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A Theological Take on the Miracle of Ministry in the SPU Student Ministry Coordinator Program

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Introduction

This paper stems from a hope: to use the tools that I have gained as a theology major in service of day-to-day ministry. Of course, it seems as though this should be the hope of any theologian, but at times, I know that has not been the case for me. Even though I have been both studying at Seattle Pacific University and participating in ministry at Seattle Pacific University, I have often kept these two activities separate. I have analyzed theological concepts and parsed Greek words without applying the insights gained from these studies to the ministry, and I have carried out the responsibilities of my ministry without first pausing to consider ministry theologically. I have been surprised that as I have written this paper, I have not needed to sacrifice either the rigor of academic study or the joy of ministry. I have discovered what I wish I had always known: that serious study is not tainted by interacting with my daily life experience, and that my daily life experience is not made lifeless by interacting with serious study.

This paper engages theological concepts robustly, but always with a practical aim in mind: to understand how these concepts relate to the SMC (Student Ministry Coordinator) Ministry at SPU (Seattle Pacific University). The first section articulates a theology of ministry, the second section discusses the unique developmental phase of the people within the ministry, and the third section suggests that the theological framework of narrative may help ministry leaders apply the insights from the first and second section.

The first section engages the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer on discipleship, relating his articulation of discipleship—especially the grace and the cross of discipleship—to the SMC Ministry. It presents discipleship in light of three concepts: bounded agency, gift, and relational knowledge. The second section draws on James Fowler, Steven Garber, and James K.A. Smith to articulate the unique developmental, intellectual stage of leaders in the SMC Ministry. These

writers provide both language for understanding how faith development commonly occurs during college and suggestions for ways ministry leaders can encourage the faith development of college students. The third section draws on the narrative theology of Stanley Hauerwas to explain the importance of viewing the SMC Ministry as a ministry of coordinators. This section is a brief articulation of how ministry leaders, as college students engaging in the ministry of discipleship, may understand their participation in the story of God.

Before beginning this discussion, a brief word on the structure of the program. Students at SPU may serve in three different positions within the SMC Ministry: SMC (Student Ministry Coordinator), RHMC (Residence Hall Ministry Coordinator), and CSMC (Campus Student Ministry Coordinator). Each SMC is placed on a different residence hall at SPU. The SMC partners with the RA (Residence Advisor) on their floor to provide opportunities for spiritual growth among the residents on their floor. The SMCs are required to meet weekly for two hours with the other SMCs in their residence hall. The group of SMCs within a given residence hall are called a staff.

RHMCs are placed in partnerships of two to three people. Within these partnerships, the RHMCs oversee the SMC Ministry within a residence hall. RHMC partners plan the two-hour SMC staff meeting each week. They also each meet individually with half of the SMCs on their staff each week. All of the RHMCs have their own weekly staff meeting as well, where all of the RHMCs gather for two hours, and they meet with the CSMC each week for encouragement and guidance. The RHMCs are commissioned to aid the SMCs in their ministry by providing encouragement and guidance. Many RHMCs served as SMCs in the past.

Each CSMC is also assigned a partner CSMC with whom they oversee the SMC Ministry as a whole. They serve the needs of the RHMCs, cast vision, and perform administrative tasks.

The CSMCs meet with the ministry advisor weekly so that they may receive guidance and encouragement as well. They each meet individually with half of the RHMCs for an hour every week. The CSMCs also partner to plan the two-hour meeting with all of the RHMCs. Each week there is also a meeting in which all members of the SMC Ministry gather for an hour or two hours, depending on the quarter. CSMCs plan this all-ministry meeting, often using the time to either continue training or to invite members from other ministries to meet with the leaders in the SMC Ministry.

Since this paper often addresses ministry as it relates to all three of these roles, I will often use the term “ministry leader”. By this term, I mean someone who is serving the SMC Ministry at any level.

Part 1: Ministry

In this section, I articulate a theological foundation for the SMC Ministry. Drawing primarily on the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, I begin by defining discipleship. After defining discipleship, I consider the insights of Bonhoeffer into grace and the cross, considering how a theological understanding of these concepts helps to shape the SMC Ministry. Throughout this section, I approach each theological concept through three lenses: bounded agency, gift, and relational knowledge.

Discipleship

To be a disciple is to be a learner under a particular teacher. Christian discipleship is learning how to be human under the instruction of Christ.

Bonhoeffer gives a compelling definition of Christian discipleship. He writes, "To those who have heard the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ is given the incomprehensibly great promise that they are to become like Christ."[1] This statement reveals three themes of discipleship that will shape this paper's theological outlook on the SMC Ministry: bounded agency, gift, and relational knowledge. Below I develop each of these three themes as I analyze three sections of this quote.

First, *"To those who have heard the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ"*. People have used the language of calling so often that they scarcely realize it is metaphorical language. In a post-resurrection world, people do not usually respond to a literal call of Jesus, since Jesus no longer dwells on earth in the particular body of Jesus of Nazareth.[2] Often, they use the phrase to refer to phenomena such as a sense they have about what God is prompting them to do, a

[1] Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Discipleship*. Transl. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. 2001. Pg. 281

[2] I do not say this to limit the work of Christ. Jesus, as the Son of God, certainly could miraculously take human form and communicate with us person-to-person. I say this because when people talk about calling, they rarely are referring to this sort of miraculous appearance of Jesus enfleshed.

powerful word spoken to them by someone at their Church, or a specific way they have applied their faith. The metaphor of calling has been so frequently applied to these circumstances that people have begun to tacitly assume that calling straightforwardly, denotatively refers to such a sense, word, or application. As a result, the metaphor loses its power.

If one pauses to consider the metaphor of calling, they will gain valuable insights into the bounded agency of disciples to Jesus. Bonhoeffer starts with "those who have heard the call", implying that the disciples do not begin the process of discipleship—they just join the process that is already going. Disciples are able to choose how they will respond to the invitation to discipleship, but they do not initiate the process of discipleship. In this way, they possess bounded agency. They are able to respond to the call in any way that they choose, but their choice will always be a response. They are bound to the call—the choices they make are in response to that call. When Bonhoeffer talks about disciples being called, he is revealing the bounded agency that disciples possess—they possess the ability to choose what to do in light of the request that Christ makes of them, but any choice they make is made against the backdrop of that request.

