

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Implementation Phase for Selected
Micro-project Assignment**

A Paper Submitted to

Submitted to Dr. James Zabloski,

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

Micro-Project III: Personal Engagement

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by

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Description of Implementation Phase Activities

This micro-project purposed to create a YouTube channel where a series of videos would be hosted that would discuss how the early church operated and had such a world-changing impact upon the civilization of their day.

The YouTube Channel can be accessed by going to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRWErups9AWKO-7lxuUVEOw> or by searching YouTube for the “Early Church Vibe” channel.

The ministry problem that this micro-project seeks to address is to determine why the modern church does not have the same impact in the current culture and to seek to present concepts that would enable a modern day believer to become a change agent in their ministries where God has placed them.

I created five videos that addressed a series of topics. The first video was an introduction of the problem and proposed that there was a solution that could be implemented. The second video focused upon devotion to God as was clearly described by Jesus as He spoke with the Pharisees in Matt 22: 36 – 40.¹ Jesus was quoting Deut 6 when asked what the most important commandment was from Scripture. The third video discusses the need to love others as God loves. Jesus gave a New Commandment in Matt 22: 38-40 and described how we need to love others like as love ourselves. The fourth video raised the idea that we should be adept at communing with God and live a life empowered by the Holy Spirit. The fifth video recapped the prior four videos and explained how the prior concepts all worked together to give a believer clarity about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

The videos were created with cameras that recorded in 4K resolution. I edited the videos to include consistent opening graphics, graphic overlays to provide names and Scripture references, end graphics that provided links to other videos and the playlist on the channel as well as a subscription link. Finally, I added an audio soundtrack that underlaid the video.

Transcript 1 – Early Church Vibe

My name is Pastor Curtis and I'd like to invite you to join me in a discussion about what it would be like if we could operate as believers in the early church did. I've been on a journey where I came out of secular life and uh became part of a pastoral team at a large church in in that journey. God had done amazing things too, changed my perspective from being a guy who is a believer in working at my job to realizing there was more that I needed to accomplish based on what God had specifically challenged me to do. And so I've been working in a large church format now for 15 years to different large churches and what I can tell you is that the ministers that I get to work with are passionate about sharing the love of Jesus Christ with others, trying to explain to others their need for Christ and to live in a regenerated state as a new believer and to help equip them with the tools they need, that we learned from scripture to help us live our life in a way that brings honor and glory to God. And yet as we, we work what we have, you know, my observation is we're just not seeing the growth that appeared to have happened in the early charge and that's a little confusing because the early church didn't have a codified bible. Like we have a tremendous resource that help us understand what God is revealing to us through scripture. We get amazing organizations that have just great efficiencies from being a large church that uses its resources to reach others and to share the gospel. And yet, we're not seeing explosive growth, like the early church had, where it went from a group of persecuted individuals who were basically chased out of Jerusalem to, essentially in just a couple of

generations, completely dominating the roman civilization, which was the worldwide uh, government of their time. And so how did this small group of believers have this amazing impact on a large population? And certainly we could all say, well, God, that's how things like that happen. And I agree with that, but I believe we have access in the same way that they did. I don't believe that God is withholding favor from us. I believe we are doing something different. And so we should look back at what they were doing and say, how could that help us to minister to the world we live in? So I want to propose a few ideas to you in this video and others that will come of things that we should examine and say, how can we apply maybe a new paradigm to what we're trying to do, And it doesn't matter what kind of format your church has and the way that you and the community of believers, that you fellowship with our operating in what matters is what principles are we following and how devoted are we to those principles? I believe that's where we've gotten off track. And if we can get back to really just doing what the bible um, asked us to do, I think we're going to see tremendous change. Um, even as I say, that these are going to be profoundly difficult changes to make, because we're going to be fighting culture and a lot of things that we've already assimilated into our lifestyles. We're going to have to really examine and be willing to set aside, because I believe some of those things are keeping us from being the people that God wants us to be, to influence the world around us. So as these videos continue, I pray that you will give comments and join in the discussion uh, that will help all of us as we try to get that early church vibe to get back to being people. That just gets to see God worked mightily constantly. And because of his work, we see others uh, come to a saving knowledge of Christ and then we have the opportunity to join with them and disciple them to where they as well. We'll get to experience the same excitement that we have. So, look forward to sharing these concepts with you as we go forward.

