

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHIRST: IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR CHURCHES IN AMERICAN

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

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By

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST: IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR CHURCHES IN AMERICAN

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012

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Various research findings on spiritual formation in the American church reveal that the current state of making disciples of Jesus Christ who are observing all that Jesus has commanded is woefully grim. This author believes what we have in place for making disciples is inadequate, unimplemented, or both. The purpose of this thesis project is to explain the current state of spiritual formation in the American Church and the reasons why it falls short of God's desire and design. This effort will include and incorporate research from at least 20 churches to see what discipleship systems they are using, if any, as well as the success of such systems. Research modalities would include survey and interview of church leaders. This author will recommend a system which would make churches to revitalize and make steady numerical and spiritual growth.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICM	International Charismatic Mission
NMC	New Member's Class
Evang.	Evangelism
Gps.	Groups
PM	Per Month
Trgn.	Training
Devp.	Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

If a typical church leader in America is asked how his or her church is fairing, his/her response would probably be based on some quantitative assessment. For instance, the typical leader would make known the number of worshippers that attended the worship service on Sundays, and would likely want to determine the church's buoyancy by the dollar amount on the church's budget that was passed for the year, the large chunk of which is likely to be used for salaries, remunerations, and church maintenance. Another aspect of the church that the pastor would not want to overlook is how effective their program has been in attracting people most of who are likely to be worshippers from other neighboring churches. When these and similar criteria of the pastor's assessment are considered to be above average, he would probably rate the church's overall performance as very impressive.

From this typical example of a pastor's assessment of a church's performance, it could be seen clearly that today's church has missed out completely on understanding its basic criteria for assessing its functionality and assignment. The Great Commission is described as the church's "marching order,"¹ specifying its responsibility to "go and make disciples of nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."²

¹ Terry Bowland, *Make Disciples* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publications, 1999), 18.

² Matt 28:19 KJV

This divine statement has four elements in it: first, “go,” second, “make disciples,” third, “baptize,” and fourth, “teach.” According to Terry Bowland, “of the four elements, only one is imperative (a verb of command), while the other three are participles.”³ The command is “make disciples.” This is the sole responsibility of the church, and everything the church does and the assessment of its performance should be determined by this overarching goal. Therefore, though quantitative assessment of the church could be useful for some other purposes, the best assessment of determining the growth, vibrancy, and impact of the church should be based on how effective the church is in making disciples. George Barna, an evangelistic researcher states, “The strength and influence of the church is wholly dependent upon its commitment to true discipleship. Providing transformed lives, and seeing those lives reproduced in others, is a core challenge to believers and to the local church”⁴

There is no doubt that some churches give some attention to disciple making through some purposely designed training programs. However, the quality of the disciples they make is another issue entirely. It is doubtful if such disciples could stand the test of *true* disciples as scripturally prescribed. Towns, Stetzer and Birds in their book, *11 Innovations in the Local Church*, make the following observation,

The definition of ‘success’ in the typical American church is to lead a new believer to come to church, give a tithe and take on a job assisting somehow in the church’s ministry. Most of our discipleship processes are intended to produce those three things. They are important, but they can (and often do) occur without the necessity of a life-changing impact within the Christian.⁵

³ Bowland, 18.

⁴ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press 2001), 24.

⁵ Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church* (Ventura: CA, Regal Books, 2007), 45.

The church's loss of focus of its primary responsibility, and its shoddy attitude in raising true disciples has culminated in the loss of its vibrancy and relevance in the society. As a result, 80 to 85 per cent of the churches in America are in decline.⁶ Glen and Gary McIntosh are on the same page when they affirm that 340,000 out of 400,000 Protestant churches in America have plateaued, in a state of decline, or dying, and therefore needed some degree of spiritual renewal.⁷

It is therefore, this author's contention that churches are failing because they are not teaching people to observe all that Jesus has commanded. Until they redirect their efforts to the main assignment of raising disciples, there is no amount of attractive programs or other efforts that could make them get out of their state of decline and irrelevance. The purpose of this project therefore, is to relate the church's pitiable condition to its neglect of the Great Commission of making disciples, which has made the church fall short of God's desire and design. In order to restore the church back on its divine course of operation this author intends to design and recommend for implementation a system whereby churches could move their congregation from nominal membership to spiritual maturity.

⁶ Aubrey Malphurs, *A New Kind of Church: Understanding Models of Ministry for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 75.

⁷ Glen Martin and Gary McIntosh, *Creating Community: Deeper Fellowship through Small Group Ministry*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 2.

Statement of the Problem

This project will present a descriptive study of the effectiveness of the church in making disciples in fulfillment of the Great Commission. The author believes that many church leaders have completely lost focus of their assignment to make disciples; and the program of discipleship which those who make the attempt to do have in place is inadequate, unimplemented or both. The consequence is the declining or dying state of the churches. Studies confirm, “Some churches have plateaued, and in decline while others are in the last stage of dying.”⁸ Malphurs describes the state of health of a typical church as desperate, and therefore, needs urgent attention. He metaphorically presents the spiritual state of the church when he writes, “If the typical church were to go to a hospital emergency room, the attending physician would likely admit it to the hospital and put it on life support.”⁹ He buttressed his statement with the study, which discovered that four out of five churches in America had plateaued, or declining.¹⁰ He further projected a gloomy prognosis that of the 400,000 churches in the country, as many as 350,000 would close their doors.”¹¹

It is generally believed that America is fast becoming a post-Christian nation with declining interest in biblical Christian matters. Malphurs attributes the fault to the church and not the people because, according to him, “the people are interested in spiritual

⁸ Malphurs, 17.

⁹ Ibid., 17 - 18.

¹⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹¹ Ibid., 19.

matters, only they regard today's churches as out of touch and therefore, have no answer to their spiritual, physical and emotional needs."¹² The overall picture of the church in America does not point to the ability of the church to fulfill its God-given duty of "making disciples of all nations."¹³ For the church to be restored back to health and be made relevant in the society, Barna recommends that it should be "restored back to the position of producing zealots for Christ who would be able to transform the world."¹⁴ He describes zealots as "individuals who are intractably devoted to knowing, loving, and serving Him with all their heart, mind, strength, and soul."¹⁵

It is therefore, this author's contention that fulfilling the Great Commission goes beyond winning some souls for Christ. It involves developing those souls to spiritual maturity, and making them stand out as Christians of godly character and disciple-makers who are poised to transform their world for Christ. This is the focus of this project with the specific recommendations on how this process of discipleship could be accomplished.

Some theologians believe that the church as a living organism has a life span of forty years from its birth through maturity, to its eventual decline and ultimate death. This is much likely to happen when a church has no system of progressive discipleship and succession. However, when the church adopts a system of continuity in developing leader and disciples, it becomes a cycle of constant growth and progress which has no point of decline or termination. Paul's advice to Timothy makes this point relevant and clearer.

¹² Ibid., 25.

¹³ Matt 28:19 KJV

¹⁴ Barna, 11.

¹⁵ Ibid.

“And the things that thou hast heard of among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”¹⁶ In this text, Paul is advising Timothy to create a cycle of disciples, which is to guarantee succession of leaders at every generation.

Statement of Limitations

In approaching a project of this nature, there is bound to be several limitations. First, this project is descriptive and not prescriptive. Therefore, the study looks at the problem from a relatively broad vantage point and may not necessarily be applicable to any particular church situation. In other words, the study does not intend to present a formulaic model of church growth through disciplining people, which would be applicable to all churches irrespective of location or culture. As cautioned by Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, “We don’t suggest that you should plan to model your church after any or all of these churches (referring to the eleven church models). While some churches may be revitalized by following one of these models, your church may stagnate or even split because some of these models are too foreign for the people in your church.”¹⁷ Thus, any suggested model is not a one-size-fits-all kind of model.

Secondly, this project is not necessarily about church administration and leadership. It is predicated on the assumption that a bilateral relationship between the spiritual and the sociological will facilitate growth but it does not prescribe or explain the

¹⁶ 2 Tim 2:2 KJV.

¹⁷ Innovations, 249.

methods and quality of leadership that would enable the church to accomplish this goal. This would involve completely different research criteria.

Thirdly, the author does not intend to predict a common response to the discipleship training scheme by every participant. Since individuals respond differently to training due to other factors, which this project does not cover, the author would not attempt to predict the same outcome for all church members who happen to go through the development program. Fourthly, apart from the factor of administration and leadership, many other interrelated variables could account for growth or a lack thereof. An introduction of any of such variables may further limit the result obtained from this study. Fifthly, this is a qualitative study, and could fall short of meeting traditional criteria for generalization. A quantitative study that draws its samples from a large pool of data may provide a stronger reliability factor, a necessary criterion for generalization.

Lastly, this study does not intend to predict and generalize the behavior of people in their response to the gospel message, the church and the community. Predicting a common pattern of behavior for all people in all kinds of culture and environment could be misleading. The author is also fully aware of the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit, which may bring about the growth of a church or spur its decline regardless of humanly explicable circumstances.

Theoretical Basis

This project is rooted in two specific theoretical bases. The first one is biblical theology, while the second is pastoral theology. In what follows, a bird's eye view discussion of the two positions is presented.

Biblical Theology

This project has its basis in the Scriptures emphasizing believers' task in converting unbelievers, and making them disciples. The biblical references are traceable to the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the New Commandment. These three passages constitute the disciples' mode of operation. Understanding these passages would make the disciples understand their foundational requirements for discipleship.

The Great Commandment

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.¹⁸

The first commandment is to love God totally, with all of the person's being. The second commandment is for the person to love his/her neighbors as themselves. All the laws of the Old Testament are summed up by Jesus into these two. It is therefore, important for anyone who wants to be a disciple of Jesus to know how to express love to God, and to others because these are the reflections of true Disciples of Christ.

The Great Commission

¹⁸ Matt 22:34-40 NIV.

The Great Commission is the prime mission of not just the church, but also every Christian. It is found with varying emphasis in the four gospels, and the Book of Acts. Matthew's account states, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."¹⁹

This Scripture, which is described as "the most famous commission,"²⁰ has as the command, make disciples, and is connected to three participles: as they go, baptizing the people, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded. The fulfillment of this task is supported by the promise that Jesus would be with them till the end of the age. Matthew's emphasis in this text is disciple making, which entails the processing of developing and helping individuals to observe the commands of Jesus. Until churches do this task passionately, they may never be able to make disciples as they should, which is the bane of today's church. This is why David Howard explained that "the command to 'make disciples' means that we must help people not only to confess Jesus Christ, but to develop a life of true discipleship."²¹

In Mark's account, he states, "And he said unto them, Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;

¹⁹ Matt 28:20 KJV.

²⁰ Bowland, 49.

²¹ David Howard, *The Great Commission for Today* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 68.

but he that believeth not shall be damned.”²² This passage outlines the scope of the mission—all the world, and all of creation. In Luke’s account, he states,

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. . . . And said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoves Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.²³

The task of the disciples in this text is to be witnesses of Jesus as they proclaim the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, which is the theme of this passage. “You are witnesses of these things,”²⁴ which entails the disciples bearing witness of Christ’s death and resurrection.

The Gospel of John states, “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”²⁵ This text emphasized the theoretical nature of the sending, which is to make believers see Jesus’ mission as their mission, and delivering the message in an atmosphere of peace.

The same author of the gospel of Luke states in Acts of Apostles, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”²⁶ This text, authored by Luke, the same writer of the Gospel of Luke, has the same

²² Mark 16: 15-16, KJV.

²³ Lk 24: 44-49, KJV

²⁴ Lk 24: 49, KJV

²⁵ Jn 20:21, KJV

²⁶ Acts 1:8, KJV

context of witnessing and proclamation of the good news. The promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost,²⁷ following which the efforts of the disciples to carry out the commission are expressed throughout the book as confirmation. This shows that the believers' task of making disciples cannot be done in their own power and efforts. They need the Holy Spirit to empower them, making them to perform extra-ordinarily with their ordinary power. In summary, the Great Commission should be included as an essential part of every gospel. Without it, the gospel is incomplete.²⁸

The New Commandment

Jesus spoke exclusively to His disciples as he gave them the New Commandment, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”²⁹ Jesus gave the disciples what looks like their identification mark: loving one another. It is with this identification that other people would recognize them as the Disciples of Christ. This is perhaps what the people of Antioch observed when the disciples were identified by the way they showed love to one another, and were referred to as Christians. The implication is that when Christians love one another, it would serve as an invitation to other people, and make them gravitate towards Christians. Paul wrote the same concept to the Galatians, “As we have therefore, opportunity, let us

²⁷ Acts 2:1-4, KJV

²⁸ Howard, 78.

²⁹ Jn 13: 34-35, KJV

do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”³⁰

Therefore, the Christian’s first step in demonstrating the love of Christ is to let it reflect in the way they love other Christians.

In summary, Christians are to love God, love their neighbors, and love other brothers and sisters in Christ. Love is the central components in the kingdom of God. God loves the world and sent His Son to the earth to die for the sins of mankind. As a result, Christians can love God. When they love God they will love their neighbor, and other believers.