The writer David Foster Wallace describes bounded agency as it relates to tennis in his novel *Infinite Jest*. He writes that understanding tennis was "not a fractal matter of reducing chaos to pattern… It was a matter not of reduction at all, but—perversely—of expansion… each well-shot ball admitting of n possible responses, n^2 responses to those responses…a continuum of infinities of possible move and response… this diagnate infinity of infinities of choice and execution, mathematically uncontrolled but humanly *contained*, bounded by the talent and imagination of self and opponent."[3] The range of choices that any player makes in a tennis game is both infinite and bounded, constantly changing since the range of options depends on the

[3] Wallace, David Foster. *Infinite Jest.* New York, NY: Back Bay Books. 2006. Pg. 82

choices of the other player. A tennis player possesses bounded agency in that they are capable of responding to each shot in any way that they choose. Their choices are "humanly contained" because they depend on the response of the other person. In the same way, disciples are free to make any choice possible in response to the call of Christ. The call of Christ contains and defines the actions they choose.

Second, "*is given the incomprehensively great promise*". The first half of this sentence employs the metaphor of calling as discussed above, while the second half assists that metaphor with the metaphor of the gift. The metaphor of the gift underscores both the divine initiation and the exhilarating joy of discipleship.

No one can claim responsibility for a gift that they receive or it is no longer a gift. A gift, like a call, creates a system of bounded agency in which a person can accept or reject the gift, but any action they take is in response to the gift given. Receiving the gift of discipleship means that a person gains the offer of life with Christ, but they lose any claim of possession over their lives. Choosing to live in response to the gift of discipleship is choosing to say that Christ is the cause of the disciple's actions. Discipleship begins not with an individual choice, but with a divine offer.

The language of gift also reveals the exhilarating joy of discipleship, since a gift is always given for the benefit of the other. Discipleship as gift is discipleship that originates in Christ and is given to human beings for their benefit. People relinquish possession over their lives not out of masochism, but out of love for the beauty of the gift. The gift of discipleship requires that disciples acknowledge God as the source of their discipleship with the promise that they will receive life with Christ.

Third, "*that they are to become like Christ*". In order to understand this clause, a reader must understand the Christology Bonhoeffer develops later in this chapter. Christ comes to creation, according to Bonhoeffer, in response to the problem created by Adam at the Fall. He describes that problem as a misuse of human nature: "That was when Adam rejected grace and instead chose his own deed. The mystery of his nature, of being creature and yet God-like, was what Adam wanted to solve by himself. He wanted to become what, from God's perspective, he already was".[4] Bonhoeffer articulates the problem of sin as an identity problem. The identity of human beings, understood theologically, is the identity of creatures who may choose to carry the image of God in their fleshy form. Rather than choose to carry this identity, Adam chose the serpent's way of crafting a divine image himself, relying on an act of self-will to attain God-like status, rather than relying on obedience to Godself. Jesus meets humanity in the midst of this identity crisis by providing an invitation to join Him in becoming truly human by choosing to bear the image of God.

For Bonhoeffer, Christ provides this invitation not by becoming an idealized spirit or a self-willed hero, but rather by entering earth as a human being, the image of God fully incarnate. He writes, "Since fallen human beings cannot recover and assume the form of God, there is only *one* way to find help. It is none other than God, who assumes human form and comes to us."[5] People cannot devise a belief system that can restore their humanity. Their hope is in an encounter with recovered humanity. Christ is that encounter. Disciples are transformed not through historical information or religious dogma, but through an encounter with a living person—Jesus Christ incarnate. Disciples are in pursuit of the relational knowledge that comes through encountering Christ.

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[4] Bonhoeffer 282
[5] Bonhoeffer 283

It is not an idea about Christ or a belief system about Christ, but rather "the image of Jesus Christ", that "enters, permeates, and transforms" disciples.[6] Again, Bonhoeffer provides readers with a compelling metaphor for discipleship: the metaphor of the image. Bonhoeffer explains this metaphor himself: "The image springs from real life, the living primordial form. Form is thus being shaped by form. The prototype from which the human form takes its shape is either the imaginative form of God based on human projection, or it is the true and living form of God which molds the human form into the image of God."[7] Image for Bonhoeffer does not mean merely the surface appearance of something, but rather the existential impression that springs from the form of a person's existence. The image, then, is the outward effect of the form around which a person is constructed. Jesus is the image of God—He is the lived embodiment of the blueprint by which God constructed human beings.

Discipleship, then, is a person's choice to follow Jesus within a system of agency bounded by the gift of Christ. This gift is the opportunity to grow in relational knowledge of God by encountering the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ. As disciples begin to shape their lives around these encounters, they become a people who fulfill God's intention for humanity by bearing the image of Christ in creation.

I will now discuss Bonhoeffer's view of grace and the cross as it relates to these three themes, exploring how a true understanding of grace and the cross shapes the SMC Ministry.

Grace

[6] Bonhoeffer 281
[7] Bonhoeffer 283

Grace, simply defined, is goodwill between God and humanity. Grace is the reality that God looks on creation as good and lovable. To say God treats humanity with grace is to say that God relates to us constructively, rather than destructively. Bonhoeffer describes two forms of grace in his classic work, *Discipleship*. The first for is cheap grace, which in reality is not grace at all. The second form is costly grace, which is the true grace that saves humanity.

Cheap Grace

Cheap grace, according to Bonhoeffer, is a static proposition that is assumed valid.[8] It assumes the form of a "doctrine", "principle", or "system" that appears to promise security with God.[9] Cheap grace dresses positive relationship to God in the clothes of a universal law, like gravity, that will operate regardless of how people respond to it. A universal law does not make claims on a person's ability to choose—it just operates. There is no system of bounded agency, because agency is not important for cheap grace. Choice is not important. According to cheap grace, a person's actions in no way affect their standing before God. There is no engagement between people and grace.

Cheap grace, then, cannot be understood as a gift, since the metaphor of gift depends on a relationship between the giver and the recipient. This breakdown in the metaphor of gift reveals the theological instability of cheap grace. Grace, as discussed above, is a positive relation between God and humanity, but cheap grace does not deal in relational terms. Cheap grace is not a gift that humans must choose to receive or reject, a relationship between giver and recipient. It is a principle a person discovers—as though one could suddenly arrive at the realization that they are on good terms with another person.

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[8] Bonhoeffer 43.
[9] Ibid.

