offending the Holy Spirit. These fruits have God's command and ought to be done on account of the glory and mandate of God, and they also have their reward.[83]

A number of the commandments are also specifically applicable to the way we relate to those who are not yet part of the church, the Out dimension, how we lead holy lives on account of the world. John Pless shows us how in describing how to fulfill the Fifth Commandment.

> The Fifth Commandment turns the heart and hands of the disciple to the neediness of the neighbor's body. Because the body is the place of the neighbor's life, it is not killed, either directly by assault or indirectly by withholding that which is necessary to sustain life. Instead, it is the way of discipleship to care for the body of the neighbor, providing food to the hungry, medical aid to the sick, hospitality to the homeless, and protection to those whose physical life is threatened by violence.[84]

This also reflects what Luther writes concerning the seventh commandment:

> Anyone who seeks and desires good works will find here [in the Seventh Commandment] more than enough things to do that are heartily acceptable and pleasing to God. Moreover, God lavishes upon them a wonderful blessing, and generously rewards us for what we do to benefit and befriend our neighbor, as King Solomon also teaches in Proverbs 19(:17): 'Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full.' Here you have a rich Lord, who is surely sufficient for your needs and will let you lack or want for nothing. Thus with a happy conscience you can enjoy a hundred times more than you could scrape together by perfidy [dishonesty] and injustice.[85]

By applying God's Word through the catechism to our lives, we can grow in the ways that we live an integrated life and in our relationships with God, with our fellow believers, and with those who don't yet know Christ.

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[83] Ap XII.174 in Kolb and Wengert, 217–18.

[84] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 36–37.

[85] LC I.252–53 in Kolb and Wengert, 420.

19. The Integrated Life: You Have Been Praying for This

Maybe you have not been aware that you have been praying for an integrated life, but you have. As long as you have prayed the Lord's Prayer, you have been praying for those three dimensions, Up, In, and Out, the three directions of relationships to which we are called to grow. Let's take a look at that.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

This has to do with the Up dimension, our relationship with God. We pray to our Father, who is always ready to hear us. He gives us his Word, which is to be taught in truth and purity so that we can lead lives that honor His holy name which He gives to us in baptism. By coming to Him in prayer, we grow in our relationship with Him. We become more comfortable with admitting our own inability to get what we want, but we also become more comfortable with our dependence on Him for all things. This newfound level of comfort spills over then into our relationships with others.

Thy Kingdom come.

This has to do with the In dimension, our relationships with other believers. Luther reminds us that God's kingdom is coming whether we like it or not, but this petition means we are asking for God's kingdom to "come to us also." By praying in this way, we are praying for our relationship with the body of Christ, the believers who make up the church. We are praying that the Holy Spirit would work in the hearts of believers so that we would "believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity." It would be impossible to do this outside of the church, apart from God's kingdom of grace.

However, this also means that we are praying that God would extend His kingdom of grace

on earth, and that leads to the next petition.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This petition has to do with the Out dimension, our relationship with the world. Ultimately, the purpose of all of our outreach is to proclaim and declare God's victory over "the devil, the world, and our sinful nature." As we pray for God's kingdom to come through us to all the earth, we know that God's good and gracious will is for all people to be saved and brought to eternal life. Hal Senkbeil writes, "The life which we live in Christ as he lives through us is to be lived in the context of society, not only in the church."[86] In heaven, God's will is already in full effect. In this petition we agree and ask for God's will to be done now on earth, in us, among us, and by us, for all people.

Luther summarizes the first three petitions like this:

> Now the first, second, and third petitions deal with the highest benefits that we receive from Him. In the first place, because He is our Father, He should receive from us the glory that is due Him, and His name should be held in high esteem throughout the world. …
>
> In the second place, once we have His Word, true doctrine, and true worship, we also pray that His kingdom may be in us and remain in us; that is, that He may govern us in this doctrine and life, that He may protect and preserve us against all the power of the devil and his kingdom, and that He may shatter all the kingdoms that rage against His kingdom, so that it alone may remain.
>
> And in the third place, we pray that neither our will nor any other man's will, but His will alone may be done, and that what He plans and counsels may succeed and overcome all the schemes and undertakings of the world, as well as anything else that may set itself against His plans and counsels, even though the whole world were to

[86] Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action*, 183.

> mass itself and rally all its strength to defend its cause against Him. These are the three most important elements.[87]

We are blessed to be able to come to God and to align our desires with His in the words of this prayer. As Luther writes in the Large Catechism, "What we pray for concerns only ourselves in that, as mentioned above, we ask that what otherwise must be done without us may be done in us."[88] What a privilege it is that God calls us and works through us in all these dimensions. Why not pray for that!

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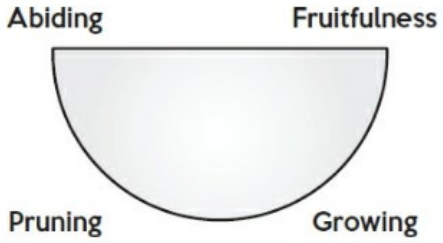
[87] *LW* 21:146.

[88] LC III.68 in Kolb and Wengert, 449.

20. The Semicircle: Hallow the Day of Rest

"God can be honored not alone by work but also by rest and recreation." — Martin Luther[89]

One of the biggest eye-opening moments for me came early in my time in PLI. At my very first immersion, I learned about the semicircle. I had been raised with what was essentially the Protestant work ethic, and I lived in a manner which showed that I believed rest must be earned by work. Years later, when I came to PLI, I learned an entirely new paradigm that significantly changed my attitude towards rest and work: that God puts rest before work in creation and throughout Scripture, and that it is a godly thing to intentionally plan our rest as well as our work, like the pendulum swinging back and forth through times of abiding and rest, growing, fruitfulness, and then back through pruning.



One of the emphases that I think is lost in our modern translations of the commandments is in the interpretation of the third commandment as "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." One of the unintentional effects of translating it like this is that we can miss the emphasis on rest that was originally intended in it. In my personal understanding of this commandment, I grew up thinking of this commandment as primarily being about worshipping, and only tangentially being about rest. It was only as an adult that I began to see how resting from work itself is a confession of faith in the God who works even when we are not.