Pastoral Theology

This project fits an aspect of pastoral theology. Jesus called his Disciples to “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”³¹ After following Jesus for three years, the disciples, who were ordinary men, were transformed in such a way that they literally turned their world upside down after Jesus had gone to heaven. In the same way, church leaders are expected to transform their followers in a way that they could also transform their world, which involves the process of disciplining. However, “Studies have shown that less than one percent of evangelical church members are involved in disciplining those who are won to Christ.”³² This discouraging report portrays church leaders as delinquent in their basic responsibility of transforming converts and members to Disciples of Christ.

³⁰ Gal 6:10, KJV

³¹ Matt 4:19, KJV

³² Bowland, 124.

Thus, until church leaders see making disciples as an urgent command which it is, they are not going to be able to experience the kind of growth and multiplication that God expects from them. This involves a systematic and formal process. It is this process that the present project aims at designing with the hope that church leaders may derive functional and philosophical benefits from it, and doing so would enable them to develop their members to maturity, who would be able to disciple others.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms in this project that will be used regularly. Some are familiar while others are not. However, for us to operate on a common ground, these terms require an initial explanation.

Small Groups

Jeffrey Arnold identified the basic purpose of small groups as “the need to build community.”³³ He attributes the accomplishment of the early church to their operation as house churches. Arnold defines small group as, “An intentional gathering of a varied number of people who commit themselves to regular meetings for the purpose of becoming better disciples of Jesus Christ.”³⁴ Basic principles that are peculiar with small groups are that they are intentional, relational, and they involve regular meetings. Their goal is to make disciples for Christ.

³³Jeffrey Arnold, *Starting Small Groups: Building Communities that Matter* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 23.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

Home Cell Group

This term, which is popularized by Paul Yonggi Cho, the pastor of the world's largest congregation in Seoul, Korea is used in this project synonymously with small group, for they represent the same kind of gathering of people, who are gathered for the same purpose of developing leaders, and growing the body of Christ. According to Cho, "In the cell groups, each one has an opportunity to be used by God to minister to the others in the group."³⁵ This is what sets the home cell group apart from church congregation.

Disciple

The word disciple means "learner."³⁶ The biblical example is Jesus' call to His disciple, with the promise that He would make them "fishers of men."³⁷ This is why Jesus made it an unavoidable commitment for His disciples to teach people to observe all things which He has commanded them. Therefore, the mark of discipleship goes beyond being a Christian or a church member. It requires sacrifice and commitment. Details of the requirements and commitments for discipleship will be discussed in Chapter Two. There is no doubt that discipleship is the basis of the believer's faith in Christ because they are not called into church membership, but are called as Christ's disciples. Oswald Sander observes, "It is not without significance that the word *disciple* occurs in the New

³⁵ David Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers 1981), 49.

³⁶ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972).

³⁷ Matt 4:19, KJV

Testament 269 times, *Christian* only 3 times, and *believer*, 2 times. This surely indicates that the task of the church is not so much to make ‘Christians’ or ‘believers’ but ‘disciples.’”³⁸

Discipleship

The process of transforming a convert to a true disciple is what discipleship is all about. Barna defines the term as “becoming a complete and competent follower of Jesus Christ.”³⁹ This is precariously the missing ingredient in today’s church, for leaders are more interested in making members than making disciples, thereby, the church has missed the divine order to “go and make disciples of nations.” Barna observes, “Disciple making is not optional. The strength and influence of the church is wholly dependent upon its commitment to true discipleship. Producing transformed lives and seeing those lives reproduced in others, is a core challenge to believers, and to the local church.”⁴⁰ It is that missing ingredient for transforming converts to true disciples that this project is set out to provide.

Leader

The biblical understanding of a leader is someone who is in God’s service. For instance, Jesus’ teaching on leadership specifies, “Whoever wants to be a leader shall be the servant of all” (Mk 10:44). Therefore, anyone who does not have the heart of service is not fit to be a leader. This concept is contrary to the secular understanding of a leader

³⁸ Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship: Principles of following Christ for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1990), 8.

³⁹ Barna, 18.

⁴⁰ Barna, 24.

as someone who is at the helm of affairs, dictating the shorts. The biblical concept is what this project will emphasize, especially in the discussion and nature of a leader in Chapter Three.

Leadership

The process of making a leader is what leadership is all about. Since there are different kinds of strategies for making leaders, so also are different kinds of leaders produced by the church. It is for the purpose of making biblical proven leaders that this project recommends what this author considers as the best strategy for making leaders which will be highlighted in Chapter Three.

Saints

The Bible says that the ministry gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teacher are given to the church “for the perfecting of the saints.”⁴¹ “Saints” in this context refers to believers. This term does not categorize believers, but puts them all at the same level. This term will be used throughout this project in this context.

Gospel

Gospel, *euangelion* (Greek), means “the good news.” This is the good news of God’s plan for salvation of mankind, which He perfected through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross for the forgiveness of sin and promise of eternal life. The Books of the Bible that give accounts of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are also

⁴¹ Eph 4:12, KJV

referred to as the Gospel. The Books are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When the message of the New Testament is preached, it is sometimes referred to as preaching the Gospel, especially when Jesus is the subject or focus of the message. Biblical examples are: Acts 5:42; and 8:35.

Vision/dream

Both terms (vision/dream) are used interchangeably in this project. Every life purpose starts from a vision; so also is every ministry that God has ordained, because it is the vision that gives impetus to the purpose. This project will adopt the definition of vision by George Barna. He defines vision as “a clear special image of a probable future implanted by God to His chosen servants, and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances.”⁴² This is also why the Bible says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”⁴³ It is because of the importance of vision in leadership that this author will explore the extent to which church leaders are motivated by their vision, and how their vision has contributed to their growth or otherwise.

Statement of Methodology

This project advocates the preparation and development of members to service as true disciples, including soul winning and turning them into soul winners. Studies after studies have shown that making disciples, which is a major goal of the Great Commission, is often neglected.

⁴² George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1992), 24.

⁴³ Prov 29:18, KJV

Thus, churches in America show a discipleship deficit and failure to fulfill the ministry priorities of Jesus Christ. A Barna research finding shows that just “one percent of adult believers contend that they have the spiritual gift of evangelism; while less than one-tenth (of the adult believers) said they have ever intentionally built a relationship with someone in the hope of been able to lead the person to Christ.”⁴⁴ This is not a heartwarming report, but is a reflection of the passive approach of the church in developing members to matured disciples for soul winning.

On the side of the unchurched, the same Barna report also noted, “Most unchurched people have never been invited to a church by a Christian.” The report further indicates, “Most unchurched people have never been told by a Christian what it means to believe in Jesus Christ and never invited to embrace Jesus as their Lord and Savior.”⁴⁵

Another noticeable reflection of the church’s inability to positively influence the spiritual growth of their members is in their lifestyles, commitments, and habits. Studies have also shown that the church is not doing much in this area because, only “a small number reported that their church helps them develop specific paths to follow to foster spiritual growth.”⁴⁶ The same report finds that “only 20 percent of members believe that their church has some means of facilitating an evaluation of the spiritual/commitment to maturing of congregation.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Barna, Disciples, 130.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.,

⁴⁷ Ibid

Therefore, two noticeable features distinguish churches that make concrete efforts in developing their members to maturity. First, they are structurally organized for the purpose of effectively transforming and developing skills and abilities that reflect Christian lifestyle and responsibilities. An example is the North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Georgia, which through stimulation of small groups grew from 300 members in 1998 to 3000 congregants in 2005. The pastor, Andy Stanley, in attesting to the members' small group involvement says,

What we discover is that sustained spiritual growth is not well nurtured by an environment where people simply sit in rows, listening to messages in complete anonymity. Sustained growth takes place where people are personally challenged and encouraged in their relationship with God, and others. This is especially true when the challenges of life occur, and eventually those challenges come to everyone.⁴⁸

Second, the churches have structured developmental programs for training and mentoring members. The church identifies and develops members' potentials and gifting for effective Christian life and responsibilities.

Furthermore, in helping the church leaders to revitalize their churches, this author has chosen to use the descriptive method in ascertaining the effectiveness or otherwise of some churches' methods of making disciples. The purpose is to determine if their methods fall short of God's desire and design. This is based on the proposition that "a church that engages in effective discipleship is a church that will grow steadily and solidly. This is because people love to be cared for; and a church that emphasized genuine spiritual care and facilitates real spiritual growth will be a magnet."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 95.

⁴⁹ Barna, 127.

This author will construct a survey that is designed to identify the discipleship models of 20 churches as well as the effectiveness of such models. This is a vertical survey. An investigation of the respondents' shortfall in providing their members with effective growth and development program of discipleship would prompt the author to develop a benchmark, which, if followed, churches could move their congregations from nominal membership to true disciples. The questionnaire of the survey intends to provide answers in support of the following hypotheses: First, the more the convert becomes a converter, the more likely the church will grow. Second, the more dynamic the church's training and development curriculum is, the more likely a disciple fold will emerge.

Third, the level of active engagement of a church in discipleship efforts will determine the extent of its growth or a lack thereof; fourth, the vision of a church leadership is directly proportional to the rate of its success in soul winning and membership growth; fifth, churches with small group ministry are likely to develop spiritually mature members who are able to identify and express their gifts and calling, which will normally reflect positively in the overall health and vibrancy of the church; and sixth, the author's research on the state of discipleship in American church will either support or replace aspects of existing assumptions.

Overview

This project is divided into five segments, each representing the five chapters of the thesis: Chapter One is the introductory part of the thesis, which highlights the summary of the project, including statement of problem, definition of terms, theoretical basis of the project, statement of methodology and review of literature. Chapter Two will

attempt to make a distinction between a true disciple of Christ, and an ordinary church member. To establish this, the marks of a disciple are will be scripturally highlighted, following which the process by which a disciple is transformed which is the process of discipleship will be established, with emphasis on the principles involved, and a working definition for this project. Following, this, this author will reflect the process of discipleship in the church's health and show how spiritually healthy disciple will invariably make healthy churches. This chapter will conclude with the seven kinds of Bodies/Churches which deficient process of discipleship could produce in churches that are not making spiritually healthy disciples.

Chapter Three will focus on small group structure and leadership development, with emphasis on how small groups could be established specifically for developing members' skills and potential, and growing them into leadership positions. This author's argument is on the fact that disciples grow better and faster in small group environments rather than in church setting, where member have little or no opportunity to demonstrate their spiritual gifts and skills. The strategy for developing such effective leaders will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four will reflect on the nation's church health based on the research findings. All the components that this author has built up from the beginning of the project will be connected together here, in the bigger structure of the church to determine how the church could evolve into a healthy and vibrant institution. The research finding will be analyzed to support the need for the church to evolve structurally into a growing and healthy Body, for the fulfillment of its assignment to disciple nations. Chapter Five, the concluding chapter that will summarize the research findings, identify some problems

relating to the current research, and make some recommendations for successful church growth and effective leadership, concluding with this author's final thought.

Review of Literature

A church practice as old and fundamental as discipleship would certainly have a bunch of literature credited to it. Some of such volumes explain peculiar church models which church leaders claimed have given their churches the expected surge in growth and vibrancy. An example is Andy Stanley, the pastor of the North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Atlanta, who described how he built a church of 12,000 attendees through the small group model, where he encouraged members to spend time together. As members operate in small groups, Andy believes that they were growing in spiritual maturity and in their relationship with God and man.

Another volume in which the authors detailed their small group experience in building their church is in the 1997 work of Glen Martin and Gary McIntosh titled, *Creating Community: Deeper Fellowship through Small Group Ministry*. In this seminal work, the authors contend that every Christian needs another person for a victorious journey, and strongly advocate small group relationship among Christians as a way of life.

Earley and Rod Dempsey also wrote an excellent volume entitled, *The Pocket Guide to Leading a Small Group*. The Pocket Guide includes 52 ways to help the leader grow his small group. This is a practical book as the proposed principles had been tried and tested successfully by the authors in their church, New Life Church in Gahanna,

Ohio. This is a must-read for every church leader who aspires to build his/her church on small group structure.

Another outstanding resource is *Successful Home Cell Groups* by David Yonggi Cho, which is a practical approach to small group structure by a man who used the system to grow what is now known as the largest church in the world. Cho believes that the system which worked for him in his church at Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea could work for anyone anywhere in the world. This source explains the organizational structure and the visionary role of the Senior Pastor as the primary champion of the small group model without whom the system could not succeed.

Another wonderful resource is, *The Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*, by Carl George. The sections on coaching and developing an apprentice are very helpful. In this book, George emphasizes the unlimited leadership potential of the members of the church which should be tapped for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

An outstanding book, *Turning Members into Leaders*, by Dave Earley, is a step-by-step strategy of doing exactly what the title suggests, turning the members of the church into leaders instead of spectators. This book is designed to guide and help church leaders to form small groups that give each member an opportunity to get involved in church ministry. The author emphasizes the development process which every member of the church should go through in the process of developing their potentials.