That is not the way relationships work. In order for people to find that they are on good terms with one another, they must engage each other. To assume good terms is to presume. It treats relationships as though they are abstractions rather than particular, embodied, contextualized interactions. Because cheap grace presumes positive relation to God, it does not deal in the terms of its subject matter. If a person claims a friendship with someone they have no interactions with, they do not actually receive a friendship. They assert friendship as if they are capable of bestowing friendship on themselves regardless of the other person's feelings, perhaps because they fear the risk of binding their agency to the offer of the other. Cheap grace claims friendship with God but requires no interaction between God and people. It is not a gift from God, but a "grace we bestow on ourselves", a forgiveness we can count on without the risk of honest confession[10]. It is abstracted grace, and so it is not a gift.

As discussed above, cheap grace deals in terms of abstraction rather than in terms of relationship, so it does not offer the relational knowledge that comes with true discipleship. Bonhoeffer describes it plainly as "grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate"[11]. Cheap grace attempts to offer us one of the gifts of Christ apart from Christ Himself. Cheap grace is incapable of offering us anything, in reality, since cheap grace is not living. Bonhoeffer reveals it as a lifeless sham, a reflection of the self concealed within the likeness of Christ, or rather Christianity, which many have exalted so highly that as a doctrine it has experienced "unprecedented deification."[12] It is not the grace of true discipleship. It makes no claims on human agency, it offers no gift, and it does not transform human beings through relational knowledge borne of encounters with Christ.

Costly Grace

[10] Bonhoeffer 44.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Bonhoeffer 53.

Bonhoeffer argues that true grace is not a cheap abstraction, but a costly interaction between God and humanity. He writes that costly grace is "costly because it calls to discipleship; it is grace because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*" (italics in original text)[13]. It is a positive relation between God and humanity that stems from a person's willingness to follow the incarnate God who loves them. Costly grace demands that people relinquish the presumption that grace can be assumed, but it liberates people from the danger of twisting Christianity into a doctrine absent of agency, gift, or relational knowing, and so a Christianity absent of discipleship. Cheap grace is ultimately allegiance to a concept we believe we have discovered. Costly grace is trust in a God we are still getting to know.

Grace is an invitation to discipleship, so it depends, to a degree, on a person's response to that invitation. Once a person encounters the invitation of grace, all that person's decisions become re-defined, since they now occur within the boundaries of obedience or disobedience to the call of Christ. Bonhoeffer describes the paradox at the core of agency and discipleship: "Because talk about obedience as a consequence of faith is unseemly, due to the indissoluble unity between faith and obedience, the statement 'only the believers obey' has to be paired with the other one, 'only the obedient believe'. In the first, faith is the precondition of obedience; in the second, obedience is the precondition of faith."[14] This is a system of agency bounded by the call of grace. Grace requires disciples to obey, but that obedience can only exist within response to the call. Cheap grace eliminates agency by eliminating Christ. Costly grace issues from the mouth of Christ when He says, "Follow me."

Costly grace begins with this invitation to follow, and so it costs disciples their ability to control grace. Cheap grace begins with the comprehension of a principle, and so once a person

[13] Bonhoeffer 45.
[14] Bonhoeffer 64

comprehends the principle, cheap grace comes under that person's control. Costly grace, as a gift, can never be fully comprehended, but only received, and in that way, grace is entirely beyond a person's control. Costly grace "must be sought again and again, the gift which has to be asked for, the door at which one has to knock."[15]People do not seek that which they already have found, ask for the gift which they already possess, or knock at the door through which they have already entered. In order to receive grace, a person must admit that their discipleship depends not on their self-assurance, their ability to comprehend, or even their righteousness. It depends, instead, on their willingness to rely on something they can never fully possess, a gift that they must receive new every moment.

To say grace begins with the gift of invitation from Christ is to say grace is rooted in an encounter with God in Christ. Grace transforms people as they are seeking God, being surprised by God, and following God. Bonhoeffer brings this point home: "Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ…. Discipleship is bound to Christ as the Mediator, and where it is properly understood, it necessarily implies faith in the Son of God as the Mediator. Only the Mediator, the God-Man, can call people to follow Him"[16]. Grace transforms through a mediator, through a person: the God-person Jesus. If people are to be disciples in grace, they will become so not through their ideas or actions, but through their encounters with the living God in Christ.

Grace and the SMC Ministry

[15] Bonhoeffer 45
[16] Bonhoeffer 59

How does Bonhoeffer's understanding of grace impact the SMC Ministry? First, Bonhoeffer offers students in the SMC Ministry a helpful word of caution: avoid cheap grace. While likely no one in the SMC Ministry would pronounce cheap grace as the official doctrine that guides their ministry, some may begin relying on cheap grace in practice. Cheap grace often appears especially appealing to ministry leaders who feel disheartened as they realize that there are few clear metrics by which they can evaluate progress. Without such metrics, those in ministry sometimes rely on a series of practices and methodologies that have supposedly been proven to work. Practices and methodologies are often helpful—it would be impossible to carry on any consistent activity without some system emerging over time—but they become distractions when a person views them as the definition of their ministry. If this begins to happen, their ministry slowly becomes oriented around a principle that cheapens grace, rather than Christ who offers grace.

Those in ministry must name their false conceptions of grace so that they do not rob themselves of grace. The best check against cheap grace is a community of people dedicated to grounding their ministry in the call of Christ. Those in the SMC Ministry, thankfully, serve on a team with other students dedicated to a ministry of costly grace. Those in the SMC Ministry are ideally empowered both to rely on other leaders for encouragement, rebuke, and guidance, as well as to offer other leaders the same. The people ministering with them will hopefully reflect the image of Christ in a way that encourages them to again receive the gift of costly grace.

If our discipleship occurs in the context of relationships with others, then we have no more "practical" tool than a living, ongoing relationship with the source of grace. In fact, Bonhoeffer's understanding of grace as relational becomes entirely fitting to the actual, day-to-

day ministries of SMCs, RHMCs, and CSMCs. Ministry occurs in the context of relationship with other people, and it is itself growth in relationship to God.