Luther's translation of this reads literally, "Thou shalt hallow the day of rest."[90] Luther's use of the German word *Feiertag*, which is a holiday or celebration day on which one would not

[89] Plass, *This is Luther*, 283.

[90] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 56.

work, brings together the two ways of understanding of this commandment. First of all, there should be a day of rest. And secondly, that day should be kept holy.

Herbert Girgensohn explains the commandment like this in his book *Teaching Luther's Catechism*:

> A person should make himself free, take time for participation in the worship life of the congregation. The commandment is a judgment upon us in so far as we are so entangled in the tasks of daily life that we leave no room for God either inwardly or outwardly. But God wills that we should be free for him, for his gracious action in Word and Sacrament, and observe the ordinance of the day which makes it possible. … To be sure, in the light of the rest of God even mere rest from labor has its importance for earthly life which is not to be underestimated. For the person who is engulfed in the rush and busyness of everyday life it is simply necessary, if he is not to lose his real humanity. But it has been given to us not only in order to recoup strength for more labor. It has importance in itself, more than ever today, when we all tend to become cogs in the never ceasing machine of our workaday life. It has importance in itself when it is hallowed and given over to the power of God's love. And this does not mean that it must be filled only with religious exercises."[91]

What a blessing! Girgensohn's words proclaim the blessing God provides for us in love through worship and rest, and these are even more beneficial in our increasingly rushed and busy world.[92] Paul Heintzman, in his book *Leisure and Spirituality*, explains how Luther managed to value rest right alongside of work:

> Although Luther saw work as very honorable, "a most holy thing and, as the means through which God blesses us," the high value he put on rest prevented him from idolizing work. Luther's evaluation of work was based on the Sabbath commandment that not only commands us to work but also establishes the limits to work by commanding us to rest. In Luther's hymn on the 10 commandments, he interpreted the Sabbath commandment in this sense: "From thine own work thou must be free, that God his work have in thee."[93] In a letter of May 12, 1530, Luther exhorted

[91] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 65.

[92] As I am revising this several weeks into what my children have labeled "Corona Break," while on stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 Pandemic during the spring of 2020, I am wondering what kind of long-term effects this enforced sabbath will have.

[93] The *Lutheran Service Book* #581 translates this as "And put aside the work you do, So that God may work in you."

> Melanchthon: "We worship God when we rest; indeed there is no greater worship of God than this."[94]

I love that last quote from Luther because it so clearly proclaims the gospel that we are saved by grace alone, not by works.[95] Even in our rest, by receiving the precious gifts God gives to us, we worship God and hallow His day. This is just as important today as ever, although Herbert Girgensohn presciently addressed this concern in the middle of the last century when wrote these words:

> The rest of Sunday can really become a resting in the limitless riches of the Father's goodness. The commandment to rest becomes a right and an obligation for a generation so weary and worn that it simply does not know what living means. And here, too, man ignores the will of his Creator at his own peril. Social order, with its rhythm of rest and work, will never become a fundamental reality except as mankind, tormented by unrest, learns again to hallow the day of rest.[96]

It has been sad to see in the world around us and in the culture in which we live that the practice of making Sundays a day of rest is becoming valued and practiced less and less. This can be an opportunity for us as disciples to act counterculturally. It may be as important and as necessary as ever to hallow the day of rest.

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[94] Paul Heintzman, *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 71.

[95] The message apparently did not sink in right away for Melanchthon. The quote from Luther at the beginning of this chapter is from a few months afterwards. Melanchthon was so consumed with his work writing the Apology to the Augsburg Confession that he continued writing even at the dinner table on a Sunday. Luther was irate and plucked the pen from Melanchthon's hand while chastising him for breaking the Third Commandment. The incident was remembered and recorded by Johannes Mathesius, a student of Luther's in Wittenberg.

[96] Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism*, 66.

21. The Semicircle: Martin Luther and Abiding in the Body

Despite the caricature of being a tireless worker, Martin Luther often found ways to rest and to take time for himself as well as taking advantage of opportunities for recreation and time with family. His understanding of the body in relation to one's self is different from both the ascetics, who would deny body pleasures, and the hedonists, who would indulge bodily pleasures. For Luther, the Christian's body is a matter of stewardship and freedom. Ewald Plass describes Luther's understanding that

> The Christian's body [is] the temple of God's Spirit. As such it was to be cherished and cared for, not despised and neglected. Physical exercise, diversions, and amusements were not to be considered a wasting of time. Any recreation that was not sinful in and of itself was allowable and might at times even be required and prescribed as a necessity. Such care of one's body was to be looked upon as a service rendered to God as truly as the care of one's soul… According to Luther the field of recreation was very broad, extending from simple resting, as in the quotation [of Luther, see the beginning of the previous chapter], to the strenuous diversion of gardening.[97]

Plass also records a number of Luther's favorite pastimes. He enjoyed gardening, and even did some target shooting with Veit Dietrich. He kept honeybees, and, as an indoor activity, he liked chess.[98] E.G. Schweibert also paints a picture of Luther joyfully spending time with his family, one we may not often consider but one which was likely incredibly important in keeping his perspective balanced as a theologian, professor, father, and husband.

> There was also provision for wholesome recreation in the Luther family life. There was a bowling lane in Luther's garden, much enjoyed by the young people and friends of the family. Sometimes Luther himself found time to roll a few balls. The children had ample space for play in the roomy grounds of the Luther House. Music and singing held a favored place in family amusements, and chess was a game much enjoyed by Luther. His delight in these family pastimes was expressed following a particularly enjoyable hour of singing. "If the Lord God has given us such noble gifts already in this life, which is, after all, a storeroom, what will happen in yonder eternal

[97] Plass, *This is Luther*, 283.

[98] Plass, *This is Luther*, 284.