In an inspiring interview in the *Leadership Journal* 4 (Fall 1988) titled, "Can Spiritual Maturity be taught?" Roberta Hestenes, the President of Eastern College, agreed that spiritual maturity could be taught, especially by pastors who are themselves trained

to be in a position of training their members. She saw pastor as the spiritual director for the congregation, who is the person with the sole responsibility of nourishing the congregation to its growth and spirituality. On the issue of church growth, Hestenes considered small groups as a favorable structure for growth. Hestenes' opinion on small groups goes a long way in shaping this author's thoughts in considering small groups as the pragmatic model for church growth and development of members. This idea will be explained in detail in Chapter Three.

In his own work, *Tomorrow's Church: A Community of Change*, John Westerhoff addresses the issue of Christian life from the point of view of the Creator. He made the unequivocal point that being a Christian is living as an agent with God in the transformation of the world into what God intends for it to become. He interpreted Jesus' call to His church as a call to be a community of change. Westerhoff believes that true conversion can only be accomplished when the group and society from where they come is transformed as well, otherwise the new converts would revert to their old ways.

In the *Catholic World*, 236 (May, 1993), Charles J. Keating identified two elements of Christian leaders in an article titled, "Leadership and Structure," which in effect show that leadership requires growth, and relationship is the key to understanding leadership. These two elements of leadership are so important in that they both form the points of emphasis in this project. This author emphasizes in Chapter Two that leaders don't just emerge, they are made; and which requires the process of growth. In line with Keating's opinion, this author emphasizes the essence of relationship as a strategy for developing leaders. These two elements are inherent in small group operations. This also

explains why this author contends that leaders develop best and are able to observe all things that Jesus has commanded in small group structures.

In his book, *Missional Reformation for Discipling Nations*, Olowe, writing from the empirical knowledge of God Embassy Church, Kiev Ukraine highlights the organization of the church on small groups and systematic training of members for discipleship and ministry. Olowe detailed the spiritual progress of some members of the church, many of whom came into the church as addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes, and generally with hopeless situations. However, these people were saved, disciplined, and became productive members, church planters and influencers of their communities, which this author believes should be the task of every church.

Aubrey Malphurs, writing from the perspective of a church consultant, in his volume titled, *A New Kind of Church: Understanding Models of Ministry for the 21st Century*, identified the general state of the church as declining and therefore offers that the church needed to adopt a model that would bring the required growth and spirituality. This author agrees with Malphurs, and is inclined to suggest that a church that is based on the structure that produces leaders would grow both numerically and spiritually.

Thesis/Dissertation

One of the most helpful thesis is Dempsey's D. Min. thesis, "A Strategy to Transition a Traditional Church Educational System to a Small Group System" (2004), Dempsey does a case study on the transformation which his church experienced as he and his pastor colleagues took the church from a traditional Sunday school model to a small group system, with outstanding growth. This work makes available the necessary

principles which must be followed to experience the same result, and also highlights some pitfall which must be avoided.

A relatively recent thesis titled, “A Descriptive Study of the Additional Factors Needed to Transition a Troubled Church to Health,” by George R. Cannon, Jr. (2010) is explicit on what struggling churches need to do other than application of philosophical models to grow their churches. The author argued that church leaders needed to take care of the barriers that stand on their way first before any model could be applied, especially those who had experienced some traumatic events like conflict. This approach gives the impression that not all declining churches are the same, and therefore, need different therapeutic approaches for their sound health.

In her thesis, “Making Disciples as a Goal of Mission: A Cross Cultural Comparison of Two Local Churches,” Janet Dearman of the University of South Africa considers the methodology of disciple making in two local churches in South Africa, and observed that although disciple-making is a major goal of the church, not many of them intentionally make disciples. She however, noted that each of the women interviewed grew spiritually in small group environment. This conclusion is similar to the one this thesis intends to prove.

While many of these volumes touch on the theme of discipleship, leadership, and small group ministry, it is this author’s aim to supplement these works with a descriptive study of a workable model of discipleship, which is the same as redirecting the attention of church leaders to the neglected or forgotten divine assignment of the church, which if adopted, is expected to move declining churches to health and vibrancy.

Bible Verses

Discipleship and leadership are issues which have their roots firmly planted in the Word of God, both in the Old and New Testaments. For instance God called Abraham in Gen 12:1-3, because He wanted to make a nation out of him. The Bible says,

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”⁵⁰

Just as God has a plan for Abraham, He does for everyone He has created. This is why Christian journey should be taken seriously, and as people searching for their Promised Land.

Matt 28:16-20 highlights the centerpiece of this thesis which is the Great Commission, and which our Lord Jesus gave to His disciple, and by implication, to His church. After Jesus had resurrected, and knew that all power has been given to Him in heaven and on the earth, He commissioned His disciples to “make disciples” of all ethnic groups of the world. The process which He laid out included, baptizing and teaching the people all things Jesus commanded.

Mark 3:13-19 provides a list of the original twelve. Jesus called His disciples “that they might be with Him.” For three years, Jesus established a deep and close relationship with the men in such a way that they lived together, ate meals together and were trained together. In other words, they did life together. This disciples imbibed the Master’s qualities and characteristics that they were observable as people who had been

⁵⁰ Gen 12:1-3, KJV

with Jesus.⁵¹ This is the same kind of effect which small group relationships are expected to have between the leader and members, and among the members.

Luke 14:25-33 will help establish a definition of an authentic disciple of Christ. Unlike what some church leaders take as disciples, Jesus has a clear definition of who a true disciple is. He explained to the crowd (Jews) that a true disciple will love Him above all earthly relationships (v.26). He further explained that a disciple will die to self and count the cost of following Him (v. 27-32). Finally, Jesus told the crowd that a true disciple is willing to abandon everything in order to follow Him. Since not everyone is qualified as Jesus' disciple both in His days, and in our days, the decision to follow Jesus is not one that could be casually made, but should be made with determination and commitment.

Romans 8:29-30 states, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This Scripture indicates God's plan specifying that everyone is called, justified and glorified. This is why church leaders should take the issue of developing members seriously, rather than taking them as members making up the congregation. Thus, if God sees every Christian as called, justified and glorified, they should be treated as such, the process of which this thesis is poised to lay out clearly.

Philippians 2:8-10 states, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath

⁵¹ Acts 4:13, KJV

highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” In this author’s analysis of the qualities of leadership, he noted humility as one of them. This is derived from Jesus’ example who “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death” (v. 8). Every Christian should be humble, because the reward of humility is always enhanced in promotion.

1Pe 5:1-2 states, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” This is a basic responsibility of church leaders, spelt out very clearly in this passage. This is also a point of emphasis of this author in Chapter Two, in his examination of the Body of Christ. His argument is that the health of the church will always be determined by the kind of spiritual food which the pastor feeds them with. Different kinds of bodies are identified which in most cases do not show a healthy church. Thus, the work of ministry must be performed with clarity of purpose, and not for personal benefits.

Eph 4:11-13, And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

This is another passages which clearly specifies the work of church leaders, which is to “equip” the saints. Paul identifies likens every church member to a particular part of the body, which has a specific function to perform. This serves as a warning for church leaders not to look down on any member as not important, but should train everyone as people who have some contributions to make to the overall health of the body.

Eph 4:16 states, “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” The ultimate purpose of discipleship is figuratively described in Eph 4:16, as a healthy body with all the parts in good working conditions. The weakness of one part affects the overall health of the whole. This is why the Bible emphasizes the task of the church (which is the Body of Christ), in keeping it healthy through proper nurturing of every member that collectively make up the Body.

Paul writes, “And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.” (Col 1:28). The focus in this text is “every man,” who should be presented complete in Christ. It is therefore, the church’s responsibility to ensure spiritual growth for every believer, and not just a few leaders developed to lead church programs.

Many of these Scriptures will come under reference in the succeeding chapters because they are quite relevant to the subjects of discipleship, leadership, and small groups which this project is all about.

CHAPTER TWO

DISCIPLESHIP

Identification of a Disciple

One should not assume that every church leader operates with a clear understanding of who a disciple is. This explains why church leaders do not develop the same kind of disciples. In other words, the divergent notions of the concept of discipleship have resulted in a diversity of disciples. For instance, a church leader could regard a new convert as a disciple, while another leader's notion of a disciple could be someone who sings in the choir, or teaches a Sunday school class, or even a volunteer in a church ministry. It would not be surprising if in some other cases a church leader refers to members of his congregation as his or her "disciples." What these divergent views suggest is that the church is yet to come up with a common understanding of the concept of a disciple. However, until the church understands without any doubt who a disciple is, it is very likely that the church would be producing different kinds of products in the name of disciples. Incidentally, disciple making is the sole responsibility of the church, and if there is no clear understanding of who a disciple is, there would be problems in raising one.

It is in this author's attempt to provide a common ground for the church's understanding of a disciple, and by implication, make the process of disciple making clearer that a working definition of both disciple, and discipleship is formulated. This is important because if the seed of a tree is defective, if the plant that would come out of it

would germinate at all, it would equally be defective. Since this has been the missing link for the church, this project therefore, intends to provide an effective and applicable mold from which perfect products would be made. In other words, from the working definition that this project will provide, the process of discipleship would be so clear that those who decide to follow the process would be sure of the kind of disciples that would come out of it. In what follows, this researcher will provide eight distinct parameters set forth by the Lord Jesus Christ that individuals must meet in order for them to qualify as His disciples.

The Marks of a Disciple

When Jesus called His disciples, he had a picture of who he wanted them to be; and that is why He told them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”¹ Jesus wanted to “make” the disciples what he wanted them to be, so that they would have distinct features as “Jesus’ disciples.” Thus, to make requires a process of transformation, which would be accomplished as they “follow” Jesus’ instructions, and teachings. The disciples were to learn from the master, imbibe His character, and values. The word disciple means learner. This means that the disciple is expected to take after the Master, called Rabbi in the culture of the time, as they watch and listen to Him, in their close interaction with Him. Jesus, however, specifies some qualifications for someone who was to be His disciple. It is no wonder that not everyone who wanted to follow Him qualified to be His disciple. It is also on record that Jesus called some people, who could not follow Him because they did not meet up with the necessary qualifications (Matt 19:22). Therefore, the qualifications and requirements of a disciple were spelt out by Jesus

¹ Mk 4:19, KJV.

Himself on different occasions in His ministry. Among others, Jesus noted the following qualifications:

A Disciple must consider the Cost

“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?”² To be a follower of Christ, one must count the cost because there is a price to pay. Ferguson describes the price as death.³ He explains, “For the true disciple, it will cost you your life, your body, your possessions, and your future. It will cost you everything.”⁴ For him, death is an essential condition because the disciple is expected to die to self, which means that ‘we are not seeking self-satisfaction and personal gratification. Rather, we are seeking to please God on an all-day, every-day basis.’⁵ Therefore, being Jesus’ disciple requires a deep and serious consideration because it would cost the person his own will and desires.

A Disciple must Be Totally Committed to Christ

“If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brother and sister, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”⁶ Jesus considers His relationship with His disciples to be so uncompromising that when compared with other relationships, it would appear like hatred. Jesus is using a

² Lk 14:28, KJV

³ Gordon Ferguson, *The Victory of Surrender* (Billerica, MS: Discipleship Publications International, 2003), 56.

⁴ Ibid.

⁶ Lk 14:26, KJV

hyperbole, a figure of speech defined as deliberate exaggeration, to give effect to the seriousness of discipleship. Therefore, hate should not be taken in the negative sense of it because Jesus is the embodiment of love, which he demonstrated by dying for us on the Cross. What this statement means is that the love that a disciple would manifest to any other human would pale in comparison to the love he or she would show to the Lord Jesus Christ. Etymologically, the word, *discipline* and the word *disciple* come from the same root word. One cannot disciple someone who is undisciplined. Strictly following the Lord requires a great deal of discipline on the part of the disciple or potential disciple.

A Disciple must Surrender or Die to Self

“Whosoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”⁷ The symbol of the cross is representational of death and suffering. Therefore, to carry your own cross means that “the disciple of Jesus will be called upon to lay down his life (his desire for self-direction and determination), and to surrender his will to the will of the master.”⁸ In this process of surrendering our will to His will, “we die in order to live, and we live in order to die.”⁹ What is emphasized here in essence is serious commitment to the things of God. By being willing to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ, the disciples are in essence aspiring to gain eternity with the Lord. A part of this disciplining process is carrying one’s cross, a heavy burden, with all its excruciatingly painful characteristics, and still be able to follow the Lord and focus on Him.

⁷ Lk 14:27, KJV

⁸ Ferguson, 60 – 61.

⁹ Ibid.

A Disciple must give up all Earthly Possessions

“So then, none of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”¹⁰ A true disciple must consider all that he or she has to be held in trust for his master; and whenever the Master calls for it, the disciple must surrender it. Whenever one finds it difficult to give up something for Christ, that thing has become a god to the individual, and Jesus says, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”¹¹ Emptying one of material possessions helps to focus on service to the Lord. Here, the Lord is emphasizing the need to break the yoke of the secular and exchange it with the holy. This is because, as He said, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”¹²

A Disciple must continue in His Word

“If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”¹³ Continuing in God’s Word suggests a consistent interaction with the Word, rather than a sporadic approach of making contact with it only when necessary. In other religions, indoctrination and brainwashing are tools of raising followers, but in Christianity, it is in the understanding of the written Word

¹⁰ Lk 14:33, KJV.

