



SOUTHWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

DISCIPLESHIP

THE ATTRACTION OF BEAUTY IN AN
UGLY WORLD

BENJAMIN B. PHILLIPS

*The Attraction of Beauty in an Ugly World:
On the Relationship of Discipling
and Evangelism*

*Benjamin B. Phillips
Harvard School for Theological Studies
Houston, Texas
bphillips@swbts.edu*

In their 2004 album *Head for the Door*, the Exies recorded a song called “Ugly,” which asked,

Are you ugly?
A liar like me?
A user, a lost soul?
Someone you don’t know
Money it’s no cure
A Sickness so pure
Are you like me?
Are you ugly?

We are dirt, we are alone
You know we are far from sober!
We are fake, we are afraid
You know it’s far from over
We are dirt, we are alone
You know we are far from sober!
Look closer, are you like me?
Are you ugly?¹

Whether they realize it or not, this secular musical group has painted a pretty faithful, if incomplete, picture of the impact of sin on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. To be sure, the biblical images for sin’s effect with which we are more familiar are the metaphors of blindness and deafness (Matt 13:14–15; 2 Cor 4:4), and death (Eph 2:1). These

¹The Exies, “Ugly,” on the album *Head for the Door* (Virgin Records, 2004).

concepts point to the way in which sin affects our reaction (or lack thereof) to divine revelation. The value of the Exies' metaphor, when applied Christianly, is that it reminds us of how sin makes us unattractive to each other, how we are much less than the "very good" creation God designed us to be (Gen 1:31).

The idea that sin makes people ugly is the corollary of Jonathan Edwards' understanding of beauty. For Edwards, arguably history's greatest American theologian, God is "infinitely the most beautiful and excellent." "All the beauty to be found throughout the whole creation is . . . the reflection of the diffused beams of that being who hath an infinite fullness of brightness and glory."² Edwards understood creaturely beauty to consist in the reflection of God, conformity to God's character and purposes.

Edwards' conception of beauty points us to Christ as the One who is supremely beautiful in creation. As God, Christ is beauty-itself, the perfect image of the Father (Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4). As man, Christ is the perfect fulfillment of what God intended humanity to be, such that He is the "New Adam" (1 Cor 15:45). Insofar as that which is beautiful is also attractive, Christ will be found to be the most attractive Person in all creation (John 12:32).³

The beauty of Christ's own character is replicated in the lives of individuals and churches as people are progressively remade in the "image of Christ." Christlikeness is precisely the result which God has promised He will achieve in all of His children (Rom 8:29). It is also the aim of our own response to the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our lives (Col 3:10–11). Our labor in forming Christlikeness in people is most commonly called "discipling" (Gal 4:19; Matt 28:19–20). What we are about is the transformation of our depraved characters into the character of Christ, the replacement of vice with virtue—in short, exchanging ugliness for beauty.

A Brief Sketch of the New Testament Teaching on Discipling

The foundational command to disciple people is found in Matthew 28:19–20, where we are commanded,

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded

²Jonathan Edwards, *Dissertation II. The Nature of True Virtue*, vol. 8, *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 550–51.

³Doug Blount, "Apologetics and the Ordinances of the Church," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 43 (2001): 68–83.

you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.⁴

Christ's command clearly entails the work of evangelism as the way in which a person comes to the faith in Christ that leads them to baptism as their first act of Christian obedience. Yet the disciple-making that starts with evangelism does not end there. The task of "teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you" has, in the New Testament, at least two more distinct, but fully necessary elements.

First of these, both in order of importance and sequence, is the work of constructive discipling. In order to observe the commandments of Christ, one must be taught what they are and how to obey them in the 'real world.' A.B. Bruce insisted that "Christian instruction is to be a continuous process . . . with a view to enabling disciples to walk worthily of their vocation."⁵ This means that constructive discipling requires more than mere classroom instruction. It is not merely the conveyance of theoretical information, but practical training to live a Christlike life in the present culture.

Acts describes apostles such as Paul doing this kind of work as they "strengthen[ed] the hearts of the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). Paul also taught that pastors are to fulfill this responsibility when he reminded the church that God has given pastors for "the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). Churches are specifically enjoined to look for this focus and ability in 1 Timothy 3:2, where being "able to teach" (cf. "teach them to observe everything I have commanded you"!) is made a non-negotiable requirement for an overseer (pastor).

Yet, it is a gross misconception to think that the responsibility to help people learn Christlikeness lies only with apostles, pastors, and other specially-called and gifted individuals in the church! Paul calls on all Christians to "encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thess 5:11). Hebrews assigns the task of provoking practical Christlikeness to all Christians by commanding them to

consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (NASB)

⁴Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the Holy Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

⁵A.B. Bruce, "Synoptic Gospels," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 5 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:340.