> life, where everything is entirely perfect and most lovely? In this world we have everything only in the rough."[99]

I can't help but smile when I imagine life in the Luther household. It sounds like fun, something I would like to be a part of, a life worth imitating. And part of what gets Luther to this point is that he comes to understand that rest and recreation are forms of worship. Paul Althaus sums up Luther's theology of rest and connects it to worship like this:

> God is God and he alone is the creator. We can worship God by resting; indeed in resting we can worship him better than in any other way because it is when we really relax our body and soul that we cast our care on God. We thus honor God as the one whose blessing rests upon and surrounds all our work, and who keeps on working for us even when we rest and sleep. The capacity truly to rest from our cares with our body and soul is a special confirmation of our faith and is related to justifying faith.[100]

It does not take a leap of faith to see how Luther's understanding of justification and God's righteousness seeps out into all aspects of life. All of God's blessings are unmerited gifts, and we have a God who deeply loves us and cares for us, providing everything we need for each day of our lives regardless of our merit or worthiness. This comforting doctrine freed Luther and frees us to truly enjoy God and to abide in Him, even as we rest.

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[99] E.G. Schweibert, *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective* (St. Louis: Concordia. 1950), 598.

[100] Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 104.

22. Huddles and Missional Communities: *Kairos* in Community

In D2MC, there are two different size gatherings that are modeled and which have different purposes. The smaller group is a "huddle," a small group of 3–10 believers who will meet several times a month for inspiration, encouragement, and accountability in their walk as Christians. The larger group is called a "Missional Community," a gathering of 15–40 people that grows together in the up, in, and out dimensions that Jesus modeled.

Why should Christians gather in missional communities and huddles? At times, behind this question is the idea held by some people that small groups come from the Pietist movement that affected Lutheranism beginning in the late 17th century. Some people think that the idea that Christians could gather in small groups is a sign of heterodoxy, antithetical to true, confessional Lutheranism. All a Christian should ever need, they contend, is Word and Sacrament received in the context of the Divine Service. Anything more is a sinful pursuit of "experience," and these pietistic gatherings will supplant the certainty of Word and Sacrament in the faith of their adherents. This is considered proof that Christians should stay away from small groups.

Historically, an aversion to small groups is hard to justify. These kinds of gatherings have their roots in the early church. Gregory Dix points out that,

> Until the third century the word "church" (*ecclesia*) means ... the solemn assembly for the liturgy, and by extension those who have a right to take part in this. There were of course plenty of other meetings of groups of Christians in one another's houses for prayer and edification and for the *agape* or "Lord's supper" (not to be confused with the eucharist). But these gatherings were never called "ecclesia," ... but *syneleuseis* or "meetings." The distinction between them lay partly in the corporate all-inclusive nature of the *ecclesia*, which every Christian had a right and a duty to attend; whereas the *syneleuseis* were groups of Christian friends and acquaintances…[101]

Dix points out that in the prayers of the Alexandrian liturgy, there was a distinction made

[101] Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster: Dacre, 1947), 19–20.

between the meetings of the church (*ecclesia*) and these smaller gatherings (*syneleuseis*).[102] These private meetings of selected individuals would "include a large element of edifying discourse" above and beyond the gathering of the "church" or *ecclesia*. As an example, Dix appeals to the trial of St. Justin Martyr, a layman and apologist. Justin appears before Rusticus, Prefect of Rome, and states that his lodgings with a man named Martin also served as the location of his meetings. "If any one desired instruction from me, I have been accustomed there to impart to him the teachings of the truth," he testifies. Dix points out that Justin uses the word *syneleusis*, and thus avoids "imperiling the *ecclesia* by revealing its meeting place." Only the six men and one woman arrested with Justin would join him in his martyrdom.[103]

Justin's testimony shows us that there is a precedent for lay teachers in the church who make disciples by gathering small groups in their home. He is commemorated in the Lutheran church on June 1 as an example to imitate both in faith and in the way he lived his life.[104]

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[102] Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 44.

[103] Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 20.

[104] Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), xii–xiii.

23. Huddles for Advanced Discipleship

Martin Luther, when writing about different contexts of worship services, describes three different kinds of services: a church service in Latin, a church service in German that could be held publicly so that others would see and perhaps join in, and then a third one, that he sets out here.

> The third kind of service should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works. According to this order, those who do not lead Christian lives could be known, reproved, corrected, cast out, or excommunicated, according to the rule of Christ, Matthew 18 [:15–17]. Here one could also solicit benevolent gifts to be willingly given and distributed to the poor, according to St. Paul's example, 2 Corinthians 9. Here would be no need of much and elaborate singing. Here one could set up a brief and neat order for baptism and the sacrament and center everything on the Word, prayer, and love. Here one would need a good short catechism on the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Our Father.
>
> In short, if one had the kind of people and persons who wanted to be Christians in earnest, the rules and regulations would soon be ready. But as yet I neither can nor desire to begin such a congregation or assembly or to make rules for it. For I have not yet the people or persons for it, nor do I see many who want it. But if I should be requested to do it and could not refuse with a good conscience, I should gladly do my part and help as best I can.[105]

Luther's idea here seems to reflect a number of different aspects of huddles and missional communities. Like huddles, he calls for special attention to be paid to "those who do not lead Christian lives" to be "known, reproved, [and] corrected." This is at the center of what huddles are. And like missional communities, there is attention paid to growing an integrated life. We see the Up dimension through worship, including reading God's Word, the sacraments, and prayer. There is also growing In, through the relationships to others, as Luther specifically includes "love" at the center of these services. And he mentions "benevolent gifts to be willingly given

[105] *LW* 53:63–64.

and distributed to the poor," which is a way of growing Out.