By understanding grace as bounded agency, gift, and relational knowledge, those serving in the SMC Ministry may more tangibly relate their theology of grace to day-to-day ministry. The framework of bounded agency empowers ministry leaders to take responsibility for their actions while acknowledging that they do not possess the ministry. They may realize that by carrying out plans on their floor that they are cheapening grace, since grace occurs in a system that depends on their response. But they also should not feel that grace depends on their actions, since their actions are always done against the backdrop of grace that Christ has offered them.

An understanding of grace as gift will, hopefully, encourage ministry leaders to approach ministry with joy. After months of serving in the SMC Ministry, it is easy for ministry leaders to view their ministry as an arduous duty rather than as a wonderful gift. In part, this is natural and healthy. Commitments often create strain, and it does not denigrate the commitment to admit that sometimes the task is performed more because of duty than desire. But this strain does not have the final word in ministry. Viewing ministry as a gift empowers those serving in ministry to approach each day with wonder and gratitude, since those are the responses fitting to receiving a gift. Ministry leaders may even want to set a rhythm of reflection in their lives in which they spend ten minutes each day writing a response to the question, “Does ministry feel like a gift this day?” As they spend time reflecting on this question, they will, hopefully, increase their awareness of the presence of grace in their lives and ministry.

An understanding of grace as relational knowledge is more practical than a cheap understanding of grace as method. A method depends on a set of similarities in experiences to which a method can be applied consistently. In ministry, there are rarely similarities that are so

consistent, since ministry involves the whole of a person's life. Ministry occurs both in moments as solemn as grief and as playful as Ultimate Frisbee. In short, ministry is not neatly compartmentalized, and so it does not lend itself to method. It does, however, lend itself to a human life, which is precisely what costly grace offers. Those in the SMC Ministry do not need to hold each moment of their life next to a concept or method to evaluate their ministry—they need to lift up their lives to Christ, so that they may receive the gift of grace. An articulation of grace as relationship allows for the fluidity of day-to-day life in ministry.

Bonhoeffer offers an understanding of grace to those serving in the SMC Ministry that both guards them against the pressures of assuming total responsibility for ministry, as though it were *theirs*, and against treating ministry like it has nothing to do with their actions, as though grace had no implications for a person's life. Bonhoeffer encourages ministry leaders to orient their lives around a choice to receive the gift of discipleship offered through the life of Jesus Christ.

The Cross

Just as Bonhoeffer clarifies the nature of grace in discipleship, he also clarifies the nature of the cross in discipleship. Bonhoeffer defines the cross as "that suffering which comes from our allegiance to Jesus Christ alone."[17] That is the way in which the cross is discussed in this paper as well. The cross is the central symbol of the suffering, death, and rejection that results from discipleship to Christ. The rest of this section will consider how to live under the cross as disciples through the lenses of bounded agency, gift, and relational knowledge.

The Cross and Discipleship

[17] Bonhoeffer 86

Jesus never forces the cross on disciples, but rather offers disciples the choice to bear the cross. Bonhoeffer underscores the conditional clause before the command to bear the cross in Mark 8:31 "When Jesus communicates this inalienable truth to his disciples, he begins remarkably by setting them entirely free once more. *'If* any want to become my followers'… Once again everything depends on a decision."[18] This makes the cross distinct from other forms of suffering in that it is suffering people freely choose to bear. The nature of this suffering becomes clearer as one considers both how it is bounded and how it requires human agency.

The cross is bounded in that it does not include all the suffering that one encounters as a natural consequence of life on earth, but only that suffering resulting from saying yes to the call of Christ. Bonhoeffer writes, "The cross is not random suffering, but necessary suffering. The cross is not suffering that stems from natural existence; it is suffering that comes from being Christian."[19] Were the cross not bounded, then the command to carry the cross would make little claim upon the disciple. The disciple could passively receive the suffering that naturally occurs in life and call it obedience. Because the cross is bounded, however, it does make a claim upon the disciple. The disciple must respond by engaging a particular kind of suffering: the cross of Jesus.

Because it requires this particular kind of suffering, the cross requires a choice. The call of Jesus will require a disciple to suffer, because the call requires a re-framing around Christ of the disciple's world. It is "the call which summons us away from our attachments to this world. It is the death of the old self in the encounter with Jesus Christ."[20] Disciples must continually choose between their old self and the self that emerges from an encounter with Christ. There is no third option. For that reason, Bonhoeffer points out, a disciple begins the process of bearing

[18] Bonhoeffer 85-86
[19] Bonhoeffer 86
[20] Bonhoeffer 87

the cross by choosing to deny themselves as they fixate their gaze on Christ[21]. The disciple must choose whether they will continue to orient their life around the self or deny the self so they may be oriented around Christ. This is the choice that Jesus creates for the disciple when Jesus commands them to bear the cross.

Yet somehow, according to Bonhoeffer, the cross of Jesus becomes a gift. This statement appears absurd at first, but Bonhoeffer asserts it despite its absurdity. The cross is a gift because it invites disciples to suffer not under themselves, but under the cross. Even if someone rejects the cross, argues Bonhoeffer, they will suffer. When people reject the cross, their life "loads them with a heavier, more unbearable burden. They bear the self-chosen yoke of their own selves."[22] Because this suffering is not the cross, it falls on their own shoulders, and so it weighs them down.

If a person receives the gift of the cross, however, they receive suffering that is carried on the shoulders of Christ, becoming the place where disciples meet Christ. Bonhoeffer describes this shared suffering beautifully: "It provides refreshment and peace for our souls; it is our greatest joy. Here we are no longer laden with self-made laws and burdens, but with the yoke of him who knows us and who himself goes with us under the same yoke. Under his yoke we are assured of his nearness and communion. It is he himself whom disciples find when they take up their cross."[23] The cross becomes a gift because it transforms suffering. Suffering now is not self-willed, self-created, and self-borne. It is instead received from Christ and borne with Christ. Suffering of the self leads to isolation, even as one feels that they are free, since no one ultimately can share the suffering that a person creates for themselves. Suffering of the cross

[21] Bonhoeffer 86
[22] Bonhoeffer 91
[23] ibid

leads to communion, even as one feels that they are isolated from others, since no one can step under the cross without encountering Jesus.

The cross leads to relational transformation, because it leads to a deeper encounter with Christ. When a person bears the cross, they share in the life of Christ, becoming transformed by his presence. The choice to receive the gift of the cross is a choice to join with Jesus.