¹¹ Matt 6:24, KLV

¹² Matt 11:30, KJV

¹³ Jn 8:31-32, KJV

because in the written Word is the power of knowledge and understanding. The Word (logos) is the Mind of God as explained in John chapter one.

A Disciple must Love Other Disciples

Love is an overarching parameter for following the Lord. This is understandable because the Bible says, “God is love.”¹⁴ Christ declared, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”¹⁵ A disciple must be committed to love, especially in those designated areas of love for God, love for neighbor, and love for brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the kind of love that could attract unbelievers by making them want to belong to the environment of love. John, the apostle that was most physically close to the Lord Jesus Christ dedicates much of His epistles to the theme of love. No doubt, love is at the core of the practical dissemination of the gospel of Christ. Thus, the Lord’s methodology of discipleship is anchored on love.

A Disciple must abide in Christ

“I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in me and me in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing. . . My father is glorified in this that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciple.”¹⁶ The ultimate desire of every disciple is to produce fruit and the condition for doing so has been specified as abiding in Jesus, and He abiding in believers. It is when we produce fruit that God is glorified. The

¹⁴ 1 Jn 4:8, KJV

¹⁵ Jn 13:34-35, KJV

¹⁶ Jn 15:7-8, KJV

theology of connectivity is the central theme of the Lord's position here. Indeed, what this parameter has shown is what separates Christianity from many other religions of the world. Here the Master sees Himself as the vine, while His followers are branches. The logic of this imagery is that both disciples and the Master provide responsorial covering on each other. There cannot be branches without a vine. At the same time, a vine without branches ceases to be a vine. At the very best, it is a stump without any value to the environment in which it is located. There cannot be any life in it because the science of agronomy has taught us that it is on the branches that foliage (leaves) are formed, and it is the leaves that make photosynthesis possible. Without the latter, the tree would die. The Lord evoked this serious metaphor in this passage. It speaks to His humility and embrace of His followers as friends and brethren. In other religions, followers and masters are mutually exclusive, their relationships are distant, and their modes of operation are those of Master-Servants.

A Disciple must Be Involved in the Mission of Christ

“Go ye 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 all that I command you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.”¹⁷ This is the statement commonly referred to as the Great Commission. It is the main task of the church today, as it was for the early disciples. The action verb (in the imperative) is to make disciples. Therefore, any disciple who is not passionate in making other disciples is not fit to be a disciple. This is what determines the strength and vibrancy of the church.

¹⁷ Matt 28:19-20, KJV

George Barna affirms in his book, *Growing True Disciples*, “The strength and influence of the church is wholly dependent upon its commitment to true discipleship. Producing transformed lives and seeing those lives reproduced in others, is a core challenge to believers and the local church.”¹⁸

Principles and Definition of Disciple

Three common principles could be deduced from the above Scriptures. These principles are: sacrificial, relational, and transformational; and a clear portrait of a disciple could be deduced from the principles. Once the picture is clear, it is therefore, possible for churches to know whether they are making true disciples or not. This researcher intends to come up with a working definition of disciple, which will be applicable throughout this project. A disciple is someone who, having accepted the saving grace of Jesus Christ is determined to live fully for Christ in deeds and in words. This individual must be committed to discover and develop his or her gifts and abilities, and deploy them fully for the mission of Christ in an environment of communal love. With this working definition, it would be easy to establish the benchmark for a disciple, and disciple making; and determine if a church leader is really making disciples or merely building up members, or volunteers.

What is Discipleship?

In the above definition of a disciple, there are some active verbs, which presuppose deliberate but voluntary actions on the part of the subject. These words are

¹⁸ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs: Water brook Press, 2001), 24.

accept, determine, and commit. The import of these words is that the subject has some deliberate actions to take for certain anticipated outcomes. For instance, he must *accept* his salvation as a condition for his *determination* to live fully for Christ; and which precipitates his *commitment* to discover his potential and gifts. This is also conditional to his determination to deploy his talent, and gifts for Christ's mission. What this shows is that discipleship is a process towards a specific goal. Therefore, as discipleship takes place it leads to some specific results. It is an intentional developmental process. George Barna describes the process as "being and reproducing spiritually mature zealots for Christ."¹⁹ Therefore, the process is intentional, and is aimed at making mature, complete and competent followers of Christ.

Jesus knew that as the disciples followed and interacted with Him, they would be transformed into people of a particular lifestyle, and who would be like Him in their thoughts, words and actions. There is no doubt that as the disciples interacted with Jesus for three years, they had some identifiable character traits with Jesus. The transformation was so glaring that the Jerusalem community who knew these men before could see the transformation in them. They exclaimed, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."²⁰ In another community of Antioch, "The disciples were called Christians first."²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 18.

²⁰ Acts 4:13, KJV

²¹ Acts 11:26, KJV

If the early disciples so imbibed the teaching and character of Jesus that they were noticeable in their communities as changed men, and positively influenced their community, the pertinent question is why are Christians today not having the same identification mode that could make them stand out in their communities from unbelievers and as community transformers? This is an indication that the church is not making true disciples; or rather, those they are making are not reflecting any specific features for identification. This signifies that the process of discipleship and the models are ineffective or faulty.

In the quest for a working definition of discipleship, this author intends to come up with some principles, which would lead directly to an understanding of the process of making disciples.

First, a disciple is made as he is taught the principles of kingdom life. Christ declared, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”²² The focus of a disciple is the kingdom of God with its principles, which are in most cases antithetical to the worldly principles. Second, a disciple is made as he is taught to obey God’s Law and Commandments. “Thou shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.”²³ Love is the basis of relationship for a disciple, love for God, love for neighbor, and love for other believers. Third, a disciple is made as he is taught how to represent God in the world. “I have given them the word; and the world has hated

²² Matt 6:33, KJV

²³ Matt 22:37-40, KJV

them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”²⁴ This shows that it is the disciple who should be the influencer of his community; and not the other way round. It is because the church is not producing true disciples that the society seems to have some influence on the church.

Fourth, a disciple is made as he is trained to have the heart of a servant as evident in the following Scripture,

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your master. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.²⁵

The leadership model propounded by Jesus is antithetical to the common understanding of leadership. While Jesus’ model emphasizes selfless service, the worldly model emphasizes status, benefits of position, and compensations of office. The emphasis is service to humanity. Therefore, anyone who wants to be a disciple must learn the art of service, in the same way that Jesus came to “serve and give his life a ransom for many.”²⁶

Fifth, a disciple is made as he is taught how to reproduce himself. It was for this purpose that Paul wrote, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many men, who shall be able to teach others also.”²⁷ This process guarantees continuity and gives life and vibrancy to the church. Therefore, any disciple who is not taught to reproduce himself is not a true disciple. In other words, “Discipling others is the process by which a Christian

²⁴ Jn 17:14-16, KJV

²⁵ Matt 20:25-28, KJV

²⁶ Mk 10:45, KJV

²⁷ 2 Tim 2:2, KJV

with a life worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have been won to Christ, the purpose being to aid and guide their growth to maturity and equip them to reproduce themselves in a third generation.”²⁸

Based on the above guidelines, and the fact that discipleship is an intentional act, which involves a process, a working definition is quite probable. Thus discipleship is the process of nurturing a disciple of Christ to maturity, helping them to discover and develop their gifts and potential for mission, and for reproducing themselves for perpetuity.

This is the working definition, which this researcher will utilize throughout this project. The definition is appropriate because it embraces the principles established above, and it also projects the following reasons. First, it is a process that has no terminal point because growing in the image of Christ is a life-long task. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 4: 13, it is “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Second, the definition is non-discriminatory as it recognizes every person as having the necessary gifts and potential to be developed. Therefore, when the church keeps its congregation on the pew, they are keeping potential disciples and leaders passive, as spectators in the church. The consequence is that the church suffers, and Christ’s mission of reaching the world also suffers. Third, one way of determining the effectiveness of discipleship is through the fruit they produce. The Bible says, “By their fruits, ye shall know them.”²⁹ The fruit is produced when the disciple operates in full maturity, and is

²⁸ Ferguson, 29.

²⁹ Matt 7:16-17, KJV

able to influence the society positively. Therefore, a disciple will produce a true disciple because that is the nature of the plant, which must reflect on the fruit produced.

Discipleship and Church's Health

There is a very close connection between church health and its disciple-making strategy. The author's intention is to establish the basis for such a connection. George Barna expresses the same view when he writes, "Discipleship matters... because it is necessary for the church to become healthy and productive. We cannot reach our potential without spiritual growth."³⁰ Just as it is expedient for disciples to be equipped to maturity, so it is for the church to be totally committed to the process and strategy of equipping the disciples. It is not enough for the church to emphasize quantitative growth at the expense of spiritual growth, which determines the quality of the church. Barna, in the same report says, "Growing true disciples is a major undertaking of the church."³¹ This has been the missing link in most of the churches, and it is what this project is set out to highlight for the attention of church leaders.

Examining the Health of the Church

The church is figuratively described as the Body of Christ. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians made this revelation, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the *church, which is his body*, the fullness of him that

³⁰ Barna, Disciples, 30.

³¹ Ibid., 10.

filled all in all.”³² (Emphasis added). Jesus is the Head of the church, and the church is His body. In the same epistle, Paul used another analogy to describe the relationship between Jesus and the church. Invoking the familiar language of family sociology, Paul likened the dynamic between the Church and Christ to the relationship between a husband and his wife. He writes, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the savior of the body.”³³

Since the Head is described as “the savior of the body,” there is no doubt that the Head is perfect, and is performing its functions of directing the body adequately. However, it is necessary to determine the condition of the body. This is where the problem is, because the church of Christ is certainly not in its best condition. In his writing about the health of the church, Aubrey Malphurs provides a graphic metaphor with the imagery of the sick and the hospital as he observes, “If the typical church were to go to a hospital emergency room, the attending physician would likely admit it to the hospital and put it in life support.” He added, “Churches all across America are struggling. Some are plateaued, and in decline, while others are in the last stage of dying.”³⁴

However, this project intends to consider church’s health in relation to its disciple-making strategies. As Barna observed, “The strength and influence of the church is wholly dependent upon its commitment to true discipleship. Producing transformed lives and seeing those lives reproduced in others, is a core challenge to believers, and to

³² Eph 1:22-23, KJV.

³³ Eph 5:23, KJV.

³⁴ Malphurs, 17-18.

the local church.”³⁵ If discipleship is at the core of the challenges of the church, this project is on the path of unveiling the root cause of these challenges and exploring the relationship between the church and its disciple-making strategy.

Examining the Various Parts of the Body/Church

In the three Scriptural references where Paul wrote about the various gifts in the church, he likens the operation of the gifts to the operation of the parts of the body. For instance, in describing the ministry gifts, he states,

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors; and some, teachers. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ . . . From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.³⁶

This passage establishes a progression of church leaders equipping the members to spiritual maturity, so that they would be equipped to do the work of ministry, and for the overall edification of the church. The emphasis here is on the “saints,” representing the individual parts of the body “being fitted and held together by what every joint supply.”³⁷ The effectiveness and health of each part causes the growth of the body. This means that the body of Christ will grow as each individual part is healthy enough to function effectively. Therefore, the growth of the church is dependent on the growth of

³⁵ Barna, *Disciple*, 24.

³⁶ Eph 4:11-16, KJV

³⁷ Eph 4:16, KJV

the individual members. As the members are equipped and developed into maturity, so also would the church grow in quality and in quantity.

However, there is a difference in what the church is doing and what the Scriptures recommend. While the church tries to grow the congregation by delivering a sermon in a Sunday service, this Scripture recommends a strategy for the complete growth of the church through training and equipping of members. Paul makes this point clearer when he writes in another passage, “When we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”³⁸ According to this passage, Paul’s preaching and teaching was to “every man;” with the sole aim of making them perfect in Christ. Therefore, the strategy of church growth should be growing the individuals, the corollary of which is to grow the church.

In his writing on another kind of gifts, commonly referred to as the “gifts of the Spirit,”³⁹ Paul puts the same emphasis on individual members of the body. He writes,

But now are they many members, yet but one body . . . Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; For our comely parts have no need; but hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.⁴⁰

The message in this text is that though all members of the body do not perform the same functions, and do not have the same kinds of prominent positions in the body, they should be treated with dignity and equity because they function to complement one another.