Luther also writes about the attitude needed by those who care for the consciences of others (those to whom one would be accountable) in his exposition of Galatians 6:1:

> Let those to whom the charge and care of consciences has been committed learn from this command of Paul how they are to deal with the lapsed. "Brethren," he says, "if a man is overtaken, do not embitter or sadden him even more; do not reject or condemn him. But correct, refresh, and renew him (for that is the import of the Greek word); and by your meekness repair that about him which has perished through the devil's deception or through the weakness of his flesh. For the kingdom into which you have been called is not a kingdom of fear and of sadness; it is a kingdom of confidence and happiness. If you see some brother in terror because of a sin of which he has been guilty, run to him, and extend your hand to him in his fallen state. Comfort him with sweet words and embrace him in your motherly arms. The obdurate and stubborn, who fearlessly and smugly persist and continue in their sins, you should rebuke sharply. But those who are overtaken in a trespass and sorrow and grieve over their fall should be encouraged and instructed by you who are spiritual. And this should be done in a spirit of gentleness, not of zeal for righteousness or cruelty, as some confessors did, who, when they should have refreshed thirsty hearts with some sweet comfort, gave them gall and vinegar to drink, just as the Jews did to Christ on the cross (Matt. 27:34).[106]

One of the places I first learned this kind of accountability was in a huddle. I showed up with all the usual baggage (sin) and was eventually called out by my huddle leader… but in a different way than I was used to. Instead of threats of punishment or manipulation, I learned that if I had not followed through with my plans of action we would come back and talk about it again the next week, and I would be encouraged and accepted throughout the process. What's more, by working my way through the first half of the learning circle (something that I, by nature, skip over to get to the action), I learned how to evaluate my life and decisions in light of the freedom of the gospel. I had to learn and be repeatedly reminded of God's love for me and His forgiveness and how as a Christian I need not be motivated by shame or guilt any longer. That was life-changing and eye-opening. It was the real-life working out of Gal. 6:1–2:

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[106] *LW* 27:111.

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

24. *Kairos* in Community: Jesus Redefines the Family

Starting with the second immersion, one of the major concepts taught in D2MC is called "Family on Mission." From the first talk in the first immersion of D2MC, a vision is cast of what it means to be a Covenant Family with a Kingdom Mission. Casting vision and information about how to live is important, but too often, Christians do not grow up with a good example of what a family looks like that follows Jesus.

In my own life, I grew up in a Lutheran church and attended Lutheran schools that taught information about the Bible very well. However, there was not a family on mission I knew well enough to imitate until after I became a pastor. What I was left with was a hodge-podge of disjointed experiences that left my wife and me to innovate what our own family would become, without healthy examples for what we wanted our family to look like. What we could have used and what we hope to now be is a family that can be imitated.

Many people have a hard time beginning a family on mission because they assume that it has to start with a nuclear family, a husband, wife, maybe a couple of kids. But that is not how Jesus started, or ever actually functioned. The idea of a spiritual family that supercedes the biological family is one that Jesus models in the New Testament. Jesus rejects his biological family early in his ministry (Matt. 12:46–50, also see Mark 3:31–35 and Luke 8:19–21), when He asks, "'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'"

Was this shocking? Probably. In an ordinary family in the Roman Empire of the first century, the will of the father was supreme. Greek and Roman families are noted for the absolute power of fathers, including the right to kill handicapped or unwanted babies. While Jewish and Christian families also would have had a high amount of respect for the father, Paul's teachings

about the family gave a new level of respect to mothers and children. [107]

Robert Kolb, in his book *Make Disciples, Baptizing*, writes about the effects of baptism creating a new community. He shares, in a bit of an exposition on Galatians, that baptism

> transforms us into brothers and sisters… believers do not count the differences of this world as important in any way as they live together with one another. Jews may indeed remain Jews and Greeks Greeks; men do not lose their maleness or women their femaleness; and slaves and free people coexisted in the early Christian community in their earthly status. The point is that they all coexisted together in a single body of believers. Since God saw them all as his children, they viewed each other as brothers and sisters.[108]

While Christian families do keep up many cultural distinctions among members, their status as new community, a family on mission, is undeniably the bond of being joined together as siblings with God as our Heavenly Father. That is how Christians are to function and how their communities work. Christians are not meant to live a life of faith as individuals. They are meant to live in a community, in the church. John Pless speaks out against that idea that "faith is brought to maturity by moving people beyond the community, enabling then to stand as autonomous selves over against any particular narrative."

As he states, "the goal of our catechesis [discipleship] is to shape the baptized to live in Christ as members of the Royal Priesthood." His goal for disciples is that they should be "priests living in the company of fellow priests under a common High Priest."[109] This is how Jesus led His disciples, and this is also how Paul functioned in his ministry and made disciples of those who followed him.

As Paul begins his missionary journeys, he also uses the households he is welcomed into as

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[107] Gene Edward Veith and Mary J. Moerbe, *Family Vocation: God's Calling in Marriage, Parenting, and Childhood* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 220.

[108] Robert Kolb, *Make Disciples, Baptizing: God's Gift of New Life and Christian Witness* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1997), 102–3.

[109] Pless, *Manual for Discipleship*, 172.

home bases for the work he does in each city. The first convert outside of eastern Asia is Lydia, who was joined in baptism by her household, "which seems to indicate the presence of children and even infants but may indicate her slaves and dependents." Her house then becomes Paul's headquarters for ministry during his time in Philippi.[110] (Acts 18:1-3) He travels to Corinth, where he joins Priscilla's and Aquila's household. Together, they join Paul as a traveling family on mission as they make their way on his journeys to Ephesus and Rome with him. It makes sense that we should function in the same way.

[110] Robert H. Smith, *Concordia Commentary: Acts* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1970), 246.

25. Luther's Spiritual Family on Mission

"Whoever teaches another becomes that person's spiritual father." — Martin Luther[111]

By the middle ages, multigenerational households were less common, and yet, for the Reformers, there seems to have been an expansion in the number of unrelated members of the household, which grew to include "servants, retainers, orphans taken in, foster children, warriors, apprentices, employees—who lived with the family and were also considered part of the household."[112] What we learn from observing Luther's household is that being a family on mission, led by spiritual parents, is a very Lutheran concept. Not surprisingly when you consider the open access many people had to dinners in the Luther home (dinner regularly was served for a table that seated a couple dozen), there are a number of vivid descriptions about life for the Luther family and friends.

Luther's household was not a quiet one, and for good reason. E.G. Schweibert quotes a letter to Prince George of Anhalt: "The home of Luther is occupied by a motley crowd of boys, students, girls, widows, old women, and youngsters. For this reason there is much disturbance in the place, and many regret it for the sake of the good man, the honorable father. …" He goes on to explain who all was living in the Luther household:

> Included in the "motley crowd" were two daughters and four sons of a sister of Luther; Hans Polner, son of another sister; and another nephew, the son of his brother; a great-niece, Anna Strauss; a lady teacher, Margarethe von Mocnau; other tutors of the Luther children, at one time numbering six; and Aunt Lena… the same aunt who had escaped with Kathie from the nunnery and who faithfully cared for the children until her death in 1537. To these more or less permanent members of the family must be added numerous nuns and monks who found themselves without occupation, the twelve table companions who spent varying lengths of time under the Luther roof, a steady flow of guests, and indigent pastors without pulpits. All who for any length of time took up their abode in the Luther House were considered members of the family and were expected to conform to the family customs. They were

[111] *LW* 45:24.