Ultimately, the creation of Christlikeness in a person is a miracle of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:18–25; Rom 8:11). Yet the Spirit uses various tools to accomplish His purpose. These tools include (but are not limited to) the ministry of the Word (Eph 5:26) and the corporate worship of the church (Col 3:16). Significantly, the Spirit also uses the living examples of individual Christians to provide contextualized models of Christlikeness for others to imitate (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6). Pastors are certainly to teach others by means of a Christlike example (1 Tim 4:12; 1 Pet 5:3). But the New Testament also expects that older, more mature Christian men and women will develop the kind of relationships with younger Christians that will allow the older to develop Christlikeness in the younger through word and deed (Titus 2:2–5).

Constructive discipling is necessary for developing the beauty of a Christlike character in people. Without such training, younger Christians will struggle more than need be both to learn what Christ expects of them and how to live it out in daily life. Unfortunately, constructive discipling is not by itself sufficient to develop the character of Christ in Christians struggling against the enticement of their sinful natures and a seductive world (cf. Rom 7). The New Testament also requires corrective discipling.⁶

Where constructive discipling encourages virtue, corrective discipling addresses vice redemptively. Corrective discipling is commanded and modeled in the New Testament every bit as strongly as constructive discipling. At least eleven times the New Testament commands or commends the work of correction to Christlikeness, using words and phrases like:

Rebuke (Luke 17:3; 1 Tim 5:20; 1 Tim 4:2)

Correct (2 Tim 2:25; 3:16)

Turn a sinner back (Jas 5:19)

Appeal (1 Tim 5:1; Jude 3)

Show him his fault (Matt 18:15)

Reprove (2 Tim 4:2)

Save, snatch from the fire (Jude 23)

At its extreme, corrective discipling will involve public rebuke, and even expulsion (Matt 18:17; 1 Tim 5:20; 1 Cor 5). But these actions are options of last resort to correct a brother who persists defiantly in sin. They are not the usual ways in which the New Testament envisions corrective

⁶I choose the phrase “corrective discipling” instead of the more common “church discipline” because of the unfortunate connotations the latter phrase often carries. Our concern here is much more broad than formal church action against the unrepentant perpetrator of gross sin.

discipling to work. The paradigm for the normal practice of corrective discipling is actually best seen in Galatians 6:1–2,

Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you won't be tempted also. Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Here, Christians who are walking with Christ are to help those who are struggling to do so. The goal is the restoration of the sinning brother to obedience and growth in Christlikeness, and thus to unimpeded fellowship with others. Rather than being high-handed or condescending, the spiritual brother should be gentle and encouraging. The discipling Christian must take care not to be tempted also, either by the sin being addressed in the life of the one he is discipling, or by pride.⁷ The goal is neither the self-congratulation of the discipler nor a saint-versus-sinner battle, but rather is to create a situation in which by walking together, one Christian may help another avoid sin and instead faithfully reflect the character of Christ. When Christians come to the aid of one another this way, Paul says, they are fulfilling Christ's command to love each other as Christ has loved us (John 13:34).

Jesus emphasized the redemptive aspect of corrective discipling alongside its corrective aspect by telling us, "if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3).

James encouraged corrective discipling as an expression of love for other Christians when he reminded us that "whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from death and cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:20). This parallels the teaching of Peter, who urged Christians to "keep your love for one another at full strength, since love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8).

The New Testament expects us to "teach them to obey everything that I have commanded" through both constructive and corrective discipling. Both are necessary. Constructive discipling serves to encourage Christians to cooperate with the Spirit's work of transforming them into the image of Christ. Corrective discipling adds the encouragement and strength of other Christians in obeying Christ to our own when we are too weak to stand alone. If necessary, it also applies progressively stronger forms of confrontation to the life of one who defiantly refuses to deal with

⁷Richard Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), 275.

gross sin in their lives. By means of these complementary tools, the Holy Spirit fosters the beauty of Christlikeness in His people.