The Cross and the SMC Ministry

The cross confronts ministry leaders with the truth that ministry involves suffering. If Bonhoeffer helps those serving in the SMC Ministry to see only that, then he has helped them approach their ministry more realistically. With some tasks, the implied suffering is at first hidden. A person starts a task smiling because it seems like it will be enjoyable, but as they continue, they begin to slowly realize that it is actually more difficult than they had thought, and so they may begin to doubt their commitment. The suffering within ministry should not surprise disciples—this suffering is stated at the beginning of the call to discipleship when Jesus asks disciples to carry the cross. Leaders at all levels of the SMC Ministry must articulate this truth clearly: this will be difficult, this will require you to relinquish control, and this may hurt.

But the cross also encourages ministry leaders that through suffering, they will find Christ. This transforms the suffering to joy, even if it does not take away the pain. The suffering becomes joy because, as described in the previous section, it is under the suffering of the cross where disciples find Christ. Ministry leaders must, then, cling to two phrases of encouragement: "There will be pain because of the cross" and "there will be joy because of the cross". When both these phrases stand together, they provide disciples with the clarity and courage to choose the cross.

How does someone in the SMC Ministry choose the cross? This will look different for each person, but there are three suggestions offered here. First, ministry leaders must be willing to change. The cross means that the disciple's true self emerges not through their own self-definition, but rather through their self-denial. The call to discipleship means that a disciple must be open to any request that Christ makes of them, whether or not that request fits into the disciple's self-concept. Ministry leaders must be marked by an open willingness to place the call of Christ over their understanding of themselves.

Second, ministry leaders must learn to make decisions according to a different standard than pain-minimization. Many make decisions by evaluating which option will be least painful so that they may choose that option. This rubric simply does not work for discipleship. Ministry leaders hopefully learn to act according to the call of Christ, rather than according to the path of least pain. By learning to choose the cross, ministry leaders will learn to follow Jesus, however painful this may become.

Third, ministry leaders can face the cross honestly, but without despair, since that is the place they meet Christ. Even as they make decisions that contradict their initial impulse, ministry leaders may experience joy, because their choices are bringing them forward on the journey of discipleship. There is freedom to admit the difficulty of these decisions, and there is perspective to find encouragement in the midst of this difficulty.

Conclusion

Christian discipleship is following the call of God in Jesus Christ. People follow this call by choosing to receive the gift offered in Jesus: the call to discipleship. This call transforms the disciple as they become shaped relationally through encounters with the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected Christ. Discipleship requires both grace and the cross. Grace confronts disciples

with the truth that through Christ, they may relate positively to God and should live accordingly. The cross confronts disciples with the truth that to follow Christ, they will need to suffer as they deny themselves so that they may join with Christ. Those serving in the SMC Ministry embrace the call of discipleship—a call of grace and suffering. As they embrace this call, they will learn to use their bounded agency to receive the gift of Christ, so that they may be transformed in relationship with him.

Part 2: Student

In this section, I will draw on resources from developmental theory, theology, and education to understand the unique context of ministry leaders serving in the SMC Ministry. I will consider the ways in which a person's faith development transitions during college, propose ways of maintaining integrity amidst those changes, and explore an educational model that can shape their approach to ministry in their context. This section draws primarily on the writings of James Fowler, Steve Garber, and James K.A. Smith.

Two Assumptions

This section proceeds based on two assumptions. First, it assumes that most of those serving in the SMC Ministry and living in the residence halls are between the ages of 18 and 23. Because of this, the resources quoted address spiritual formation among people who are in their late teens or early twenties. This is not intended to ignore anyone outside this age range who lives on campus or serves in the SMC ministry—it is merely my attempt to make the best use of limited time for research and writing. Second, it assumes that developmental models are helpful, while acknowledging that they do not apply to every individual. Since the goal of this section is to articulate the developmental stage of most students in the SMC Ministry, it paints in broad developmental strokes.

A Developmental Shift

The psychologist James Fowler uses the insights of developmental psychologists, such as Jean Piaget, Erik Erickson, and Lawrence Kohlberg to understand the stages that people undergo in their faith development. Fowler may help those in the SMC Ministry understand the unique faith development stage of many residents at SPU.

From Synthetic-Conventional to Individuative-Reflective

According to Fowler, many people between the ages of 18 and 23 enter a transition between the third and fourth stage in their faith development. They transition from a Synthetic-Conventional faith to an Individuative-Reflective faith.

The Synthetic-Conventional stage begins around puberty. As children entering puberty begin to develop abstract thought, they become capable of reflecting on their own thoughts and perceptions.[24] As people become capable of self-reflection, they begin to wonder about the ways that other people perceive them, adding a layer of self-reflection to interactions with others. They thus attempt to create an image for themselves of what others see when they look at them.[25] Fowler traces three implications of self-image construction on the faith development of those within stage three: they begin to understand God as a person who knows the infinitely complex and deep personalities of others;[26] they locate authority in other people who they deem significant;[27] and they relate to others according to their individual personalities with little understanding of how cultural, political, or religious systems shape them.[28]

A series of conflicts often lead to the end of the Synthetic-Conventional stage of development: contradiction between trusted authority sources; marked changes in how authorities treat certain people groups or behaviors; encounters with perspectives that cause someone to question their beliefs; and moving away from home.[29] These conflicts often occur within students during their first two years at SPU. When an SPU student who grew up in a Church that taught complementarianism hears a professor argue for the ordination of women, that student faces a contradiction between trusted authority sources. When an SPU student who

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[24] Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco. 1981. Pg. 152
[25] Fowler 153
[26] ibid
[27] Fowler 154
[28] Fowler 163
[29] Fowler 173.

grew up in an environment where anyone who was educated scoffed at religion hears a professor speak earnestly of their faith, that student encounters a marked change in how authorities treat certain people groups. When an SPU student who grew up in a place with almost no ethnic diversity realizes how privilege has impacted the opportunities that are available to them, that student questions why they never before considered this question. And when an SPU student lives in the residence halls, that student has to move away from home. The context of residence life at SPU leads to many of the conflicts that complicate a Synthetic-Conventional faith.

These conflicts catalyze the transition to an Individuative-Reflective faith. The defining mark of an Individuative-Reflective Faith is that a person begins "to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes."[30] One begins to develop personal beliefs and perspectives that shape how they interpret the influences and expectations of others. These personal beliefs and perspectives become more important to the individual's faith than the beliefs of authority figures, such as parents or community leaders.[31] The authority figures are still significant, but they no longer exert the most authority over the individual's faith. That authority now comes from the individual.