Transcript 2 – Early Church Vibe

Hello. I'm Pastor Curtis. Thank you for joining me as we continue this discussion about how to apply some of the thought processes of the early church to the ministry that we pursue today. In the last video, I shared that I've served on the senior staff of two large evangelical churches. Both of those churches were growing and we were seeing the numbers of people increase over time. But the growth was relatively slow and I would say we would call it attitude. It wasn't explosive growth like the early church experienced. My experience in the corporate, in the corporate world was that I was an executive there. Whenever we were trying to pursue our goals, we would really study what, what are the key drivers, what are the pieces of information we need to know to make the changes that would make a difference. I started to apply some of those concepts as I worked within the church. My background was as a turnaround person. I would go into broken organizations and, and look at their fundamentals and say, okay, what is their key to success according to the normal ways people operate? So as I need to do to understand change, to modify the way we work. I watched our work and I think one of the things many of us as individual believers are missing is a clarity about what it is God wants us to accomplish. What is our mission? As I hope all of us would do, I went to Scripture. So Lord, what's my mission? What am I supposed to be doing? And, and I found really a couple, no, three things that jumped out at me that I think are key for us as believers to grab ahold and say, okay, I've got to get this part right before I can take my next steps in my development as a follower of Jesus Christ. The first, I would point you to Deuteronomy 6:4 - 5. In those verses, when we go to the New Testament, Jesus refers to these verses, whenever the Pharisees came to him and we're basically trying to trip him up. I said, what's the most important commandment? What's the thing that's the biggest deal? Jesus basically pointed them back to Deuteronomy 6 and in

these verses it says “Hear O Israel the Lord, our God, The Lord is one. You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind”. This passage is called the *Shema* and it's a passage that devout Jews will recite every morning and every evening. It's part of their practice. That little piece of Scripture is talking about something that I'm going to call devotion. All right. So, we are meant to be a people that are devoted to God, not merely knowledgeable about God. He is supposed to be the center of our life and that encompasses our thoughts all day long. You know that verse continues in verses 6 through 9. Basically, the passage tells us “These words, I command you today too shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your Children. You shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise, you shall find them um as a sign on your hand and they shall be as front list between your eyes, and you shall write them on the door post of your home and on your gates.” So again, as we continue to unpack that, we see, He's saying, I want this to be central to who you are, and as I've rubbed shoulders with other believers and I look at my own life, it is apparent to me that we let other things crowd into our life to where God becomes a thing. We know that and I'm sorry to refer to Him as a thing, but we don't embrace the relationship to the point where it is all-encompassing. It's what we're constantly thinking about and that seems like, well, is that realistic what Jesus is proposing whenever He said, that's the greatest commitment? Is that what we should be doing? Well, I would ask that back to you and say, Okay, the Creator said this to us, right, it's exposed in Deuteronomy 6 and now we come over into Matthew and Jesus is restating. I think it might be important, it might be something that we're supposed to build our life around as believers. So what does that mean that I do? Does that mean I move God up in front of family? Yes. Do I move God up in front of my responsibilities to my business? Yes. Is it more important than my work? Yes. The