[112] Veith and Moerbe, *Family Vocation*, 220.

> expected to study the catechism, pray, and attend the family devotions, which included the reading from the Hauspostille on Sundays. Luther was in every sense the bishop of his own household.[113]

As the "bishop" of the home, Luther understood that teaching children was essential. He writes in the Large Catechism, "Therefore let all people know that it is their chief duty, at the risk of losing divine grace—first to bring up their children in the fear and knowledge of God, and, then, if they are so gifted, also to have them engage in formal study and learn so that they may be of service wherever they are needed."[114] As you can see, this was something he practiced as he preached. Ewald Plass gives us even more detail on what dinner was like in the Luther home.

> Supper was served at five o'clock. This hour ended the most strenuous labor of Luther's day. As a rule, he would relax during the meal, call upon someone of his rather numerous table companions to relate the latest news heard on the street or conveyed to someone by letter, and begin a running comment on anything and everything that was of interest to him. As was to be expected, he gave the cue and was the chief conductor of the conversation which ensued. Thus originated his famous *Table Talk*…Not infrequently Luther would bring a book to the table and discuss parts of it with his guests. It was customary at the time for a number of students and tutors to dine at the table of some professor, and Luther's board always had its full complement. He was frequently late before the diners arose. Even then, some would not disperse. Some might continue their daily exchange of thoughts and perhaps finally join in the songs which were being accompanied by Luther on the lute.[115]

These opportunities for discipleship were not wasted, nor did they end when the meal did. Schweibert points out that

> often some discussion begun at the evening meal by the table companions would be continued in this family living room, or other student groups would drop in to engage their distinguished professor in conversation. In this same room the commission of professors which assisted Luther in the translation of the Bible after 1531 held their sessions. Consisting of Melanchthon, Autogallus, Cruciger, Jonas, and Bugenhagen,

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[113] Schweibert, *Luther and His Times*, 597–98.

[114] LC I.174 in Kolb and Wengert, 410.

[115] Plass, *This is Luther*, 266.

> the members of the commission were the most intimate friends of the Luther family, and no doubt they frequently visited in the home on other occasions.[116]

Luther's evenings often included time with family.

> The few remaining hours were spent in reading, catechizing the children, and playing with them or, perhaps, in playing a game of chess.… Luther would, as a rule, close his day by offering his private prayers at the open window, if the weather permitted. Preserved Smith says: "Luther's whole nature blossomed out in response to the warm sunshine of domestic life." His circle of friends became very large. No wonder it had; for Mathesius assures us that men found the great man to be "a joyous, frolicksome companion."[117]

Martin Luther led a life worth imitating. It is disheartening that from our cultural viewpoint (as North American Lutherans in the early 21st century) this kind of lifestyle often seems so distant, but we can be encouraged by the fact that our spiritual DNA is still wired for discipleship. There is a lot of value in our Lutheran heritage and history, both theologically and practically, and that gives me hope for the future of God's church and the world we are passing on to our spiritual children.

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[116] Schweibert, *Luther and His Times*, 598.

[117] Plass, *This is Luther*, 266–67.

26. Index: Where We See Covenant and Kingdom

There are a lot of ways to talk about Covenant and Kingdom. If you try to use them all, you will confuse people and likely even yourself. On the other hand, as you begin to use and repeat a particular set of terms, you begin to create a culture around the terminology and language that is used. As I read a lot of different sources for this project, I began to assemble a list of all the different terms that go together. You may come across these terms also, and this chart may help you understand what you are reading and put it together with the tools for discipleship you are learning and using. I have included the main terms used by PLI as a part of our discipling language first and in bold.

Covenant	**Kingdom**
Relationship	**Responsibility**
Invitation	**Challenge**
Community	**Mission**
Father	**King**
Being (one with God, atonement)	**Doing (something for God)**
Image (impression/handprint)	Rule (We are His royal emissaries)
Moses as Priest	Moses as Prince (Moses carries both C&K DNA)
Faith	Love
Righteousness before God (Coram Deo)	Righteousness before the World (Coram Mundo)
In Heaven/Above Us	On Earth/Below Us
Justification	Sanctification
Divine realities and justifying faith	The created world
Passive Righteousness	Active Righteousness
"Imputed Righteousness of Christ"	Inherent Righteousness, or the "indwelling of the divine nature, through which one's nature and will is renovated."
"Christ is *extra nos* as in justification"	Christ is *intro nos* in our sanctification.
Christ is *Donum* (gift)	Christ is *Exemplar* (example)
How to receive (faith)	How to give (love)
Answers "How am I saved?"	Answers "What is my life all about?"
Invisible	Visible
The works which Christ has done for the Christian	The Christian's good works reflecting what Christ has done for him.
The doctrine of faith	The righteousness of the law

APPENDIX TWO

REVIEW OF COVENANT AND KINGDOM

Mike Breen's book *Covenant and Kingdom*[1] is recommended by 3DM in the first immersion (the first of five gatherings over 3–4 days held twice a year), and oftentimes churches involved come away from there with a prescription to teach these doctrines, which, according to Breen, make up the "warp and weft"[2] of the fabric of Scripture.

According to Breen, "Covenant is the way in which the Bible describes and defines relationship: first our relationship with God and then our relationship with everyone else."[3] He puts it this way, "As we follow his story, we see him invite his followers into a depth of Covenant relationship not seen before. He invited them to experience the same depth of relationship that he enjoyed with his Father."[4] Or to put it another way, "Covenant" refers to the way Christians know God as a loving Father and Creator, who has given His identity to His children (Lutherans will often point out here that this happens in baptism), and from that identity we are blessed to obey our Father and follow His will, because He only wants what is best for us. We cannot obey our way into our identity, but "obedience is simply acting in a way that is consistent with our identity."[5] This is about "relationship," and corresponds to (in the two kinds of righteousness paradigm) our horizontal relationship, our righteousness before God.