As authority becomes located within the individual, one begins reflecting not only on how outside influences shaped their own development, but also on how outside influences shape the development of others. They begin to approach others both interpersonally, as they did in the Synthetic-Conventional stage, and also systemically.[32] They become aware of the role that systems play in shaping individuals.

The Impact of the Developmental Shift on the SMC Ministry

[30] Fowler 182.
[31] Fowler 179.
[32] Fowler 180.

Fowler may provide students within the SMC Ministry comfort and a new understanding in how to relate with others. Fowler gives a word of comfort to students in the SMC ministry who worry that they are alone in their doubts and internal conflict. Ministry leaders who encounter his model of development will realize that their doubts are shared among many people. This word of comfort will hopefully empower the ministry leaders to speak plainly about the difficulties of serving in ministry amidst a season of transition, so that they may ask these questions safely in community rather than bitterly in isolation.

At its best, Fowler's model provides ministry leaders with language to articulate their stage of faith development. As they are able to articulate and understand the Individuative-Reflective stage, they will hopefully recognize the ways this stage may help them engage the stories of others. For example, in the Individuative-Reflective faith, encountering the perspectives of others is vital, since these perspectives allow someone a broader range of experiences that will shape their personal beliefs. If a ministry leader recognizes that they are at the stage in their faith development when they are beginning to develop their own personal system of beliefs, they will, hopefully, seize the opportunity to listen to the beliefs of others. They may listen to challenging perspectives not with fear, but with gratitude. In this way, ministry leaders are able to better model a grace-filled response to others, since they no longer feel that their entire worldview is at stake when presented with an opposing viewpoint. They, instead, are free to approach the other person with humility, ready to be shaped by the other's story.

This stance of humility could be a powerful force in the residence halls, especially if paired with the ability to consider how systems, laws, and cultural backgrounds shape individual identities. As students seek growth through engagement with a broader range of perspectives,

they will, hopefully, learn to more gracefully and tactfully engage with issues of reconciliation and diversity. If the CSMCs partner with on-campus resources—such as the John Perkins Center, Multi-Ethnic Programs office, or the Vice President of Intercultural Affairs—to design trainings that coach their ministry leaders, the students in the SMC Ministry may become more equipped in engaging with people from different backgrounds and in leading conversations about differences.

As SPU's student body grows increasingly diverse, the residence halls could become an environment in which students from different backgrounds are able to share space. Fowler helps us recognize that the cultivation of this shared space among 18-23 year-olds is both difficult and essential. It is difficult because these students are asked to share space as they are undergoing a transition from locating the authority of their beliefs in authority figures to locating the authority of their beliefs in themselves. This may cause confusion, anxiety, and even anger toward those who confront beliefs that have felt safe. It is also necessary, however, because sharing space gives students a context within which to learn the ability to be with those who are different. As they develop this ability, they become capable of viewing others and themselves according to the systems that shaped them.

Fowler offers the SMC Ministry a framework through which ministry leaders may understand their faith development. According to this framework, students living in the residence halls usually undergo a transition from the Synthetic-Conventional to the Individuative-Reflective. This transition can cause anxiety as one feels uncertain of where to locate authority for their beliefs, but it can also be a time of immense growth as one considers the beliefs and perspectives around which they will form their lives. As ministry leaders discover language for

this transition, they will, hopefully, embrace it as a transition they can talk about honestly with others, and grow through intentionally by engaging with others.

Three Staples of Christian Development

Theologian Steven Garber provides helpful insights into navigating this developmental transition as ministry leaders in a way that deepens their discipleship, rather than destroys their faith. Garber wrote *The Fabric of Faithfulness* to provide Christian students guidance in discipleship through college. Many students describe college as a disorienting time in which they lost much of the certainty they held before college. While Fowler helps students see that this disorientation is part of the natural course of one's faith development, Garber responds to this disorientation by asking, "What is it that happens when a person, moving from student years into adulthood, continues to construct a coherent life?... How do students learn to connect presuppositions with practice—belief about the world with life in the world—in the most personal areas and the most public arenas?"[33] Garber aids students in bringing alignment between their values and the substance of their lives. Garber offers college students a way to develop spiritual authenticity.

The Three C's

Garber draws on the history of ideas, virtue ethics, and personal experience in college ministry to discuss the three strands that he believes weave into an authentic faith: "Convictions, character, and community."[34] *Convictions*, according to Garber, emerge from the longing to live a life of coherence and integrity between one's beliefs and actions.[35] Integrity is rooted in "a worldview that will be coherent across the whole of life because it addresses the whole of life:

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[33] Garber, Steven. *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2007. Pg. 47

[34] Garber 57.

[35] Garber 128.

from sexuality to politics to economics to the arts, from local commitments to global responsibilities."[36] A person of integrity lives a life that matches their worldview.

Character, according to Garber, emerges from mentoring relationships between older and younger people who are committed to the same worldview.[37] Students experience deep transformation through a "dynamic relationship" with an older mentor who opens their "life up to a student, which enables young people to understand that their worldview can also become a way of life"[38]. Students witness the full power of convictions once they see them embodied. The mentor allows them to see their convictions embodied

Community, according to Garber, emerges from one's need for relationships with others who are committed to a life of coherence with their convictions.[39] When a person faces difficult circumstances, these relationships keep them grounded because the lives of others remind them of their core convictions.[40] Being in relationship with others who share the same convictions fills life with living reminders of these convictions. Garber charges those involved in the spiritual formation of college students to lead with these three strands in mind: convictions, character, and community.

The Three C's in the SMC Ministry

Initially, it seems difficult to apply the *convictions* portion of Garber's model, because students serve in the SMC Ministry during a year of college usually marked by changing convictions. Fowler revealed that the leaders in the SMC Ministry often are transitioning from a Synthetic-Conventional faith to an Individuative-Reflective faith, which means that they are in

[36] Garber 138.
[37] Garber 155.
[38] Garber 143.
[39] Garber 159.
[40] Ibid.

the process of figuring out their personal convictions. This situation raises an important question: How can a person lead with integrity during a period in which their beliefs and values are changing? How can someone lead with coherence between their values and actions when they are uncertain of their values?