³⁸ Col 1:28, KJV

³⁹ 1 Cor 12: 20-25, KJV

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The question then is this: How is this heavy analogy related and applicable to the church? The common arrangement in the church today is to encourage a part of the congregation to be involved in the church ministries, leaving a large part undeveloped, and making them spectators of what others are doing. This model is in contradistinction with the model espoused by Paul when he said, “Whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it...”⁴¹ No wonder the overall health of the church is suspect, which makes the church to struggle in fulfilling its task of discipling nations. Allen Hadidian, in his assessment of the church situation states, “Discipling strengthens the church body, and perpetuates God’s work by developing godly leaders for the church.”⁴²

Features of a Disciple-Making Church

From the above analysis, the picture of a disciple-making church is getting clearer, and so in the pages that follow, this author will identify some features that are common to such churches, using the early church as the benchmark. About those early churches, the Bible says,

And they continued steadfast in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as be saved⁴³

⁴¹ 1 Cor 12:26, KJV

⁴² Allen Hadidian, *Successful Discipling* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1979), 16.

⁴³ Acts 2:42-47, KJV

There are ten different habits that set the early church apart. These are: studying the Apostles' teaching, fellowshiping with each other, breaking bread together, prayer, unity, need meeting, met in the temple, met from 'house to house, praising God, and having favor with all the people.

One basic thing that bound the early church together was community. They were together expressing their love and affection to one another in the best way possible. There is no doubt that 'community' is the best environment for growth. The text confirms, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."⁴⁴ Individual growth led to church growth, which made the church vibrant and poised to reach "all nations." Andy Stanley expressed the same idea in his own experience of forging community in his 12,000 strong congregations. "In community' is how God intended us to express life. It is how the Lord wired our souls. When people don't need more things to attend, they do need the kind of life-giving benefits that occurs when people connect regularly in a meaningful way."⁴⁵

There are three identifiable characteristics of a healthy church.⁴⁶ First, they are deliberate and intentional in their disciple-making efforts. It is not a process they stumble upon, but a strategy they deliberately adopt. Such churches have systematic progress of growth of which members are aware.

⁴⁴ Acts 4:47, KJV

⁴⁵ Andy Stanley, and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc, 2004), 174.

⁴⁶ Notes on DSMN 974 intensive, "Developing Lay Leaders," led by Professor Rodney Dempsey, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Jan. 7 – 11, 2013.

Second, the approach is individually oriented. Every member is considered as an important and essential part of the church, which makes for the overall growth of the church. There is every reason to believe that the body will grow in quantity as they intentionally develop and nurture each individual to attain their full potential in Christ.

Third, the motive of the church is missional, which is the divine task that the church has been mandated to carry out—to go and make disciples of nations. The next chapter will explain in greater detail the organizational structure adaptable to discipleship, and the effects of such structure on the individuals and the church.

How Jesus would See His Church

The author will summarize this chapter by assessing the health of the Body/Church from the Head's vantage position. If Jesus were to assess today's church in America, what kind of church would He find? Taking a cue from what Jesus instructed John to write to the seven churches in Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, in which He pointed out their shortcomings, this author would want to compare the ailing church to different body ailments. Some scholars suggest, concerning the Asian churches in Revelation, that "each church contains characteristics that can be found to some degree in most churches throughout church history"⁴⁷

Based on what has been discussed so far in this chapter, the author wants to proffer some kinds of body that the American church is producing. The Bible says, "Even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but

⁴⁷ The King James Study Bible, (Personal Size, 1988).

that it should be holy and without blemish.”⁴⁸ There is no doubt that the church is not yet prepared to meet Jesus in its expected state of perfection. This is probably the reason for His delayed return. This is also a way of assessing the performance of church leaders based on the spiritual food with which they feed the congregation. What kind of churches are the leaders producing for the coming of Christ? In what follows, this author will borrow nutritional metaphor and imageries to describe the spiritual state of the churches today.

Seven Kinds of Bodies/Churches

First, paraplegia Body/Church. This is the kind of church which engages half of its congregation in church activities like ushering, choir, welcoming of guests, women’s fellowship, men’s fellowship, youth ministry, children’s ministry, etc., but leaves the other half as spectators. Although this other half is counted as members, they are not productive members. Jesus would have seen half of this body paralyzed, and half active, which would make the church need serious therapy to activate the paralyzed half.

Second, emaciated Body/Church. This is the kind of church that shows serious nutrition deficiency. This is a church that has no development program, and all the leadership provides for the congregation is as a cold meal served only on Sunday morning. The church remains underfed, and has no form of nutrition for a whole week. This is the kind of church that is weightless, making members unable to perform any form of spiritual responsibility, including resisting the devil and making him flee.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Eph 5:23-27, KJV

⁴⁹ James 4:7, KJV

Third, shunted Body/Church. This is the kind of church that is fed with the food meant for another kind of body. When fed with wrong diet, the body is shunted instead of growing properly. This kind typifies those churches whose leaders feed their congregations with copied sermons, and internet generated messages, instead of serving the congregation with the message that would inspire and give them the proper inspiration for their situation. These are churches whose leaders feed with the wrong kinds of diet. Consequently, instead of them growing, they are shunted.

Fourth, cancerous Body/Church. This cancer may be benign or malignant. In either case, a body with an early stage of cancer in one of the internal organs might look physically healthy, but on proper diagnosis, the problem of cancer would be detected. This is the kind of church which looks good on the outside may be due to its share size or structure, but is completely disoriented by internal strives and conflicts which make their development difficult. The fact that the people are not bounded together by the essential element of love, the Holy Spirit finds it difficult to operate freely, and the people end up splitting into different fragments, which would eventually lead to the demise of the church.

Fifth, exhausted Body/Church. There are some people who misuse their bodies, and because they do not understand the body's warning signs, the body breaks down due to exhaustion. This is the kind of church that is busy with mostly irrelevant programs and activities round the year. For the fact that they are just doing programs that may or may not relate to their vision, the people are soon burnt out. Such programs also do not add to the church both numerically and spiritually. Because the people do not see any benefit

from the programs and because they are exhausted, they react by gradually keeping away from the programs, until they stop going to church altogether.

Sixth, the Anemic Body/Church. Anemia is a medical condition where blood is not enough to keep the body and the essential vital organs running effectively. If care is not taken, it could lead to death. The blood goes through the veins and nourishes the entire body. By not providing effective tools for discipling, what the churches are doing is to deny their members (the veins of their congregations) the essential spiritual blood needed for daily living.

Seventh, the Kwashiorkored Body/Church. Kwashiorkor is a disease of extreme malnourishments. It occurs quite often in the time of war when food is in short supplies and people, especially children, have to feed on food lacking in proteins and essential nutrition. The stomach is always swollen and the body is weak. Many churches are experiencing this in the spiritual realm – they are overfed but undernourished. They are barraged left, right and center with theologies, doctrines, rules of dos and don'ts, and philosophies that are completely of no spiritual relevance; and so, the churches are sick almost to the point of death.

Some of these churches pictured here will show up again as the research findings are analyzed in Chapter Four. However, it is important to note here that churches are producing different kinds of congregations as a result of the different kinds of programs they operate in their quest for an applicable church growth strategy. This author will recommend an effective discipleship program which if implemented would bring forth true disciples who would be able to disciple nations, and produce other disciples, with guarantee for church growth and optimum spiritual gains.

CHAPTER THREE

LEADERSHIP

The Small Group Structure

In the previous chapter, this author argued that discipleship is a deliberate process, which requires a deliberate action for its success. This proposition assumes that disciples do not just grow, they are made. They grow within a supportive structure, and with a strategic approach. Thus, discipleship process is a well-thought out strategy in a sustaining structure, otherwise, any disciple produced in a haphazard and unstructured system is very likely to end up in failure. Therefore, in this section, this author will analyze the structure and model of developing leaders and making disciples so that church leaders would be able to articulate an effective model for developing their leaders.

A corollary of what this author intends to establish is found in Jim Collins' research findings of how some companies stand out of the pack as they transform from "good to great" companies, and perpetuate their position for years. Although Jim Collins had his focus on corporate business outfits, the principles established are equally applicable to any organization that aspires to greatness, including the church.

On this basis therefore, this author sees the applicability of Collins' principles to church growth and intend to identify those principles as those that could project churches

to the highest level of accomplishment. The following are some of the noticeable principles:

First, Leadership stands out as one of the factors responsible for the transformation of the companies. According to Collins, “These are seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extra-ordinary results.”¹ He tagged them as “Level 5 Leaders.”² This description fits the identity of Jesus’ disciples who after they had walked with Jesus for three years, people saw their effectiveness, and “perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”³ Just as it was with the early disciples, so it is supposed to be with Jesus’ disciples of today. There is no doubt that every member of the church is a potential leader because the Bible confirms that every person has been endowed with gifts which if discovered and developed could transform an ordinary member to an extra-ordinary person.⁴ This is exactly what leadership is all about, and which this author intends to highlight in the remaining section of this chapter.

Second, structure is another feature of a great organization. Collins discovered that “getting the right people in the right seats would make the leaders able to take the company to somewhere great.”⁵ When this concept is interpolated into the church context, one could clearly see that the organization’s transformation to greatness is a factor of its structure. This is why any church which has no sustainable structure for

¹ Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York, NY: Haper Collins Publishers Inc.), 28.

² *Ibid.*, 21.

³ Acts 4:13, KJV

⁴ 1 Pet 4:10, KJV

⁵ Collins, 41.

developing its members can hardly experience any meaningful growth. In this section, this author will establish a pragmatic structure for sustaining church growth and a favorable spiritual climate for the spiritual growth of its members.

Third, People are identified as catalysts for growth. Collins found out that “if you have the right people on the bus, the problem of how to motivate and manage people largely goes away.”⁶ He summates this point by saying, “Great vision without great people is irrelevant.”⁷ It seems that the church is adopting a contrary approach by making the congregation run with the church leaders’ vision, not minding where it would take them or whether each member has a vision that they need to pursue for their own spiritual fulfillment. Still identifying “people” as the most important asset in an organization, Collins qualifies the ambiguity and relative truthfulness of the assertion by saying, “People are your most important assets turns out to be wrong. People are not your most important asset. The right people are.”⁸ Although, not every member is the “right” person by church’s standard, yet it is the leader’s responsibility to make them right by developing them into true Disciples of Christ. Thus, in the church context, Collins’ assertion could be reframed, still retaining its original meaning as, not just members make the church grow; it is disciplined members that make the difference. This is the picture modeled in the configuration of Jesus’ disciples, and it is the model today’s church is expected to pattern itself after and develop to full maturation.

⁶ Ibid., 42.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 13.

These three principles will form the fundamentals of this chapter. They are: identifying leaders in all members of the church; formulating an enduring structure in support of the process of leadership development and church growth; and establishing the process of developing members into leadership positions.

Identification of a Leader

Unless the church has a clear picture of who a leader is it is not likely that it would be able to identify one whenever they appear, neither would the church unmistakably understand what a leader does. Most importantly, the church would not be able to develop them. This understanding is essential because of the common connotation of what a leader is. Usually a leader is assumed to be someone at the top echelon of an organization, controlling its affairs. When applied to a church setup, there is only one place reserved for a leader, and that is the overseer/pastor of the church. Such an understanding could be misleading as it cannot be biblically sustained, nor does it lend itself to any practical application in secular organizations.

The biblical example of Samuel's anointing of David is relevant here. When Samuel saw David's brother, Samuel was attracted to him by his physic and appearance. However, God restrained Samuel from anointing him because "for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."⁹ In this instance, the leader God had in mind, contrary to people's choice, was the youngest in the family who was at that particular time in the wilderness keeping their father's sheep. Thus, with God, a leader is not necessarily the most privileged, most

⁹ 1 Sam 16:7, KJV

talented, or the most skilled because God does not determine a leader based on qualities that appeal to popular choice of man.

Jesus' notion of leadership expressed in His teachings is of the same concept. For instance, Jesus taught that whoever wants to be a leader shall be the servant of all (Mk 10:44). In other words, a leader is a servant, and anyone who has no heart of service is not fit to be a leader. This notion of leadership is contrary to the secular understanding, where a leader is identified by position, status, benefits of office, and title. Therefore, God's idea of leadership is more applicable in the church because it is more of service than immediate gratification, just as Jesus came to die for humankind, having stripped Himself of His heavenly glory.

This is why this author agrees with John Maxwell, a renowned authority in Christian Leadership, that "all of us are leading in some area, while in other areas, we are being led. No one is excluded from being a leader or a follower."¹⁰ Similarly, James Kouzes and Barry Posner, express rather bluntly, that "leadership is anyone's business"¹¹ Therefore, with this basic concept of a leader it is safe to consider every church member as a potential leader who could be developed to lead in the relevant areas of their gifts and calling.

¹⁰ John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader within You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.), 2.

¹¹Kouzes and Posner, *The Christian Reflection on Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 2.