Throughout the Old Testament, God makes covenant promises with people, only to have

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[1] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*.

[2] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, xii.

[3] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, xv.

[4] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, xv.

[5] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, xvi.

them broken. He makes a covenant with Noah after the flood that He will never destroy the world with water again.[6] In Abraham's time, covenants become a popular way to find support and protection. They are "the best available thread to hold together the fragile fabric of society."[7] God chooses Abraham to be His covenant partner, and confirms that covenant in blood and in Abraham's dream.

At this point in *Covenant and Kingdom*, Breen slips into his Arminian tendencies and suggests that Abraham and God are both active participants in the covenant God makes here, though he points to God as a "greater and stronger partner" welcoming "lesser and weaker partners" in Abram and Sarai into becoming equal partners with him.[8] In Breen's view, grace is present, but only for the purpose of initiating the covenant. As a Lutheran, I would interpret the story differently and say that this covenant is different, paving the way for the "everlasting" covenants to come by showing God not as a greater partner, but as the one who will also take the penalty when the covenant is violated. I think that Breen does, however, accurately show that the new identity given to Abram in his new name of Abraham is a sign of the new relationship he has, and through that relationship (which we could even identify as receiving passive righteousness), Abraham's obedience to God (his active righteousness shown by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac) becomes manifest. Breen makes the point that "Covenant is about submitting what we have into the hands of our Covenant partner, and so our obedience is fundamental."[9] I'm alright with those words, as long as obedience never makes its way into being an essential element of our justification or sanctification, which I think gets explained better later by Bob

[6] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 14.

[7] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 20.

[8] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 26–27.

[9] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 36.

Rognlien in *Empowering Missional Disciples*.[10]

On the other hand, we are also a part of "Kingdom." Our heavenly Father is also the King of the universe, and He has dominion over all things. As we grow in our Father's identity, we take on His authority to act in His name, whether that would be in forgiving sins or serving others, and we have all of God's power behind us as we serve Him in His stead and in His name. This is about "representation" and "responsibility" and corresponds to our righteousness before the world.

Breen introduces the theme of Kingdom with the story of Joseph, who was called to serve Pharaoh (and God) as ruler over Egypt. This theme is about representing God. Breen goes back to the idea of obedience as submission (or surrender), relating that to Joseph's verbal acquiescence to and dependence upon God's power in Gen. 41:16.[11] But then he moves forward into the newly found authority bestowed upon Joseph by Pharaoh and even points out that the idea of forgiveness, which I think would often considered by most Christians today as a theme arising out of Covenant, is actually a display of power derived from God's Kingdom.[12] Breen uses this to point forward to Jesus, who submitted His life to His Father, even to death on a cross, and though His sacrificial submission, "heaven's forgiveness broke into a world of sin."[13]

Next, Breen traces these themes through the lives of Moses and David to see where Covenant and Kingdom join together. He points out Moses' struggle with the question of identity and his call to surrender to God's plan for his life, where once again identity leads to obedience for not only Moses but for the people of Israel as they are born as a new nation and come into

[10] Rognlien, *Empowering Missional Disciples*, 88–90.

[11] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 50–52.

[12] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 54–56.

[13] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 57.

their own in the power and authority God gives them. We also see these themes play out in David's life, as he finds comfort and strength in his covenant relationship with God, and because of his faithfulness, God gives him Kingdom authority and power. The example of David is instructive: "David's kingly authority emerged from his Covenant Identity. Covenant and Kingdom, at their simplest, are about 'being' and 'doing,' respectively. At a practical level, David knew who he was (his identity and relationship with God) and what he had to do (his responsibility to represent the living God)."[14]

In the next section, "The Journey So Far," Breen summarizes how we have seen the themes of Covenant and Kingdom in the Old Testament. These themes are incomplete without the revelation of the New Testament in Jesus, but we can still see a fairly clear, yet limited outline. The concept of Father is mediated through the Patriarchs, and Identity is closely tied with security. Obedience, over and over, is placed before Identity for Israel. On the other side, Israel struggled with the idea of having an invisible God as their King, though there were numerous examples of people who operated in the authority and power given to them by their God.[15]

In the New Testament, Breen identifies Jesus' titles of "Son of God" with His Covenant Identity and "Son of Man" with Jesus' role representing God as King over the world. He also points out that while the synoptic Gospels focus on the Kingdom of God, John brings out the Covenant. Jesus' baptism is an important event because it encapsulates Jesus' Covenant Identity and shows how Jesus comes to represent the authority and power of God's Kingdom. Whereas Joseph, Moses and David all took a while to establish their Covenant Identity, Jesus claims it from the get-go, and then immediately comes into the authority and power that come with it.

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[14] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 116–17.

[15] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 125–28.

This identity is challenged right away at Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, but Jesus resists the devil's temptation to undermine God's authority, and we should expect to experience the same in our lives.

Once Jesus has defended His identity and His authority is confirmed, He begins to show His power in the miracles He performs. But He still exhibits invitation into His covenant. In fact, Breen comes dangerously close to articulating a perfectly acceptable Lutheran tenet regarding the Lord's Supper when he says, "our Covenant relationship has an identity that is defined by Jesus. In the New Covenant, we 'become one' with Jesus. We take him into ourselves as we would take in food. Covenant is about sharing identity. In the New Covenant, Jesus becomes part of us—fully integrated into the fabric of our being. Amazing!"[16] Breen takes this one step further, too, challenging us to be participants of God's Kingdom work: "We have already seen that the New Covenant means that we are one with Jesus. Therefore, we must have the same message and ministry as him!"[17] For Breen, this includes prayers for healing. He ties this in by saying, "An understanding of the covenant gives us confidence to pray knowing our Father wants the best for us. An understanding of the Kingdom gives us courage to fight on knowing that victory will be declared one day."[18]

Breen applies this framework to the life of Peter, who receives a new Covenant name and receives both invitation and challenge from Jesus (especially when Jesus tells him "Get behind me, Satan"). From there, we follow Jesus to the Last Supper and Gethsemane, and ultimately to see that Jesus is crucified as both the sacrificial lamb and the victorious king. He rises from the dead, and then offers restoration in the invitation to Covenant extended to all people. Again, the

[16] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 166–67.