answer to this all is it's the most important thing, it's the greatest commandment, love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, so that's not a thing that you can kind of sort of do, you've got to go all Yeah. So as believers, we have to step back and say, is that where I'm at? Have I really given myself completely over to God or am I existing in a different way? What I mean by that is, you know, if we read through Scripture again and look at the passage that talks about the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and said, I followed all your commands, right? So I've gone to church every weekend, I've been on time, I've tried. I'm doing all these things that everybody told me. This is what you need to do and yet you know what else should I do, teacher, and Jesus looked at him and said you should sell everything you have and follow me. So now that a that was a pretty challenging word to give a "fella". Of course, it tells us in that passage that he walked away sad because he had great wealth. The disciples came to Jesus afterwards and said, Lord, how can anybody get into heaven if that's what they have to do? That's interesting to me that they made that statement because that's what they had done. They had walked away from their careers to follow Jesus. So even in their own lives they had made a choice to follow him, but they didn't quite understand who He was. He was a great teacher, but at that time they hadn't quite embraced the idea that this was God they were talking to. So bring it back to our lives. Are you willing to give up everything for Him? Because the problem was not that the young man had great wealth, it's that the great wealth had him. He was confronted with God and he had to make a choice between stuff and God, he chose stuff. I would contend that for many of us that the challenge we have is not the action of selling everything, but to really get into our hearts and say, I choose you God over everything else. I'm going to absolutely devote myself to you. Because I think we all know people who are truly devoted, they behave differently, They don't pick whatever subject that comes up when somebody is devoted. You know, people who decided to

become Olympians, alright. It's not enough just to be an amazing athlete. They want to be the very best in their sport in the world and they totally devote themselves to preparing their bodies and their minds to compete. So, it's all for a crown. That we all know you became an Olympian and the next year probably you can't win it again because of the intensity of the competition, but they're so devoted they give everything to it. So, I want to use that as maybe an example to us to say, can you devote your life to Christ to a level that you're willing to put everything else aside to just focus. To say I want you, I want a relationship with you. I'm going to devote everything I have. I would contend for most of us that doesn't mean we're going to devote or get rid of every bit of resource we have, but it's aligning our hearts to say, I seek you with everything. I seek you and what I believe, we will see God is just and faithful and He's going to come and meet us. That's what we're going to talk about more about in the next lesson. So, the first thing to remember, we have to be devoted, we have to give it all. God bless you.

Transcript 3 – Early Church Vibe

Hello and welcome again. This is Pastor Curtis and we're continuing our discussion on the early church vibe. How can we embrace some of the ideas that were used by the early church to impact the ministry that we are pursuing today to reach the lost world around us? From the last video, we talked about how devotion was one of the things that we have to really investigate ourselves on and make sure that we are clear in our devotion to God. We recognize His sovereignty and we are thinking about Him when we wake up in the morning, whenever we're going through our day, and then as we go to bed at night. We're constantly sharing with others what we know about His Word and how it impacts our lives. We also discussed the fact that it is reasonable for God to ask for that. He's clear. He tells us that in Deuteronomy 6, Jesus mentions it again in Matthew 22. So, the Question is, are we clear? Do we get He demands all from us? He

wants our hearts, He's not willing to share. We can go back to Exodus and the ten commandments. That's kind of like the number one rule is that God will not allow us to have any other god before him. So that's basically asking are we making anything equal to an importance to God or is He our sole priority? Is that reasonable? Yes, I think so. Now, the second thing Jesus shared what we call the New Commandment in Matthew 22: 39 - 40. It says again, He was continuing the thought where He said love the Lord, your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. And now He's saying, "and a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. And on these two commandments depend all the law and all the prophets." Okay, So that's a pretty significant statement made by Jesus. Who is God! He's saying this is big. All right. Can we hear? Okay? He just gave us, love God with everything you got. Now I want you to love others. So He's telling us a key concept of being a disciple for Him is to develop our ability to love now in the world that I live here. I suspect you as well, we have a habit of choosing people we want to love and choosing people we don't want to love. We will have all sorts of rule sets for it. It can be all sorts of things that we run through that criteria. But I would tell you that what all that is just us being competitive and selfish. The reason I say that is most people can probably say they're okay when it comes to racism, for instance. So most people will voice that "I really don't have a problem with racism." But, if somebody moves into their town and gets, you know, creates competition for work, it doesn't matter what race, what skin color they have. They will become a threat and people will get upset, right? Because they were competing for resources. I would contend most racial issues are basically lodged in what I call tribalism. I'm okay with the people I'm okay with. But if you're not one of those people, then I'm going to have a resistance to you because you're after my stuff, right? So we go back to what is God expecting us. Number one, He says, Hey, I want you to be devoted to Me, right? Which means you also, as we study