Defining a Leader

There are as many definitions of leader as there are books, concepts, and opinions on the subject. The wide parameter already established that everyone is a potential leader makes it expedient for the clarification to be made as to who a true leader is. For instance, Kouzes and Posner in their approach which appears like their avoidance of a clear-cut definition saw leaders everywhere they looked. According to them, “Leaders reside in every city, in every position and place. They are employees and volunteers, young and old, rich and poor, male and female. Leadership knows no racial or religious bounds, no ethnic or cultural borders.”¹²

Maxwell however, distinguished a leader by the influence he attracts. He opined, “In any given situation with any given group there is a prominent influence. Thus, for him, a leader is “the person others will gladly and confidently follow.”¹³ Another author, Paul Powell agrees with Maxwell. He states, “The simplest definition of leadership I know is ‘influence’;” and explains, “It is the ability of one person to influence others to his point of view.”¹⁴

Therefore, this author’s working definition of a leader, for the purpose of this project is, a person who is convinced of God’s purpose for his or her life, and is able to influence others by helping them to discover and develop their divine purpose, and deploying prepared leaders to their respective areas of their gifts and calling for the overall health and wellbeing of the church of Christ.

¹² Ibid., 2.

¹³ Maxwell, 5.

¹⁴ Paul W. Powell, *Getting the Lead out of Leadership* (Tyler, TX), 55.

Essential qualities of a Leader

The above definition assumes a leader as person of influence who is supposed to possess some qualities which, among other things, are to enable him or her fulfill the purpose of a leader. This author will specify these qualities as a way of establishing a standard for the kind of leader this project is trying to identify. The qualities are specifically based on biblical parameters, and are substantiated by opinions of some notable authors and authorities as expressed in scholarly literature on the subject. They include the following:

First, a leader must have integrity. In setting out the qualification for a leader (pastor), Paul wrote to Timothy, “A bishop then must be above reproach.”¹⁵ He further states, “He must have a good report of them which are without.”¹⁶ This means that a leader must be a person of integrity. In other words, what attracts people to a leader and makes them give him their loyalty is the leader’s integrity. In their writing on the issue of integrity, which they referred to as “credibility,” Kouzes and Posner tagged it “The first law of leadership.”¹⁷ According to them, “Credibility is the foundation of leadership. If people don’t believe in the messenger, they won’t believe the message.”¹⁸ Therefore, a leader of integrity has his words match up with his actions. Maxwell agrees, “For a leader to have the authority to lead, he needs more than the title on his door. He has to have the trust of those who are following him.”¹⁹

¹⁵ 1 Tim 3:2, NIV

¹⁶ 1 Tim 3:7, NIV

¹⁷ Kouzes and Posner, 120.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Maxwell, 39.

Second, a leader must be spiritual. As one of the conditions for filling the position of a deacon, the early church specified that the person must be “full of the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ This means that he should be a person who continually yields to the control of the Holy Spirit. The evidence of being spirit-filled is demonstrated by showing the Fruit of the Spirit in one’s words and deeds. The Bible lists out the fruit as “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.”²¹ In other words, a leader is expected to have and demonstrate all the fruit, not some or a fraction of it, as an evidence of his being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul referred to it as “fruit,” a singular formation, and not “fruits” in the plural form.

Third, a leader must be responsible. Part of the author’s definition of a leader is “someone who is convinced of God’s will for his or her life. . . .” Thus, when true leaders are convinced of God’s will for them, they will go into immediate action to pursue the will, regardless of the consequences. They will be willing to accept full responsibility for consequent failure or success, and not place any blame that might accrue to subordinates. In other words, a leader is responsible for the success or failure of the mission. Harry Truman, a former President of America was quoted by Collins to have said, “You can accomplish anything in life, provided that you do not mind who gets the credit.”²² Collins puts it in the most visual way, “A leader looks out the window to apportion credit to factors outside himself when things go well At the same time, they look in the mirror to apportion responsibility, never blaming bad luck when things go poorly. A biblical

²⁰ Acts 6:3, KJV

²¹ Gal 5:22-23, KJV

²² Collins, 17.

example of accepting responsibility with courage and determination is in the experience of Prophet Isaiah who was called by God to speak an unpopular message. Yet, he did not back away from it, but accepted responsibility by responding to the call, “Here I am! Send me.”²³ This is the demonstration of responsibility at its best.

Fourth, a leader must be a permanent learner. He or she does not think of having arrived, but is always thinking of further places to go and more things to learn. Paul demonstrated this quality when he says, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”²⁴ Any time the followers get more knowledgeable than the leader, the position of the leader becomes vulnerable.

Fifth, a leader must be humble, which is demonstrated when a leader thinks soberly and appropriately about himself or herself. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans writes, “for I say, . . . to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”²⁵ Humility is one of God’s laws of promotion. The Bible says, “Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.”²⁶ This injunction is in conformity with the model of Jesus’ teaching on leadership when He says, “Whosoever will be great among you will be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”²⁷ Giving his mission to the

²³ Isa 6:8, KJV

²⁴ Phil 3:14, KJV

²⁵ Rom 12:3, KJV

²⁶ 1 Pet 5:6, KJV

²⁷ Mk 10:14, KJV

earth as an example of service in humility, Jesus says, “For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”²⁸ Kouzes and Posner attest to this truth when they write, “But the only way to make a real difference is to do humbly, without regard for recognition, ego, pride, even self-preservation. Of course, Christ is our ultimate example of this kind of humility.”²⁹

Sixth, a leader must have ability. Leadership involves having the ability to get the job done. One of the four reasons Maxwell identified as the cause of failed leadership is, “They do not know how to do it.”³⁰ Moses’ father-in-law also identified this quality in his advice to Moses in selecting those to delegate some of his responsibilities to. He says, “Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all people able men . . . and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of ten.”³¹ This is a confirmation that at every level of leadership, ability is required.

Seventh, a leader must be positive. A leader must have a positive mindset, which is a requirement for cultivating faith and for success. Paul is an example of someone with a positive mindset. He says in one of his writings, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.”³² With this kind of attitude, there is no mountain too big that cannot be surmounted because such an attitude can turn problems into blessings. It also has a double-edged effect because as it works favorably with leaders, so also does it reflect

²⁸ Mk 10:43-45, KJV

²⁹ Kouzes and Posner, 72.

³⁰ Maxwell, 75.

³¹ Ex 18:21, KJV

³² Phil 4:13, KJV

positively on the followers, because attitude is contagious. A biblical example is Nehemiah's positive attitude to get the wall of Jerusalem built which turned out to be the motivation for the builders. The Bible recalls,

Then said I unto them, ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of god which was upon me . . . and they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.³³

This is why the discouragement and frustration of the enemies could not stop the work, and the project was successfully completed. Henry Ford, one of the greatest leaders in industry was quoted as saying, "Enthusiasm is the sparkle in your eyes, the swing in your gait, the grip of your hand, the irresistible surge of will and energy to execute your ideas."³⁴

Eighth, a leader must be mature. Leadership is not for a novice or an immature self-centered person. In the list of qualifications for a pastor, and writing to Timothy, Paul identified maturity as a key point. He warns, "Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."³⁵ What determines maturity is the leader's ability to grow out of self-centeredness, and responding to situations with the patience of a person who sees the bigger picture and the result. In other words, this is the concept of Christian leadership that is "servant leadership." Kouzes and Posner attest to this concept when they write, "The lesson that leadership is a service and that leaders are servants are likely the most significant Christian feelings about the nature of

³³ Neh 3:17-18, KJV

³⁴ Powell, 108.

³⁵ 1 Tim 3:6, KJV

leadership.”³⁶ Therefore, any leader who is not ready to serve in a position of a servant-leader is not ready to be a leader. In the same vein, when others are discouraged, leaders are never discouraged. “They keep hope alive by recognizing the dedication of others as they get extraordinary things done.”³⁷

Having defined who a leader is, and the qualities that make up one, it seems the picture of a leader as defined in this research project is evolving into its proper perspective. The next logical issue is a focus on the structure under which leadership could be effectively developed. This is a point of great divergence in the church. It is the reason why the church is not producing the same kind of leaders. There are as many structures as there are denominations, each of which has its peculiar kind of leaders they are producing. The consequence is the church’s inability to produce the kind of leaders that are designed purposely for fulfilling the divine mandate of the church. However, this author’s intention is to identify a structure that would make the church able to produce leaders that would guarantee the success of its mission; and who would be able to reproduce others like them for the continuous growth and vibrancy of the church.

Leadership Developmental Structure

Leaders do not just emerge; they are made. The fact that they are made makes it expedient for the process to be modeled in some structure. The Bible says, “By their fruit ye shall know them.”³⁸ That is, the fruit is the most positive and empirical identifier of a

³⁶ Kouzes and Posner,

³⁷ Ibid., 128.

³⁸ Matt 7:16, KJV

plant. Therefore, the kind of leaders a church produces speaks to the character and nature of the church. This is determined by the structure and methodology through which such leaders are developed. However, just like a natural plant requires certain environmental conditions like good soil, sunlight, water and air to grow and bear fruits, so also does a leader need to be rooted in some favorable structure to be optimally fruitful. The intention of this author therefore, is to identify the most favorable structure for effective leadership development. This will be followed in the next chapter by the research findings, a process that should confirm the effectiveness of the identified structure.

The Small Group Structure

This author recognizes the fact that there are various structures that the church could choose from in developing its leaders. However, this author wants to show, with convincing evidence, the most favorable structure. Taking a cue from the Parable of the Sower, a model emerges in which the Bible states that the sower sowed his seed into different kinds of soil like the roadside, among thorns, and on the rock--with differing negative outcomes. However, the seed sown on the good ground was able to bear fruit, but in differing levels of output. The Bible says, "Others fell on good ground, and yield fruit that spring up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred."³⁹ This shows that ecological conditions are predominant factors in the output of the sown seed.

Similarly, different kinds of structures of leadership development would normally produce different kinds of leaders. As the sower would naturally prefer the environment

³⁹ Matt 4:1-8, KJV

that yields the optimum level of output, so also is a church leader expected to adopt the structure of leadership development that would produce the highest level of leaders. This author therefore, wishes to identify the small group structure as the model for such maximum level leadership. Dave Earley agrees with this assertion when he writes, “Experience shows that leadership development and discipleship happens best in the small group ministry of a local church.”⁴⁰ He further observes, “The churches experiencing explosive and healthy growth are churches that are raising up disciple-making leaders in their small groups to lead their small groups.”⁴¹ Therefore, the churches that effectively practice small group ministry have some good outcome to show off their experience. Writing on his experience of small groups, Jeffery Arnold says, “Small groups produce multiple benefits. They can release the ministry of the laity, offer superior pastoral care, and better challenge people to be like Jesus Christ.”⁴²

Arnold identifies three operational foundations for small group ministry. These are sociological, biblical, and theological foundations.⁴³ He noted that in the American social system “45 per cent of Americans are in some form of a small group, and many more indicate an interest in joining one group or more groups,”⁴⁴ affirming that the small group system is not alien in the American social system. In considering its relevance to the church, Arnold observes, “Of those people in groups, 60 per cent are in church-related

⁴⁰ Dave Earley, *Turning Members into Leaders* (Houston, TX: Cell Group Resources), 33.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴² Jeffrey Arnold, *Starting Small Groups: Building Communities that Matter* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 11.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

groups, and a large portion of the remaining 40 per cent is studying spiritual issues.” He concludes, “These statistics demonstrate that small groups are a powerful force in American culture.”⁴⁵

Sociological Foundations

With this kind of cultural affinity with small groups, which the American social system is already familiar with, Arnold lists out four reasons why small groups are sociologically beneficial to the church. First, small groups provide a safe place where people can be heard; second, small groups give our dysfunctional society a positive model for building healthy relationships, helping to strengthen the family and other interactions; third, since people are known deeply in small group settings, they are prayed for, cared for, and challenged in a way that no other church structure can offer; and fourth, small groups can keep people on the cutting edge by consistently demanding more in the way of Christian leadership.⁴⁶

When compared with the regular church situation in which there is no small group structure, but every member is just a face in the crowd, interpersonal relationship is not available. Leith Anderson affirms, “The small group movement is more than support groups. It is a grass-root movement of people gathering for friendship and common interest.”⁴⁷ Therefore, small group relationship is expected to provide psychological satisfaction to those who belong to them.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁷ Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers), 36.

Biblical Foundations

There are many biblical references in both the Old and New Testaments in support of small group structure. From the divine mandate God gave to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth,”⁴⁸ it is evident that multiplication—physical and spiritual—was God’s intention. It is by their fruitfulness and multiplying that the earth could be filled, replenished, and subdued. The same kind of mandate was reiterated to Noah following the destruction of the earth by flood. “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.”⁴⁹

Similarly, when God called Abraham, saying “get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee,”⁵⁰ God’s intention was to make him “a great nation.”⁵¹ Though Abraham was yet to have a child, God still promised to “multiply him exceedingly.”⁵² Some centuries later, when Abraham’s descendants were being led as God’s people into the land of Canaan which God had provided for them, God gave them the Law; and in the process, confirms the

⁴⁸ Gen 1:28, KJV

⁴⁹ Gen 9:1, KJV

⁵⁰ Gen 12:1, KJV

⁵¹ Gen 12:1-2, KJV

⁵² Gen 17:2, KJV

divine mandate once again, “So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm my covenant with you.”⁵³

Example of the early church

The early church was established on small groups, which had its natural elements in homes. This is because the home was the social basis of interaction for the family and community. Thus, in conformity with this social phenomenon, the early church used to meet in houses. For example, the Scriptures identified the churches that met in the homes of Priscilla and Aquila, and Philemon.⁵⁴ In addition, the Scriptures give a glimpse of the functioning of such house church,

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.⁵⁵

There are some common practices by the early church in this passage that show their Communality and closeness with one another. Therefore, it can safely be conclude that “meetings in homes provided the backbone of the church structure.”⁵⁶ McBride further observed that the house church remained the most pervasive form of church structure up until the time of Constantine, about 274-337 AD, when church buildings began to replace the house church.⁵⁷ From this time on to the present, the erroneous

⁵³ Lev 26:9, KJV

⁵⁴. Rom 18:2-3, KJV

⁵⁵ Acts 2:42-47, KJV

⁵⁶ Neal F. McBride, *How to Lead Small Groups* (Colorado springs, CO: NavPress, 1990), 19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

theological perception of the church being referred to as a building rather than the Body of Christ emerged. This is why this author is interested in helping the church to redefine itself so that it would maintain its original meaning of a body of people, rather than a building.