[17] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 167.

[18] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 170.

temptation to find identity in obedience rears its ugly head in the circumcision controversy Paul writes about in Galatians, but the church decides together to free the Gentiles from following obligations to the Mosaic law.[19]

The book of Ephesians is singled out by Breen as "perhaps the most complete rendering of the two themes found in the New Testament letters."[20] Paul begins by explaining our relationship with Christ, then moves on to make an application of this Covenant theology to the church not only in Ephesus but beyond. However, he moves on to exhort and encourage the new Christians as he prepares them for the spiritual warfare they should expect as they represent God's Kingdom.[21]

Finally, Breen addresses the message of John's Revelation and even points out that within the apocalyptic language and figures we find in that letter, we see the covenant and kingdom imagery as Jesus is shown in Covenant form as the lamb who was slain and also as the King, both seated on the throne and as a mighty warrior coming on a white horse ready to do battle with all the forces opposed to God and to release the prisoners held in captivity, as victory is ours![22]

While Breen talks about sin in "Covenant and Kingdom," he often (though not always) stays away from the judicial, forensic terms that Lutherans are familiar with. I believe that this is because most westerners who are not culturally native to using language like sin often are shocked by what they perceive to be an assault on their integrity when "sin" is mentioned by well-meaning but ill-informed Christians. Instead, Breen borrows familiar language from other

[19] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 209.

[20] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 218.

[21] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 219.

[22] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 222.

areas of life which is less likely to be misunderstood when he talks about sin as the loss of both a "relationship with God" and the "ability to represent him as the King."[23]

Later on, in his 2013 book *Leading Missional Communities*,[24] Breen revisits these themes of Covenant and Kingdom by showing how they played out in the life of Jesus and his disciples (in the first three rows: Relationship and Responsibility, Invitation and Challenge, and Community and Mission). Then he adds the fourth row: Substitution and Victory, citing Col. 2:13–15 as an example of the way Paul communicates the gospel.[25]

Covenant	Kingdom
Relationship	Responsibility
Invitation	Challenge
Community	Mission
Substitution	Victory

For Breen, Christ's Substitution and Christ's Victory make up the two dimensions of the gospel. Christ's victory over Satan and evil by the cross means that Christ has conquered everything that holds us in bondage today, whether in body, mind, or soul. Christ's substitution then represents the other facet of the Gospel, that our sins are forgiven and our relationship with our heavenly Father is restored.[26]

In a Missional Community, then, the challenge is to live out both facets of the Gospel, substitution and victory, forgiveness and freedom. Breen explains: "People's 'front door' into salvation will usually be either the good news of substitution or the good news of victory, and in

[23] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, xvi.

[24] Breen, *Leading Missional Communities.*

[25] Breen, *Leading Missional Communities*, 23.

[26] Breen, *Leading Missional Communities*, 24–25.

the process of discipleship they will come to embrace both."[27]

I think it's interesting that only here does Breen categorize forgiveness as a facet of the Covenant. In several other places, including in the Covenant and Kingdom book and in the Lifeshapes explanation of the Lord's Prayer (the hexagon), forgiveness is placed in the realm of the kingdom.

Mike Breen distinguishes between different words that align with the Covenant and Kingdom perspectives. The theme of covenant is often found in passages that use words like the following:

- Father
    - Family
    - Protection
    - Provision ("bread")
    - Promise[28]
- Identity
    - Being one in Christ
    - Being known
    - Calling
    - Anointing
    - Belonging
    - Nation
    - Tribe

[27] Breen, *Leading Missional Communities*, 27.

[28] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 234.

    - Inheritance
    - Shepherd
    - Flock[29]
- Obedience (Breen explicitly says that this is the Law in the Old Testament, and this refers to "behavior that is consistent with being children, such as pursuing holiness.")
    - Command
    - Oath
    - Vow
    - Obey
    - Holiness
    - Loving one another
    - Walk
    - Path
    - Hear/listen
    - Law
    - Code[30]

In addition, there are a couple of other sub-themes that are related to God's relationship with us:

- God's initiative
    - Chose

[29] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 235.

[30] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 236.

    - Predestined
    - Blood
    - Sacrifice
    - Atonement
    - Lamb
    - Grace
    - Favor
    - Gift
    - Loving kindness/goodness/mercy[31]
- Love for God (our loving response to His initiative)
    - Love for other Christians
    - Love for the world
    - Thanksgiving
    - Worship
    - Confidence in prayer[32]

To me, this doesn't look like Breen has completely sorted this out, and as someone who sees himself as a pioneer and not a systematician, I doubt he ever will. I can see the distinction in the early parts of what he writes, but I think that he gets ahead of himself when he starts to classify "Love for other Christians" and "Love for the world" in the Covenant side of things. For me (and as someone with a systematician's heart) I would like to see those moved over to the Kingdom category in order to line that up more with the active righteousness and to clean out the

[31] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 237.

[32] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 239.

category of passive righteousness to line up more with Covenant.

On the other hand, God's Kingdom is revealed in other words:

- King
    - Reigning
    - Ruling
    - Splendor
    - Majesty
    - Throne
    - Other regal references[33]
- Authority
    - Go (commission)
    - Send (mission)
    - Task[34]
- Power
    - Miracles
    - Might
    - Sign
    - forgiveness[35]

Other concepts also fall under this category, especially those which describe God's heavenly rule, His rule at the end of time, and also the idea of struggle and battle.

[33] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 241.

[34] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 242.

[35] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 243.

- Heaven
    - Heavenly host
    - Angels
    - Realm[36]
- Coming kingdom
    - Glory
    - Jesus returning
    - Judgment[37]
- Warfare
    - Battle
    - Struggle
    - Victory
    - Weapons
    - Armor
    - Taking frontiers
    - Suffering
    - Persecution[38]

[36] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 244.

[37] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom,* 244.

[38] Breen, *Covenant and Kingdom*, 245.