I believe the answer is honesty. Many ministry leaders feel that it is hypocritical for them to lead in ministry even as they feel uncertain about important elements of their faith, but this feeling is not grounded. They are only truly hypocritical if they pretend to be more certain than they are. Ministry leaders will lead with integrity not by always having the answer, but by living according to the answers they have and by admitting the answers that they do not yet have.

The organizational structure of the SMC Ministry lends itself particularly well to Garber's understanding of character and community. Garber argued that the key to character development is a relationship with a mentor who shares a person's belief system. The SMC Ministry is structured to provide each ministry leader with a mentor—the advisor is the mentor to the CSMCs, the CSMCs to the RHMCs, and the RHMCs to the SMCs. Ministry leaders meet with other ministry leaders who are given the task of taking care of them, listening to them, encouraging them, and guiding them. Ministry leaders should not entirely rely on the SMC Ministry for their mentorship—there are many benefits to having mentors that possess more experience in Christian life than other college students do—but they can rely on the SMC Ministry for *a* mentor.

The SMC Ministry also provides each ministry leader a community of other ministry leaders with the same convictions—the staffs. During staff at each level of the ministry, the ministry leaders have an opportunity to share their struggles with one another, pray for one another, and laugh with one another. This community empowers ministry leaders to foster a

community inspired by their experience in the SMC Ministry. The community within the staff then becomes formational and visionary. It both forms the SMCs into people capable of building Christian community, and it provides the SMCs with a vision of Christian community.

All You Need is Love

Formation and Desire

Fowler provides insight into the developmental stage of leaders within the SMC Ministry, and Garber provides insight into how to empower ministry leaders to maintain integrity in the midst of internal transition. Now we will consider the work of James K.A. Smith, who provides insight into Christian education. The term education here does not primarily concern formal instruction, as in a classroom, but rather spiritual formation, which is the deepening of a person's discipleship to Christ. The task of every ministry leader in the SMC Ministry is to further the spiritual formation of the people in their care—for SMCs, the residents on the floor; for RHMCs, the SMCs on staff; and for CSMCs, both the RHMCs on staff and all of the SMCs. Smith clarifies the task and practices of Christian spiritual formation.

In his book *Desiring the Kingdom*, James K.A. Smith argues for a shift in the common understanding of education. He argues that Christian education should emphasize formation, which is the shaping of desire, rather than information, which is the disseminating of knowledge.[41] He founds his educational model on a view of human beings as lovers directed toward the aim of their desires.[42] If a person is at their core "shaped by what one loves as ultimate, which constitutes an affective, gut-like orientation to the world that is prior to reflection and even eludes conceptual articulation", then the task of education should be concerned with

[41] Smith, James K.A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 2009. Pg. 31
[42] Smith 51

this love.[43] While many think of education in terms of information and technique, Smith thinks of education in terms of love and passion.

Smith suggests two ways that education shapes a person's desires: by providing a vision of the desirable life[44] and by shaping habits.[45] The vision acts as the object of desire around which a person orients their worldview. If human beings are primarily lovers, then the vision is their beloved. Habits act as the main forces that drive a person toward their desire. Many wish to live a life full of behaviors that bring them closer to the objects of their love. Since habits are the key elements of a person's behavior, habit formation is the key to re-orienting a person's actions.

Desire and Formation in the SMC Ministry

Ministry leaders may begin applying Smith's theories by asking themselves questions about their own lives. If I am primarily a person who loves, then what loves have been motivating my thoughts and actions? Are these the loves I want to drive my life? Are my habits aligned with the love I profess? A ministry leader could begin by identifying the vision and habits that currently direct their individual life, so that they may more fully understand the message that they are communicating to others through their thoughts, words, and actions.

Ministry leaders could then begin to shape a vision for how ministry may look in their context—be that a specific residence hall, a staff, or a ministry-wide class. Perhaps ministry leaders could even take a day to pray, talk with those they trust, and write a vision statement. They would be able to edit this statement at any point throughout the year—it could function as a work-in-progress that they use to direct their time and energy. Ministry leaders could also express this vision in visual art, story, song, or any other medium. This expression would align the personal loves that they identified initially with the needs of their context.

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[43] ibid.
[44] Smith 52-53
[45] Smith 56-58

After clarifying the vision that drives their ministry, ministry leaders could implement this vision by considering their habits. Two habits seem especially fitting to the SMC Ministry: corporate worship and inward spiritual disciplines. For corporate worship, the ministry leaders could form the habit of attending a particular worship service on campus or at a local church. Before attending, they could invite people on their floor or staff to join them at the worship service, developing habits of spiritual formation not only for themselves, but also inviting others to join in these habits.

Ministry leaders also may develop inward spiritual disciplines that will direct their desires toward Christ. These may be habits of silence, of various forms of prayer, of confession, or of any other discipline that keeps their internal life focused on the love of Christ. Perhaps each week the ministry leaders could choose a different habit to practice at last three times, and then they could discuss with one another how that habit impacted their weeks. As they develop these practices into habits, their habits will direct their behavior toward a deepened love for Christ.

Conclusion

Those in the SMC Ministry often experience a shift in their faith development from a Synthetic-Conventional to an Individuative-Reflective faith. This shift often feels disorienting for ministry leaders, since it marks the beginning of their attempt to sort through which beliefs they hold personally and which beliefs they inherited from authority figures. If ministry leaders understand that this dis-orientation is common for students their age, then they may actually harness the unique qualities of their developmental stage to aid their growth. They can do this by admitting their doubts to others, engaging the perspectives of others as an opportunity to expand their worldview, and honing their understanding of how systems shape individuals. Garber also offers three insights into how to navigate this transition with integrity: desire coherence between

convictions and actions, develop relationships with mentors who shape their character, and participate in a community of people with shared convictions. Those in the SMC Ministry may apply Garber's insights by admitting their doubts, relying on the people commissioned to mentor them, and embracing their staff as a community of people with shared convictions.

As ministry leaders then begin to consider what ministry looks like in their context, they may find Smith's model of education helpful. This model encourages them to think of human beings as creatures that are shaped primarily by their loves. These loves then become enacted through their habits. Ministry leaders may begin contemplating the role of love and habit in their own lives to develop an understanding of their own faith journey, so that they can then align their love with the needs of their context. This alignment will create a compelling vision enacted through habits of corporate worship and inward formation.