There is no doubt that the exponential growth which the early church experienced could be traceable to its small group structure. For example, the Bible says, “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied . . .”⁵⁸ In the same account, it was reported, “The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem.”⁵⁹ There is a significant difference between “multiply” and “increase.” Multiplication indicates an exponential increase rather than normal increase. Yonggi Cho explains this point from the standpoint of the cells in the human body. He writes,

The church is a living organism, and cell groups are living cells, and they function like the cells in the human body. In a living organism, the cells grow and divide. Where once there was one cell, there become two. They become four, then eight, then sixteen, and so on. Cells don't simply add to the body, they are multiplied by geometric progression.⁶⁰

Thus, the church is not to be satisfied with normal increase contrary to the practice of some churches that celebrate a couple of families' visit to the church as first timers.

Theological Foundations

⁵⁸ Acts 6:1, KJV

⁵⁹ Acts 6:7, KJV

⁶⁰ David Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Gainesville, FL: bridge-Logos Publishers), 63.

Jesus modeled His ministry on small groups. He chose twelve men to follow Him, with the sole intention of “making them fishers of men.”⁶¹ This is why Jesus spent most of His time with the disciples. “They were together constantly; they travelled together, shared meals, experienced mutual hardship, and literally lived together.”⁶² Thus, the small group structure was the leadership training method that Jesus used in developing the disciples. His goal was to equip them in such a way that they would continue to carry on the work of the gospel after He would have returned to heaven. With the kind of interaction that was evident between Jesus’ and His disciples, what Jesus was building with them was relationship, and not an institution.

The basic point of attraction here is that if Jesus could model His ministry on small groups, there is no reason why the church should not follow this model. If we are to “be imitators of God . . .,”⁶³ this is an aspect of Jesus’ example the church should imitate. This is not just for the purpose of being Christlike (which is expected of us), but also because of the indisputable success of such a model. It is the effectiveness of the small group model that made the disciples able to carry the gospel from “Jerusalem, unto Judea, to Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth.”⁶⁴ Therefore, for the present church to witness beyond our immediate community, and make some impact on our society, and nation, we should adopt the effective and dynamic model of Jesus Christ, the small group model.

⁶¹ Matt 4:19, KJV

⁶² Ibid., 17.

⁶³ Eph 5:12, KJV

⁶⁴ Acts 1:8, KJV

What this author is emphasizing is the fact that Christianity flourishes in relationships—personal relationship with God, relationship with neighbors, and with fellow believers. This is the summation of the Great Commandment,⁶⁵ and the New Commandment.⁶⁶ Relationship is also the reason behind God’s intention for creating mankind, whom He intended for fellowship and for His pleasure. Fellowship with God was a regular and normal thing with Adam and Eve, until the devil threw a spanner in the wheel of the relationship by making them to sin (Gen 3). Yet, God in His mercy made alternative provision for restoring man’s fellowship with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

Another kind of relationship, which is expressed in the Great Commandment, is relationship with neighbors. This explains why Adam was considered not complete without Eve, a life which God considered as not good because Adam was alone. Therefore, to normalize Adam’s condition, God decided to make “a help meet for him.” (Gen 2:18). Andy Stanley and Bill Willits mean the same thing when they write, “Community is God’s idea. . . ‘in community’ is how God intended us to experience life. It is how He has hard-wired our souls. When people don’t need more things to attend, they do need the kind of life-giving benefits that occur when people connect regularly in a meaningful way.”⁶⁷ Thus, in every aspect of Christian doctrine, relationship is the focus, and church leaders have the responsibility of promoting the relationship of their members

⁶⁵ Matt 22:37-40, KJV

⁶⁶ Jn 13:14, KJV

⁶⁷ Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 ways to Building a Small Group Culture* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc.), 174.

with God, and with neighbors, and other believers for their spiritual completeness and perfection.

Cell Group Models

In his categorization, Comiskey identified different models of small groups, approaching it from their process of evolution and growth as a movement. He identified the following: the Korean Cell-church movement, the Meta Model, the Pure, Pure, Cell church, the G12 phenomenon, and the Radical Middle⁶⁸

The Korean Cell-Church Movement

This movement was led by David Yonggi Cho, was started in his church in Seoul, South Korea in 1984, and through this model, his church was transformed into the now known as the largest church in the world with over 500,000 worshippers. Although many church leaders tried to transfer the model to the American system, Comiskey observes, “Majority who tried to repeat Cho’s small-group system failed.”⁶⁹ He attributed the reason for their failure as Cho’s inability to give “the nuts and bolts” of making the system work in his books.⁷⁰ However, many still regard the model as the foremost of the models, which opened the eyes of church leaders to church growth through home cell groups.

⁶⁸ Joel Comiskey, *The Church that Multiplies: Growing a Healthy Cell Church in North America* (Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2002), 55-59.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

The Meta Model

The adoption of Cho's model in the American culture was traced to Carl George who demonstrates that "the church of the future would be a collection of small groups."⁷¹ He coined "Meta" for his model⁷². In this model, George regarded Sunday school classes, ministry teams, outreach teams, worship production team, sports teams, recovery groups, and others as small groups. By this all-embracing approach to small groups, churches regarded themselves as already having small groups, but because there was no concrete approach to developing leaders, "the quality control of the cell itself suffered under the meta model."⁷³

The Pure, Pure Cell church

This model, developed by Ralph Neighbor appeared in 1990. The main emphasis is on equipping every cell member for cell-based evangelism. Neighbor detailed the process of equipping every cell member for the work of ministry, especially evangelism.⁷⁴ However, the awareness which this movement created did not last for long because of the impression which church leaders had in Neighbor's approach that he was "against the conventional church in tone and operation."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., 57.

⁷² Ibid., 59.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 58.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

The G12 Phenomenon

This model is traceable to the International Charismatic Mission (ICM) in Bogota, Columbia, initiated in the 1990's. Although the model has its origin in Cho's model, it was given a cultural twist that made the model adaptable. By the application of this system, it was reported that ICM grew into multiple thousands.⁷⁶ This model regarded everyone as a potential cell leader; and established a "clear, dynamic equipping training track that prepared everyone for ministry."⁷⁷ Following Jesus' example of twelve disciples, this model encourages the multiplication of a group as it gets as large as twelve members, with the new group to be led by a trained apprentice. This model promotes a healthy growth of the church as every member is recognized as potential leader, and are assisted to grow into their full potential.

The Radical Middle

This model seems to have Comiskey's sympathy and inclination. According to him, leaders in this group "greatly desire to maintain the key components of cell ministry, but they are just as passionate to make sure it actually works in North America."⁷⁸ Exploring the term, "Radical Middle," Comiskey says, it "highlights the radical nature of cell ministry yet also proclaims the need for practicality—it must work."⁷⁹ This

⁷⁶ Ibid., 58.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

presupposes that this group cannot be identified with a specific model, or a coaching structure. Their approach is “if it works, use it. If it doesn’t work, don’t.”⁸⁰ They are open to adopting principles that make cell groups work in other churches and adopting it to their own system in as much as it is able to satisfy their motive “To make disciples, develop leaders, evangelize more effectively, and eventually plant new cell churches.”⁸¹

Although this categorization is not able to define churches in terms of their small group structure, it is able to provide some information as to the pragmatic evolvement of small group movement in America. However, a more progressive approach is worth looking at which is expected to provide a functional application and leadership structure for the church. In this approach, the churches are identified simply as “with” small groups; “of” small groups; and “is” small groups. By this classification, it is easy to relate churches with small groups to traditional churches; while of small groups churches to hybrid ones; and is small group churches to organic churches. Each of these church groupings will be analyzed in this section, and would serve as the basis for classifying churches in the research analysis later in this chapter.

Strategy for Effective Leadership Development

This author has been able to establish the basis for leadership development as small group structure. However, it is not enough to set up the structure without an understanding of the methodology of the structure for leadership development. In concluding this section therefore, this author will set up a methodology with the small

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 60.

groups for the development of the leader through the perimeters of the Great Commandment, and the New Commandment. This is essential because in Jesus' divine mandate to the church, He established the method of reaching out as teaching. He says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . ." ⁸² What mode of teaching did Jesus instruct the disciples to adopt? It is clear that they were to teach by observation. What are they to observe? Whatever Jesus has instructed them, which are embedded in the Great Commandment, and the New Commandment. This author will therefore, expatiate on how small group structure could accommodate the observatory mode of teaching.

It is interesting to note that "to observe" in Greek is *tereo*, which means "keep," or "keep watch." In a broad sense, it means, "Give attention to." ⁸³ With the church setting, it is difficult for members to watch or give attention to whatever goes on in a two-hour weekly service in a participatory and involving way. Rather, the congregation is made to watch in a passive and non-involving way. Therefore, in a regular church setting, it is difficult for members to accomplish fully what Jesus has commanded the church to teach. This is Yonggi Cho's point of emphasis when he writes, "While they are having words of encouragement from the pulpit, they are experiencing in church much the same thing as in secular life. They are merely spectators." ⁸⁴

However, with small groups, it is a different story. Yonggi Cho observes, "Home cell groups provide a real opportunity for people to find meaningful involvement in the

⁸² Matt 28:20, KJV

⁸³ Stephen D. Renn ed., *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2005).

⁸⁴ Cho, 47.

life of their church . . . there is an opportunity for everybody to become involved.”⁸⁵ The way it works is that in small groups, “members have the opportunity to bring a word of prophecy, tongues, and interpretation, a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom. Each member can pray for the sick, and in faith believe God will hear his prayer and heal the sick.”⁸⁶ The point this author is making is that the teaching methodology that involves observation and keeping watch with the intention to learn by example is better done in a small group setting. McBride means the same thing when he writes, “Small groups are excellent method to facilitate human interaction and accomplishment.”⁸⁷ With the methodology of interaction, it is necessary to establish how this model is applicable to Jesus’ commandments to the church.

The Great Commandment

The first command to Christians is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind; while the second is like the first, but it is directed toward loving neighbors.⁸⁸ Small groups provide the content and context for that mode of teaching because it involves demonstrating love. Love is shown by action, and when a person shows love by example, others replicate the action. Apostle Paul gave a similar admonition to the Thessalonians when he wrote, “For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us . . . to make ourselves

⁸⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁸⁸ Matt 22:37-40, KJV

an example unto you to follow.”⁸⁹ The best impartation is accomplished when people are close enough to observe how love is demonstrated to God and to neighbors.

The same is true of loving neighbors. When a small group meets at home, relationship can be observed, and replicated. This is unlike what happens in a church setting in which the people have little or no time to invest in lasting relationships. The Great Commission is the prime mission of every Christian and every church; and therefore, it is imperative for individuals and the church to foster its fulfillment. In Matt 28:19-20, the imperative verb is to make disciples, which is what every New Testament believer is supposed to be doing. However, the church is pleased with making converts, and members, which negates the spiritual growth of such converts and members. Jesus assigned us specifically to teach them to observe all that He has commanded. The primary way by which disciples could be developed is to help them to observe Christ-like characters of mature Christians. The most effective way to do this is by small group interactive relationship.

The New Commandment

Concerning the New Commandment, the Lord states “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.”⁹⁰ As with the Great Commandment, love is best expressed in small group settings where effective relationships could be built. Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, writing on their

⁸⁹ 2 Thess 3: 7-9, KJV

⁹⁰ Jn 13:34-35, KJV

experience in community building, observe, “We have found that people are naturally cared for best by those who know them best—those with whom they are walking through life.”⁹¹ The nature of a typical church is to assemble on Sundays, and depart after service with little or no form of interaction during the week. As observed by McBride, “to stimulate one another to love and good deeds and to encourage one another are activities which are possible in large group’s service, but not probable, On the other hand, the small group’s relational dynamics provides the ideal setting.”⁹² In Yonggi Cho’s practical experience of cell groups, he attests to this fact and writes,

There are often tears when friends have to separate to attend different meetings. There is much security for the members in the cell groups. Such one becomes a family member with the others of the group in a kind of community relationship, which is more than community . . . The fellowship goes beyond counsel and prayer; members really take care of one another.⁹³

“One another” Relationship

There is no doubt that small group structure guarantees the biblical conviction that the Holy Spirit officially commissions every believer into a ministry of caring for one another. The “one another” structures do not refer to specific positions or gifts in the church, but to the congregation as a whole; and there is no better place to demonstrate the one another injunction that in the small groups. Carl George observed that there are fifty-nine of such injunctions in the New Testament.⁹⁴ Therefore, it is in small groups that,

⁹¹ Stanley and Willits, 96.