The Apologetic Connection Between Discipling and Evangelism

The Great Commission certainly connects evangelism and discipling in sequential order—one is not yet obedient to Christ if one has not come to Him in penitent faith for salvation! Yet more must be said about the relationship between these two elements of the Great Commission. Evangelism addresses those who are enslaved to sin and not yet saved—those outside the church. Discipling, both constructive and corrective, addresses those who are reaching for Christlikeness because they are saved—those inside the church. The common denominator is that both evangelism and discipling serve to resolve the problem of sin in the lives of people.⁸ Moreover, as the great Latin American evangelist Luis Palau argued, corrective discipling (esp. church discipline) helps to preserve church leaders and evangelists from having to deal with major sin inside the church—something that inevitably distracts from evangelism.⁹

The connection between discipling and evangelism is stronger, however, than sequential ordering, the correlation of interior and exterior, or even the avoidance of embarrassment or distraction for the evangelist. The New Testament makes the life of the disciplined Christian and church the primary apologetic for the truth of the proclaimed Gospel.¹⁰

Jesus laid down the essential connection between the fruit of discipling and evangelism in the Sermon on the Mount, saying, “In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16). Christ’s command comes as the climax to His claim that His disciples are as salt and light in the world (Matt 5:13–15). At first blush, this command seems to conflict with Jesus’ marginalization of public acts of piety, “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of people, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Matt 6:1). Yet there is no real conflict. In Matthew 6, Jesus is condemning the common practice of first century Jewish religious leaders, who made a public show of their religiosity (esp. almsgiving, prayer, and fasting), in order to be praised by men. The “good works” which Christ has in mind in Matthew 5:16 are

⁸J. Carl Laney, “The Biblical Practice of Church Discipline”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (1986): 353–54.

⁹Luis Palau, “Discipline in the Church”, *Discipleship Journal* 16 (July/Aug 1983), <http://www.navpress.com/EPubs/DisplayArticle/1/1.16.11.html> (Accessed 12 March 2008).

¹⁰Joseph Woodell, “Aesthetic Christian Apologetics” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006).

the kinds of things seen in the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–12), the character traits described in the “you have heard it said . . . but I say to you” formulae (Matt 5:21–48) and the description of the character corresponding to the words of the model prayer (Matt 6:19–7:6). In other words, the good works Christ affirms are those which flow naturally out of the Christlike character of the true disciple.¹¹

Christ’s expectation is that the result of such good works (i.e. Christlike character) shining like a light set on a hill is that non-Christians will come to “give glory to your Father in heaven.” The result is more significant than the grudging admission that God is at work in the life of the one who is becoming Christlike—it seems to extend to glorifying God to the point of conversion.¹² No one truly glorifies God short of the affirmation that “Jesus is Lord” (Phil 2:11).

Jesus’ affirmation that people would respond to the Christlikeness of His followers by coming to penitent faith in Himself does not undermine the requirement that the gospel be proclaimed verbally (Matt 10:7; Mark 16:15; Luke 4:18, 43). Jesus was a preacher of the gospel, and His life attracted many to His message. He did not allow any to rely on their lifestyle alone to fulfill their responsibility to proclaim the gospel.

Paul affirmed much the same apologetic strategy in Titus 2:7–8,

Set an example of good works yourself, with integrity and dignity in your teaching. Your message is to be sound beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about us.

The message which is to be beyond reproach is both the proclamation of the gospel itself and the correlation of the life of the preacher with that message. Paul is not content, however, to rest the apologetic burden on the life of the preacher alone. He extends it to the lives of all Christians, older men and women, younger women, young men, and even bondservants whose lives are to “adorn” the teaching of the gospel (Titus 2:2–10). For Paul, the preaching of the gospel is enhanced by the behavior of Christians. Their goal should be to “make the Gospel as attractive as possible for those around them” through their Christlikeness.¹³ The proof of the gospel, the silencing of its opponents, is in the lives that the Gospel transforms (Titus 2:11–14).

¹¹Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 128–33.

¹²*Ibid.*, 131–33.

¹³William Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 189.

The most famous apologetics passage is Peter's charge that Christians be ready to give an account of their hope in 1 Peter 3:15–16,

sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. (NASB)

Peter's exhortation to be ready to make a defense of the faith is embedded deeply within a passage that commends the discipleship which results in Christlikeness. His command to "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts," and "keep a good conscience" sets the defense of the faith firmly in the context of a Christlike life.¹⁴ It builds on Peter's restatement the apologetic strategy of Christ, mentioned in 1 Peter 2:12,

Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do evil, they may, by observing your good works, glorify God in a day of visitation.

Peter did not rule out reasoned defense of the faith, but neither did he emphasize it. Instead, he called upon Christians to defend the faith through the beauty of their Christlike character and behavior. The result Peter expected was the same that Christ expected. The beauty of Christlike behavior will prompt even opponents of the gospel to reconsider their negative response and ultimately to glorify God through coming to Christ for salvation.¹⁵

The teaching of Jesus, Paul, and Peter, the greatest preachers of the New Testament, demonstrates that the way in which the New Testament envisions the preached gospel becoming attractive to non-Christians is through the beauty of the Christlike character and behavior of Christians individually and churches collectively. They did not divorce the two, as if merely by living out good character one could claim to be doing evangelism. They tied proclamation and character, not only of individuals but of the church as a whole, into a package of compelling beauty.