APPENDIX THREE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: A Companion Guide for PLI's D2MC Discipleship Process

Researcher: Rev. Jedidiah Maschke

Email Address and Telephone Number: jedidiahmaschke@plileadership.com *-***-**** (cell)**

Research Supervisor: Rev. Dr. David Peter

Email Address: peterd@csl.edu

You are invited to be part of a research study. The researcher is a student at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri as part of the Doctor of Ministry program (D.Min.). The information in this form is provided to help you decide if you want to participate in the research study. This form describes what you will have to do during the study and the risks and benefits of the study.

If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the researcher. Do not sign this form unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This study seeks to test a companion guide for PLI's D2MC learning track that will help participants understand the Lutheran, confessional, theological basis for the discipleship methods PLI teaches.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THE STUDY?

You are invited to be in the study because you are:

- Enrolled in the D2MC track of PLI.
- Over the age of 21.

If you do not meet the description above, you are not able to be in the study.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?

About 30 participants will be in this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher is a pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Carson City, Nevada.

WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You do not have to pay to be in the study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study, your participation will last about 1-2 hours.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study and if you sign this form, you will do the following things:

- submit personal information about yourself, such as your age, gender, occupation, personal religious history, and education level.
- answer questions during an online interview about your experience with D2MC and the companion guide.
- answer questions during an online focus group about your experience with D2MC and the companion guide.

While you are in the study, you will be expected to:

- Follow the instructions you are given.
- Tell the researcher if you want to stop being in the study at any time.

WILL I BE RECORDED?

The researcher will record audio and video of your interview or focus group. The researcher will use the recording in order to create written transcripts for data interpretation.

The researcher will only use the recordings of you for the purposes you read about in this form. He will not use the recordings for any other reasons without your permission unless you sign another consent form. The recordings will be kept for seven years and they will be kept confidential. The recordings will be destroyed after seven years.

WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?

Being in this study will not help you. Information from this study might help researchers help others in the future.

ARE THERE RISKS TO ME IF I AM IN THIS STUDY?

No study is completely risk-free. However, we do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable.

WILL I GET PAID?

You will not receive anything for being in the study.

DO I HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to be in the study and you can change your mind about being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you. If you want to stop being in the study, tell the researcher.

The researcher can remove you from the study at any time. This could happen if:

- The researcher believes it is best for you to stop being in the study.
- You do not follow directions about the study.
- You no longer meet the inclusion criteria to participate.

WHO WILL USE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT MY BEING IN THIS STUDY?

Any information you provide in this study that could identify you such as your name, age, or other personal information will be kept confidential. Each person will receive a number, which will replace your name in every transcript and note. The researcher will be the only person with access the information about who is who. In any written reports or publications, no one will be able to identify you.

The researcher will keep the information you provide in a PASSWORD PROTECTED COMPUTER AND/OR A LOCKED FILE CABINET in his office at Bethlehem Lutheran Church and only the researcher and research supervisor will be able to review this information.

The Researcher is the only person who will have access to the recordings taken, and these are kept on a password protected computer.

Even if you leave the study early, the researcher may still be able to use your data. Any interview or focus group responses you give would still be counted in the final data assessed for the purpose of this project.

Limits of Privacy (Confidentiality)

Generally speaking, the researcher can assure you that she/he will keep everything you tell him/her or do for the study private. Yet there are times where the researcher cannot keep things private (confidential). The researcher <u>cannot</u> keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused,
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else.

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person might harm themselves or another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to hurt themselves or another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS STUDY?

You can ask questions about the study at any time. You can call the researcher if you have any concerns or complaints. You should call the researcher at the phone number listed on page 1 of this form if you have questions about anything related to this study.

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study. The researcher has talked with me about this study. The researcher has answered all my questions. I voluntarily agree to be in this study. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will get a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

I attest that the participant named above had enough time to consider this information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Printed Name of Researcher: Jedidiah Maschke

_____ May 23, 2020

Signature of Researcher Date

DO YOU CONSENT TO BE RECORDED IN THIS STUDY?

I voluntarily agree to let the researcher record me for this study. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

APPENDIX FOUR

INTRODUCTORY INVITATION LETTER

Greetings, brothers in Christ!

Over the past decade, I have been blessed to learn a lot about discipleship from PLI. For the last few years, I have been collecting various thoughts on discipleship from a Lutheran perspective and I have been amazed to see how much what is taught in D2MC reflects our Lutheran theology and confessions. As a result, I've put together much of what I've noted over the years in the form of a companion guide for D2MC, and now I am field testing this as the research portion of my Major Applied Project for my Doctor of Ministry studies at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis).

My hope is that the things I have learned and written can be helpful for you, and so I am sending you a copy of this companion guide. It would help me immensely if you could take a look at this and give me some feedback about what is, is not, and would be helpful for you.

The companion guide is a free gift to you, and if you are willing to help me I would be very thankful. In order for this to count towards my project, I need you to email me and let me know your name and email address, so I can send an Informed Consent document for you to electronically sign. This Informed Consent document gives me your permission to record what you say. This is essential, since if I do not have that form with your signature, I cannot ethically use any of your feedback for my research. I would also like for you to know that any feedback you give is considered confidential and will not be attributed to you unless I have your written permission to name you. More details are found in the electronic Informed Consent form I will send you. Also, this companion guide is my own work and has not been submitted for doctrinal review to the LCMS nor is it endorsed by PLI. Everything in it is solely my responsibility.

I am planning to have three "focus group" sessions where I will record the feedback you have in a Zoom focus group that will be held online. The dates and times for those are as follows (all times are Pacific Daylight Time):

June 30 at Noon

July 1 at 9 a.m

July 2 at 2:30 p.m.

If none of those times work for you but you would really like to share your thoughts with me, please feel free to communicate with me via email.

Along with the companion guide, I've also attached a brief video with greetings from Jock Ficken explaining PLI's role in helping me with this project as well as a list of the questions I'm asking for your help in answering.

One more thing. If you know of anyone else who is participating in the D2MC learning community who would be interested in helping with my project, please feel free to pass this on to them and let them know to contact me.

Again, if you can help me, please reply to this email (jedidiah.maschke@plileadership.org)

before June 29th with your name, email address, and availability so we can start the process. Thank you, and may God bless you!

In Christ,

Pastor Jedidiah Maschke

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