scripture, you're looking to Me for resource. You're not competing with everybody else. You look to Me for resource, I will order your path, I will set your ways so it changes our mindset. Do I need to compete with others. I don't. But what I do have to do is I have to crack open my heart and say and there's room for you in here and I choose you because you're my brother and sister because God created you. All men have value and so I'm going to value you because He values you and how much am I going to value? I'm going to value, like I value me. All right now, that's a pretty significant challenge to say I'm going to love you like I love me. Jesus states it clearly here, that's His expectation. That's what it means to be a disciple is we become people who love. In other places, He tells us as believers, that people will know we're believers because of the way that we love each other, that we are just so defined by love. So I ask you to look at your heart, say, is that who you are? Are you following Christ's example of being a person who loves? Who isn't easily offended. That you can quickly get past offense. To say, because I love. I think if you do that, then we have two things that have happened here. We became intensely devoted to God. So it's ordering our steps and it's changing who we are as regenerated believers in Christ and now our focus on others becomes very accepting. We become loving towards them and we want to help them and part of that help is to help them understand who Christ is. To understand their need for salvation and that there is an afterlife that is more important really than this life. When we can embrace those ideas and just make them core to who we are, I think we're going to start to see significant impact to the world around us. Think about these things. God bless you.

Transcript 4 – Early Church Vibe

Welcome, I'm Pastor Curtis and I welcome you to Early Church Vibe where we are discussing what it would take for us to be able to operate the way the early church operated. This week

we're going to continue our discussion looking into the things that define purpose for us as believers. We've talked about devotion, we've talked about having a heart of love and this time we're going to talk about the, the imperative that Jesus gave us, which was to be people who were working To spread the gospel to the rest of the world. So in Matthew 28: 18 - 20, we have a passage, it's called the Great Commission by many. In that passage, Jesus said this, he said, "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age." So this passage gives us great clarity that we're supposed to be as disciples, people who are sharing what we know about God and inviting others to have this saving knowledge of Jesus, and it's not just having knowledge you might remember in that passage, it says teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. So we are supposed to embrace what Jesus has told us and then they make it active in our life and then be able to help others be able to do the exact same thing. So it is very much an active thing to do. Now there is a part of this passage that's important, a lot of people will focus and go back to the Greek and they define the imperative to be go and I would like to offer that, I believe the imperative actually is on make disciples. So the go part I think has led a lot of people who believe they have to leave where they are to go reach people and to be able to disciple. I would actually contend the people you are supposed to reach are the people right where you're at and certainly if you were to be extremely effective and saw God move mightily, it could be that you're going to have to leave where you are because everybody knows Christ and there's no opportunity to further develop others. If that's where you found yourself, then certainly I think there's an imperative to go and expand your reach, but I think too often people are defeated by this idea that, well, I don't really feel like I can leave all that I have and

the relationships I have and all the investment that I've made in others. I don't think it would be right to leave here. It gives us a way to kind of step out of being a people who disciples and evangelizes and I would offer that's actually exactly what a disciple does, but you don't have to go anywhere to do it. Right where you're at is the mission field that God has put you and you can be highly effective right there. It requires intentionality on your part. It requires you sitting at the feet of Jesus and showing him your absolute devotion and as you do that, I believe that He will empower you, the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say. He will continue to disciple and work to sanctify you so that your lifestyle and your thoughts are attractive to those who don't know Jesus or who need to know more about Him in developing themselves as disciples. So, it's very important that you have clarity about that. There's a great book that was written by Dave Early and Rod Dempsey and the book is called "*Discipleship is*". I highly recommend, you can find it on things like Amazon and download it to Kindle or have it shipped to you. This book does a great job of reminding us what it means to engage in discipleship and really one of the profound statements that I kind of came away from that book with is that the way you know if you're a disciple is, if you've discipled someone. If you've never discipled anyone, then you haven't engaged in discipleship. You're a person who maybe has taken, but you haven't given. I think that's a tremendous definition, it really helps give clarity that we should be a people who are involved in helping others and that it becomes kind of what we're known for. That we have a legacy of people that we've made a difference with. So, I highly encourage you to grab ahold of the Great Commission and make it your own and do what Jesus has asked you to do. Disciple others, teach them all that he has commanded as you live that out in your own life. Next time we'll talk about more um actions that we can take to enhance our ability to be a disciple, God bless you.