¹⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 174. See also J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 189.

¹⁵Schreiner, 122–24.

The Apologetic of Beauty in History

History indicates that the apologetic of Christ and the apostles has met with considerable success when it has been conscientiously applied over time. Two test cases, from different ends of the history of the church, serve to demonstrate the attractiveness of the beauty of Christlikeness. The ante-Nicene church rested its apologetic defense for the truth of Christianity on the beauty of the church, especially on the Christlike love of Christians. More recently, Baptists in America took great pains to ensure the moral purity of their churches and the practical Christlikeness of their members.

The apologetic approach of the church in the first through fourth centuries, the period from the church's birth to the first ecumenical council of Nicea (325 AD), demonstrated dependence on the New Testament pattern. Jesus had commanded His disciples to let their "light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Many of the great apologists in this period, especially in the second century, were sufficiently confident in this strategy and in the lives of Christians whom they had never even met, to make the lives of Christians generally the basis of their defense of the faith against persecutors and emperors alike.

In 138 AD, Aristedes wrote his *Defense of Christianity to the Emperor Hadrian*. In it, he contrasted the power and moral beauty of Christ and His followers with that of the opponents of Christianity. He famously divided humanity into four "races": the barbarians, the Greeks, the Jews, and the Christians.¹⁶ For Aristedes, three of these followed religions that are irrational. The barbarians worship gods by offering them gifts. Yet these gods are so weak, that men must then guard the gifts so that they are not stolen by robbers.¹⁷ The Greeks were little better. They worshipped gods and goddesses who are merely morally degenerate humans writ large.¹⁸ While Jews follow revealed religion, Aristedes accused them of having succumbed to pride by coming to adore the Law and angels more than God Himself.¹⁹ Christians, however, were characterized by customs superior to any of the other three "races." Most significant among these was the love which bound Christians from many different backgrounds together.²⁰ Aristedes, then, made the moral character of Christians, especially their

¹⁶Aristedes, *Apologia* 2.1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alan Menzies, trans. H.R. Kay, Reprint Edition (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 9:264–65.

¹⁷Ibid., 3.2

¹⁸Ibid., 8.1–13.8

¹⁹Ibid., 3.2

²⁰Ibid., 15.2–10

Christlike love for each other, the core of his defense of the faith.

The author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* (mid to late second century)²¹ also employed the same basic logic as Christ and the apostles. He argued that the Christian faith is superior to all others because it alone comes from God. Everything else is the product of human wisdom. For proof, the *Epistle* offered the “wonderful and confessedly striking method of life” found in Christ’s followers. They do not commit infanticide. They share their resources and love all men in spite of persecution. They return blessing for cursing.²²

Most impressive, however, is *A Plea for the Christians* written by Athenagoras (176). In this work Athenagoras answered the charge that Christians were atheists because they denied the existence of the pagan gods. Though he offered a series of defenses, this chapter culminated in what he undoubtedly considered his strongest argument—the lives of Christians. The summation of his case for Christianity against the philosophers is sufficiently striking to warrant recounting in full.

Allow me here to lift up my voice boldly in loud and audible outcry, pleading as I do before philosophic princes. For who of those that reduce syllogisms, and clear up ambiguities, and explain etymologies, or of those who teach homonyms and synonyms, and predicaments and axioms, and what is the subject and what the predicate, and who promise their disciples by these and such like instructions to make them happy: who of them have so purged their souls as, instead of hating their enemies, to love them; and, instead of speaking ill of those who have reviled them (to abstain from which is of itself an evidence of no mean forbearance), to bless them; and to pray for those who plot against their lives? On the contrary, they never cease with evil intent to search out skillfully the secrets of their art, and are ever bent on working some ill, making the art of words and not the exhibition of deeds their business and profession. But among us you will find uneducated persons, and artisans, and old women, who, if they are unable in words to prove the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit

²¹Dating for this letter is uncertain, with some scholars favoring dates as early as 130 AD and others ranging as late as the early 200’s AD. Nevertheless, it is fairly certain that the document derives from the ante-Nicene period we are considering. See David Freedman, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) col.1 s.v. “Aristides,” by Robert Grant.