Part 3: Coordinator

This section analyzes a key element of the SMC Ministry: coordinating. This analysis revolves around an important question: What precisely are those in SMC Ministry coordinating? A pragmatic answer comes easily. They coordinate the residents on their floor with the ministries at SPU by putting up posters, sending out e-mails, and inviting residents to join them at ministry events on campus. This section travels below the pragmatic responsibilities of a coordinator, however, to reveal the theological aspect of these responsibilities. Ministry leaders coordinate

members of their floor with various ministries on campus because ministry leaders recognize that ministry on their floor is inseparable from the ministries across campus—in fact, it is inseparable from all ministry across time and space. No ministry is separate from other ministries, because all ministries are part of the larger Christian narrative. I will draw on Stanley Hauerwas's work on the nature of theology as narrative to guide this reflection.

Narrative and Interdependence

Hauerwas argues that narrative reveals the interdependence of all aspects of existence on one another.[46] Narrative is a way of expressing something's journey through time, interaction with matter, and relation to others. Think of any story that includes a solitary person at a single moment, entirely independent of any context. It is impossible, because a story itself is context. To tell you a story about myself is to tell you of myself in relation to time, matter, and others. To view theology as narrative, then, is to believe that people can only know God, themselves, or anything else through its relation to something else. Hauerwas writes, "Not only is knowledge of self tied to knowledge of God, but we know ourselves truthfully only when we know ourselves in relation to God. We know who we are only when we can place ourselves—locate our stories—within God's story."[47] To know God, then, is not to understand a concept that is separate from humanity and creation, but rather to understand humanity and creation as they relate to the story God tell us.

This narrative understanding impacts the way Christians articulate the nature of ministry. For a Christian, theology as narrative implies that to participate in ministry is "not principally to obey certain commandments or rules, but to learn to grow into the story of Jesus as the form of

[46]Hauerwas, Stanley. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. 1983. Pg. 26
[47] Hauerwas *27*.

God's kingdom."[48] Ministry, then, is not something that any individual *does* or *possesses*. Ministry, rather, depends upon the individual's participation in a story that expands much further beyond the individual's self. People join ministry—they never create it. Because of this, the very act of participating in ministry can be understood as a certain type of coordinating. Ministry coordinates a bounded, finite life with the limitless, infinite narrative of God.

For this reason, it is essential that ministry leaders are coordinators, since they are called not primarily to shape their own stories, but rather to join the story of God. Practically, this means that by engaging in ministry, ministry leaders connect themselves with other Christians across time and space.

Across Time and Space

Hauerwas describes the Story of God stretching across time as grace inhabiting history. According to Hauerwas, "Grace is not an eternal moment above history rendering history irrelevant; rather it is God's choice to be a Lord whose kingdom is furthered by our concrete obedience through which we acquire a history befitting our nature as God's creatures."[49] To join the Story of God, then, is to join a particular history—the history of God working across time in Israel, Christ, and the Church. For this reason, the Christian narrative stresses the receiving of a past. This is difficult because it requires our dependence not only upon the people around us, but the people before us: "To gratefully inherit a tradition is to recognize and honor the chain of actual benefactors who have sustained the skill and stories that provide us with the means to know and live our lives as God's creatures."[50] Joining the story of God requires joining the lives of those in the past who were part of the unfolding of this story.

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[48] Hauerwas 30.
[49] Hauerwas 27.
[50] Ibid.

For students in the SMC Ministry, past Christians can offer a wealth of resources that they would otherwise lack. Ministry leaders are not required to invent methods of ministry for their floor or staff each year. Instead, they can look into the resources provided by liturgy, theology, spiritual practices, the Church calendar, and any other helpful tools that past Christians have to offer. This paper is an attempt to use these tools in such a way. Although likely none of the theologians referenced in this paper have encountered the SMC Ministry at SPU, they still provide valuable insight into a life lived in discipleship to Christ, adding texture to the way in which ministry leaders understand and live the Christian story.

Just as ministry leaders benefit from works of Christians across time, they also benefit from the works of Christians across space. As technology makes possible the connection between Christians across the world, ministry should seize this possibility to engage with ministry in other countries. This may occur through reading theologians who write to the Church in another country, forming friendships with Christians across national divides, and participating in worship services that unite Christians who are usually separated. Engagement with the Church in other time periods and other cultural contexts keeps ministry leaders from the believing the lie that the ministry originated with their own choice, rather than with the call of Christ. The ministry, in fact, coordinates with ministry occurring across time and space.

Narrative and Vision

Hauerwas describes narrative as not just a way to speak, but also as a way to see. Hauerwas ties this new way of seeing to the journey in discipleship, since "by learning to be faithful disciples, we are more able to see the world as it is, namely God's creation"[51]. The Christian narrative provides a new rubric by which Christians assign meaning to their

[51] Hauerwas 30.

experiences, actions, and relationships with others. It frames a Christian's interpretation of reality.

For ministry leaders, then, the Christian story must become not one of several lenses through which they interpret their ministry, but rather the point around which all their actions are oriented. Many ministry leaders feel tempted, especially when someone doubts whether they are accomplishing enough, to think of ministry in terms of offered services. In the back of one's mind, a ministry leader may begin to think, "Even if the theological outlook on this position isn't true, *per se*, I am at least…" after which they fill in a service that appears valuable. As an example, an SMC may think, "Even if this business of God reaching out to the people of my floor through me is just a figure of speech, I am at least providing a space where members of my floor can come, unload their stresses, and walk away with a better outlook." This thought is destructive because it actually re-contextualizes the actions of the ministry leader so that these actions no longer participate in ministry. Because they lost sight of the narrative of God, they lost the defining factor of their ministry: participation with God in creation. They no longer approach ministry as an act of narrative coordination, by which people begin to consciously participate in the narrative of God.

Conclusion

At its theological core, the work of coordinating is not only coordinating students with ministry organizations on campus, but becoming the sort of disciples who by our very lives invite others into the story of God. No individual can enact or possess ministry. They can only join it, since it is a story that exists before, after, and beyond the life of the individual. Ministry leaders should not feel pressured to invent a certain strategy for ministry, but rather should learn from the ministry that has happened in the lives of Christians in other time periods and in other

nations. As ministry leaders grow in their discipleship, this narrative outlook becomes part of their vision—they begin to see all existence as it relates to the story of God.

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