Transcript 5 – Early Church Vibe

Hello, I'm Pastor Curtis and I welcome you to this discussion about how do we find that early church vibe and apply it to our lives as we minister for Jesus Christ. In this video, I'm going to sum up what we've been talking about in the last few videos. We've talked about three key things that God has provided to us to give us direction in our lives. What is it that we should be doing as believers? The first that I proposed was that we should embrace the great commandment that Jesus gave where he was quoting from, Deuteronomy 6, the *Shema*, in this passage that talks about having God as the prime, kind of to use star trek lingo, the prime directive in our life. That we are going to start every day, thinking about Him as we go through our day. All of our actions will be based upon what He has directed us to do. We will contemplate His Word and how to apply it to the situations that we're experiencing. Then finally, as we go to bed, we're going to remember the fact that He's given us life and thank him again. So, we would live a life of total devotion and then Jesus continued, and gave us the next thought, which is the new commandment where He said, love your neighbor as yourself. So, He's giving us a clear message to say, I want you to develop a heart of love and a love that is really amazing and that you're going to love others the way that you love yourself. You would put them as an equal priority in your life. For most of us, that is not how we approach life and our culture has taught us it's about you, right? It's all about making your life work, and then if you can help others, that's a good thing, but really it should mainly be about you. Jesus is turning that around on us, it's like, no I want you to love others, like you love yourself, so be very aware of their needs. He does say like you love yourself, so He's not saying don't love yourself because He wants us to be able to be taken care of and to work in a way that provides a good stable life, but He's saying don't get lost in it to where it becomes all about you and you forget about others.

Then the third thing He shares is the great commission where He's actually said, I need you to share what you know with others, be proactive and then work to help them become disciples, like you are so it's very clear what He's asked us to do. He wants us to teach them to obey all that He commands and implicit in that is that we obey all that He commands. So, with those three things I want to unpack it just a little more with a challenge to say, first of all in devotion, are you spending time just with God? And what I mean by that is not you know, I hope that you're starting your day or ending your day by praying, but have you learned to hear him? One of the things I would tell you is He absolutely will talk to you. The Holy spirit lives in us. He is there to direct and guide us and you should expect to hear from Him. I often have people come to me and say man I just, I don't ever hear from God and I'm kind of confused why you guys say you hear from Him. I would tell you it's a learned skill and it's one you can learn and it starts with sitting in a place where you can hear God. What I mean by that is get, you know, get to a place of worship, maybe you use some great music that would help you ponder and kind of communing with God and then instead of coming with a list of what you want, ask Him what He wants, just sit and listen. And then whenever you hear that quiet voice that's giving you ideas, my encouragement to you is write it down. There's a concept called journaling. It's really helpful to help you learn to hear God's voice and you write down what He says and then here's the tricky part. The way you'll learn to hear Him and know that you heard Him is do what you heard. So, if He brings someone to mind. One of the kind of things I'm trying to learn to be better at all the time is whenever God put someone on my mind, I make an agenda to contact that person. I'm going to pray for him, but I'm also just going to talk to them to let them know, I care, I love them. What can I do to help? What's your story today? So that's the way that you can enhance your ability to hear God. And not only that, it starts to give us direction for daily life. What do I