²²Mathetes, *Epistle to Diognetus* 5, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. anonymous, Reprint Edition (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:26.

the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth: they do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give to those that ask of them, and love their neighbors as themselves.²³

Athenagoras, like the apologists who came before him, offered as his strongest proof for the validity of the Christian faith, the virtue to be found in the lives of Christians. His contrast of poor and uneducated Christians with highly sophisticated philosophers is all the sharper in light of the elitist claims for the power of philosophy to develop virtue in the lives of those with the leisure and intelligence to pursue it.²⁴

None of these apologetic works are even thinkable apart from the firm assurance of these authors that their claims could be sustained by any interested party in the life of virtually any Christian and any church one might choose to examine! That these authors were willing to risk staking their case for the truth of the faith on such claims bears strong witness to the thorough-going commitment to Christlikeness and thus to discipling across the church in the ante-Nicene period.²⁵

In this same period of time, the Church experienced the most explosive period of growth in its history. Stark estimates the growth rate in this period at about forty percent per decade.²⁶ In less than 300 years, Christianity went from being a minority Jewish sect, to being a large enough target to warrant persecution, to being the largest single religion in the Empire, to being a sufficiently large percentage of the population (especially in cities) to prompt the emperor Constantine to adopt it as the primary tool for unifying the Empire.

More recently, Baptists in the United States also took a holistic approach to discipling very seriously, especially before the twentieth century. Greg Wills has shown that in the 80 years between 1781 and 1860, Georgia Baptists alone exercised the most serious form of corrective

²³Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*, 11, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, eds. Johannes Quasten and Joseph Plumpe, trans. Joseph Crehan (New York: Newman, 1955), 23:41–42.

²⁴Blount, "Apologetics and the Ordinances of the Church," 72–78.

²⁵Examined from another perspective, the work of Rodney Stark connects the dramatic growth of Christianity in the ante-Nicene period in part to its willingness to risk death in epidemics in order to fulfill the command to care for the sick. While Stark does not describe this as Christlikeness, the willingness to risk death in order to care for those who are at least technically your enemies surely constitutes a high expression of likeness to the One who laid down His life for us while we were yet enemies of God (Rom 5:6–11). See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), esp. 73–94.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 7.

discipline (exclusion) on more than 40,000 church members. Nationally, the reported expulsions by Baptists amounted to one or two percent of their membership annually; formal church discipline was exercised on about three to four percent of members annually.²⁷

Wills notes that Baptist churches in the United States experienced the greatest growth in the periods in which they practiced corrective discipling. Earlier Baptists maintained strict discipline—and grew at twice the rate of the population of the United States. By contrast, he notes, Southern Baptists since 1960 have virtually abandoned consistent, formal corrective discipling, and have barely been able to stay ahead of the growth in the general population.²⁸

Conclusion

The gospel makes claims which fall harshly on the ears of most non-Christians; you are a sinner (Rom 3:23); you stand under the judgment and wrath of God (Rom 6:23); and, there is nothing you can do to gain God's favor (Isa 64:6). Though the gospel is also attractive in itself as "good news," its beauty is seen more clearly, its attractive power felt more keenly, in the context of lives transformed to Christlikeness.

The transformation from a depraved character to one which images the character of Christ is achieved through the discipling which teaches and encourages obedience to the commands of Christ and conformity to His character. This is the task of all Christians, though it is also a non-negotiable requirement for those the church calls to pastor. Discipling requires the constructive communication of both the "what" and the "how" of following Christ. No less necessary, however, is the operation of corrective discipling, both informal and formal. Refusal to help brothers and sisters who are falling into sin to deal successfully with that sin and return to growing in Christlikeness is nothing less than a refusal of Christ's command to love each other as He has loved us (Gal 6:1–2).

Both the experience of Baptists in the United States and the ante-Nicene church suggests that when the church takes the task of discipling seriously, fulfilling both the constructive and corrective aspects of discipling, the long-term result is the numerical growth of the church.

²⁷Greg Wills, "The Church: Baptists and Their Churches in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life*, ed. Mark Dever (Washington DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 26. Greg Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1789–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁸Ibid., 28. Indeed, as Wills notes acerbically, Southern Baptist numbers in the post-1960 era are artificially inflated by the fact that it is "much easier to become a Baptist and almost impossible to become an ex-Baptist" today than it was in the earlier centuries.

The Christlikeness of Christians individually and collectively provides a powerful apologetic that enhances the success of the preaching of the gospel. It should come as no surprise that the connection between evangelism and discipling made by Christ and the apostles should bear the fruit God has promised. The beauty of Christ seen in the lives of those who reflect His character is attractive, especially in contrast to the ugliness of a sin-scarred world.