do? I promise God has a very specific plan for you every day, if you'll listen to it. And doesn't mean for all of us that we have to go into full time ministry paid ministry? Not what I'm saying at all. Matter of fact, we go back to the Early Church. There were very, very few paid ministers. So really, it's always been about believers being the ministers and folks like myself, our job is to equip, we are here to help you. Too often, unfortunately, throughout history, the clergy ended up taking away the opportunity for people to minister. Well, that's not the way the Early Church did it. I want you to know that you're a minister, you can make a difference, but it starts with your heart being in a place where you care about that. I just want to invest in others. Finally, it took along that concept. You know, this love that we are brought to through the new commandment should open our hearts to those that are believers. First of all, that we would be outrageous in our love for each other. That we would we do our very best to care for each other. We always choose to believe in them and that we would do what we can in support of them. So we basically, we enter into the family of God. So we are loyal to each other, like family. So Jesus was talking in a time frame where everybody understood family to be a close communal group who lived together. The generations didn't spread out the way we often do in today's culture. They lived together. The parents would raise up the kids to take over the family business. They teach them everything they knew, and then they'd step out of the way to let the kids be the ones who would lead while they stayed there in support. Envision your church family like that, where you just say I'm going to invest in them, I'm going to care about them, I'm going to do all I can for them and I'm going to expect that they do the same thing for me. So the idea of being devoted to the family rather than to yourself, changes everything and if you can get your community of believers to do that for each other, I think you're going to see something amazing happen and your ministry opportunities explode. So as we continue that thought, understand Unity matters. Jesus said He

wanted us to be defined by our love for each other. So, it's very important that we grab ahold of that idea. The last concept I'd like to share with you is the idea that as we exhibit devotion to God, as we are working in unity with each other as believers and giving priority to loving the people around us, the last thing that is vital for us to really engage in that early church vibe is that we work under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It's important to remember that when you were regenerated as a believer, The Holy Spirit came to live within you. He's with you 24/7 all of your life. He has things to share with you. He has correction to give us when we get off track and also comfort to give us when we need comfort. So, God living in us gives us a tremendous opportunity as we commune with God to allow him to empower our work. Remember everything you do is to be done in the name of Jesus, and what I mean by that is you keep your hands off of it. You recognize it's Him that's working and you get to witness what He does. He chooses to work by using us. But then we have to recognize it is Him at work, especially in other people's lives. So living in a place where we recognize the power of the Holy Spirit means that we can start to live a life of boldness and we get to see incredible miracles take place as we stand in the presence of God working. It's not us. I'll share some personal testimony. I grew up in a Southern Baptist context and in our churches that that I grew up in, we didn't talk about the Holy Spirit very much. Everybody acknowledged the Trinity, but nobody was quite sure, what do you do with the Holy Spirit? Which is amusing because He lives in us, right? What do you do? So as time has gone on, I've been given the opportunity more than once to pray for people who are very ill and I've learned in my role as a pastor and an elder the concept of laying on hands, anointing people with oil and then believing that God intends to do something. Now I can't direct God to do anything. That's my personal belief. He's sovereign. I'm not and He knows more. It could be, I mean, we know all throughout history, people have died, right? That's the

common condition. So that doesn't mean they die because God dislikes them. It's just what is going to happen to all of us. In God's word, it even tells us that. The difference I would say is that there are times when He takes special action to make a change in what appears to be going on and it's based upon a believer acting with belief in God. I believe you can do anything and then we just let the Spirit work. It is my testimony to you. I have seen people healed. It had nothing to do with my ability to heal, it was all God doing what He does in His power, His sovereignty. So that's just one example, I wanted to give you some personal testimony, so I've seen this happen and I believe you have the ability to do the same thing I did, you are as capable and approved by God as I am and so I encourage you to activate your faith to get dynamically involved in loving other people and just show everyone how devoted you are to God through your actions and through your life. One of the things you know that I encourage you to do if you ever have a chance is to read the book called *Discipleship* by Dietrich Boenhoffer. It's an incredible book written back in the period of World War II and one of the things that he did was bring up an idea of cheap grace where people buy into this story that all we have to do is intellectually acknowledge God exists and say the words that we are making Him lord of our lives and you will be saved. That's cheap grace. Why do you think that would work without you having to invest your time, your energy, your devotion to God? Why would you think that would be enough? I would think anybody who ponders that for a moment realizes that's probably selling God short, thinking He just made this stupid easy to where there's really nothing required of you. You can live any way you want to as long as you say those words. It doesn't work that way, guys. If you're saying why doesn't my life exhibit lots of power and why don't I get to see these amazing things? I ask you, are you living a life of devotion? Are you focused on loving others? Do you allow the Holy Spirit to work through you to make a difference with others? I

think if we can learn to do that, we will see our church has become very much like the early church and we will live with that early church vibe. God bless you. Thank you.

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