⁹² Ibid., 21.

⁹³ Cho, 51-64.

⁹⁴ For the full list of the fifty-nine “one another” in the New Testament, see Carl George’s *Prepare to Grow Your Church for the Future* (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H Revel Company 1991), 129 – 131.

members celebrate their good occasions together; and are also the closest to any member who mourns the loss of a loved one, or is admitted to the hospital for any form of ailment. The small groups promote and facilitate their love for one another just as Christ has commanded Christians to do.

In summary, this chapter has argued that in a healthy leadership model of discipleship, every church member is a potential leader, having the gifts and calling of God in their lives. Therefore, church leaders should treat them as such, not as a number, but as an individual with a purpose to fulfill. It has also been demonstrated that the best structure for leadership development is the small group structure where members have the opportunity to observe all that Jesus has commanded the church to teach. The next chapter is going to show, through the analysis of the research data, how far the churches have succeeded in developing leaders by the methodology they adopt, and how effective such leaders are in impacting other leaders and their communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATION'S CHURCH HEALTH

The previous chapters have focused on the following themes: Chapter One - what disciple and discipleship mean; Chapter Two: how a disciple evolves into a leader, and what Christian leadership means; and Chapter Three: the most appropriate leadership structure. In this Chapter, the main target is to connect all the parts together in the bigger structure of the church to determine how the church could systematically and deliberately grow into a healthy and vibrant institution. This will be followed by an analysis of the research findings to determine the current health of the American church and how their structure has influenced their growth and spiritual health.

The Church

The appropriate starting point is to have a clear understanding of what a church is. It is necessary to have a scripturally supported picture of a church, which would form the basis of the understanding of the concept of the church in this project. This is necessary because it would clear every form of misconception, especially as the people generally understand the word. What then is the theological connotation of a church? The church,

ekklesia in Greek, in a more general sense means “people of God in congregation”¹ The same word *ekklesia* is used in Pauline epistles to refer to church as “the body of Christ.”² The word *ekklesia* literally refers to church as the ‘called (*kaleo*) out (*ek*) ones. “This means that the church is ‘called out’ from the world by God and ‘called out’ to proclaim His greatness.”³

Elmer Towns and Ed Stetzer identified the following features of a New Testament church.⁴ First, a church is a group of people that covenants together. This is to say a body is not a church until they are able to establish the fact that they have a spiritually binding union with each other in the bonds of faith. Second, it is a group that maintains certain biblical practices and functions like baptism and the Lord’s Supper; well codified and voluntarily or involuntarily binding theological principles are essential ingredients of a New Testament Church. For this group, the theological principles are offshoots of the laws and orders as contained in the Holy Bible.

Third, a church is a group, which presents the Word of God in preaching and teaching--an essential tenet of the operational pedagogy of a Christian Church is to emulate aspects of the modes of operation of its Master, Jesus Christ, who was known for preaching, teaching, and healing. Preaching and teaching are the two modes and strategies for which the word of God is disseminated. Finally, a church is a group that is served by two types of leaders, pastors (elders) and deacons. The laity and the clergy are

¹ Stephens D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005).

² Eph 1:22, 5:23, Col 1:18, 24.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Elmer Towns and Ed Stetzer, *Perimeters of Light* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 66.

two componential constituencies in any definable New Testament Church. The clergy, paid or unpaid, often comprises of pastors (elders) and deacons. Though this designation may vary from denomination to denomination, it is essentially the common model of church leadership.

By this clarification, a church is better understood as a group of people, rather than a building neither does a church need a building to be called a church. Therefore, it is not necessarily where a church meets that qualifies them to be called a church, or its institutionalization, but whether it meets the biblical standard as specified above.

Having thus defined a church, it will be necessary to find out from the survey conducted on the state of health of the American church. This analysis will be based on some parameter like: Church's growth rate, the vision of the church leadership, training and development programs, soul-winning methods, and small group structure. Each of these factors will be discussed in the following section.

Summary of Research Sampling

The on-going research was a sampling of different churches in a variety of sizes, ranging from congregation of 50 to 2, 500; and in different locations. For example, we gathered data from Atlanta, Georgia, a multicultural metropolitan city; Madison, Wisconsin, a middle-level semi-urban city; Chicago, Illinois, a cosmopolitan mega city; Nashville, Tennessee, a mid-level urban community; and New York, New York, a cosmopolitan multicultural mega city. These samples are randomly selected, but they are wide enough to give a fair representation of the American churches. The length of service of the pastors in charge of these churches range from three to twenty-seven years. In all,

twenty respondents are analyzed, and the churches are identified in this project by numbers that were randomly ascribed to them and are maintained throughout this project, and not by their names. The goal is to conceal respondents' identities and keep them as anonymous as legally and morally feasible. Also, pastors' names are not disclosed for the same reason.

However, the analysis represents a clear representation of what the churches have entered in their responses to the survey questionnaire. All analyses are based on scholarly speculations and not meant to be a prophetic pronouncement on any of the churches surveyed.

Churches' Growth Pattern

All the factors considered in this chapter for in speculating on the health of the churches are reflected in one basic factor, which is how effective the churches are in raising disciples who would be taught whatsoever Jesus has commanded them. In determining this factor however, this researcher decides to compute the average number of guests which the churches receive in a one month period; and use the figure to determine the number they retain based on the retention ratio which the pastor have indicated in their questionnaire. The outcome will determine how effective the churches are in converting their guests who are also invariably their new converts into disciples. It is when the church is able to retain the new converts that they would be able to train them, and help them identify their gifts. Although it is not everyone who is retained by the church that would eventually be true disciples, for the purpose of this project, the assumption is that all the retained converts receive training for discipleship. The retention rate computed in

this section will be used as the standard rate for all the factors of church health considered in this section. The summary is as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Retention and Growth Rate of Churches

CHURCH	1ST TIME GUESTS	RETENTION RATE	PST SVC YEAR
1	15	4.5	2
2	5	1.5	4
3	5	1.5	7
4	5	0.5	6
5	15	10.5	3
6	5	0	n/s
7	5	2.5	n/s
8	5	0.5	n/s
9	15	1.5	n/s
10	60	42	7
11	15	1.5	n/s
12	90	9	23
13	5	0.5	17
14	5	0.5	8
15	5	2.5	3
16	15	1.5	10
17	5	0.5	10
18	5	0.5	8
19	5	0.5	5
20	15	1.5	15
SUMMARY	300	83.5 = 28%	AV 8.5

In the churches' attraction rate of guests, the following findings are obvious: 12 churches (60%) attract an average of 5 guests each in a one-month period. 6 churches (27%) attract an average of 15 guests each within the same time frame. 2 churches (11%) attract more than 60 guests within the same time frame. Collectively all the churches attract 300 guests within the same time frame. Out of the total number of guests attracted,

the churches' retention rates are as follows: the 12 churches which attract an average of 5 guests each retain a total of 10.5 of the guests = 1 guest each per church per month. The 6 churches which attract an average of 15 guests each are able to retain a total of 19.5 guests = 4 guests per church per month. The 2 churches which attract an average of 60 guests each retain a total of 51 guest = 25 guests per church per month. Out of the total number of 300 guest for all the churches, only 83.5 were retained = 28%.

Comments

At the rate of 28 percent of retaining and discipling converts, it is very obvious that churches are not growing at the rate at which they can disciple nations effectively. This is a confirmation that the churches' strategy and methods of evangelism and discipleship are not effective, at least compared with the Biblical standard of the early disciples in which "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."⁵

This is also a confirmation that the strategy which could make the churches grow exponentially is the small group structure, but which evidently is not fully explored for its effectiveness. It is therefore not surprising that the churches are in the most pitiable state in which they are, and which this researcher has affirmed all through this project could change for better if they could adopt the workable strategy and structure of small groups.

Vision of Church Leadership and Church Health

⁵ Acts 2:47, KJV

In this research, we observe that the most fundamental issue with the health of the church is a clear and concise vision or lack thereof. It is one thing to have a clear vision, it is another thing entirely to invest on, and inspire the vision in the congregation because Christianity is not a lone journey; it is a group activity, and a destination that fulfills the purpose of the Church. Dale Earley quoted the church researcher and author, George Barna as saying, “Let’s get one thing straight from the start. If you want to be a leader, vision is not an option; it is part of the standard equipment of a real leader.” He continues, “The equation is quite simple, no vision = no leadership.”⁶

The stated vision statements of the churches, their target areas, and their growth rates are as illustrated in table 4.2., without any attempt to modify the intended meaning of the vision statements.

Table 4.2. Church Vision, Target Areas and Effect on Growth

CHURCH	VISION	TARGET AREA	INCREASE RATE PM	CHURCH PLANT
1	-Restoration of the lost -Serving God’s people -Inspire workers for kingdom building	Community	4.5	0
2	-Transforming lives -Transforming communities	Community	1.5	1
3	-Outreach to community -Meeting spiritual, emotional & material needs of widows and orphans	Community World	1.5	1
4	Gospel preached in all countries -Prepare for Christ’s second coming	City	0.5	4
5	To empower & restore families	Community, nation, world	10.5	0
6	No Vision	No specific system	0	0

⁶ Dale Earley, *Turning Members into Leaders* (Houston, TX: Cell Group Resources, 2004), 17.

7	To carry out the great commission	Community, City, nation	2.5	0
8	-Preach the gospel to community -Help realize potential -Train & release them	Community	0.5	1
9	-Impact community -support absent spouses in military -support single parents	Community, city	1.5	1
10	-To educate, edify & develop leaders, teachers & others -To be the role model to community	Community, city, nation, world	42	0
11	Same as mother church's vision (not known)	Community, city, county	1.5	1
12	-Building families, transforming communities, reconciling cultures, impacting the world	World	9	4
13	To build God's kingdom here on earth, and reach out to the people locally and internationally	Community, city, and world	0.5	0
14	To reveal the Father to the world through Christ; to establish His purpose on earth; developing people to His full image	Community	0.5	0
15	Making Christ known to all	Community, city, county	2	0
16	Connecting people to God through Christ	Community, city, world	1.5	1
17	To grow the church spiritually and numerically	Community	0.5	0
18	To preach the Word of God, minister to families; encourage one another in Christ; take our neighbor to heaven	Community	0.5	0
19	Vision for soul & harvest	World	0.5	0
20	Reach the unsaved, unchurched, and the uncommitted with the gospel as we empower them to live victorious life	Community, city, county	1.5	0
ANALYSIS			83.5	14

Discussion

Churches 6 and 12 have no vision statement. We assume that by not indicating a vision statement, they have none. Thus, we can safely assume that such Churches that have no specific visions are possibly following the status quo and cannot actively engage their members and consequently cannot grow. Thus, such Churches are sure to gradually die off. This is in line with the biblical warning that, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”⁷ It is not a surprise that Church Six has no target area, and therefore has zero increase in a one month period. Church Twelve which has the “world” as its focus area, and is poised to “build families, and transform communities, reconciling cultures, and impacting the world,” is able to have an average of six additional persons in a one month period. This figure is relatively high probably due to the high number of guests, of which the church claims to have sixty in a month. However, the retention ratio of ten percent is common as with the other churches surveyed.

Church Two’s vision is “to transform lives and transform communities.” This does not represent a vision in the true and biblical definition of the word. The question as to what the church is transforming from and to what remains unclear. This is a generic vision. Generic vision can deal with social issues generally but cannot deal with personal spiritual matters specifically. Many orthodox Churches have traditionally followed such generic visions, and so even if they are able to deal with larger social issues, like for example, the Salvation Army or the Catholic Missions, they would find it difficult to reach individual souls and transform their lives for the service of the Lord. Churches with such indefinably large visions often dwindle in true memberships. Although the focus

⁷ Prov 29:18, KJV.

area is the community, the church could retain an average of 1.5 persons in a one-month period.

Church Five's vision "to empower and restore families" does not state what to "empower" the families to do, and what to restore it from. This too, like Church Two, provides a generic declaration. It sounds more like a political statement than a vision. Pastors with such vision could only do motivational speeches rather than provide life-changes messages for the Church. They would talk about "family values," "sanctity of marriage," and many nice sounding social issues. The problem is that as good as this kind of "vision" is, it does not translate to the transformation of the heart or the restoration of true discipleship. The first time guests for this church is an average of 15 in a one month period. The increase of 10.5 persons seems relatively high because of the church's claim of 70 percent retention rate.

Church Seven's vision of "carrying out the great commission" is like saying, "I am in school because I want to be a student." Once you are in school, being a student is not a choice. Similarly, carrying out the great commission is the essence of being a church. However, this church fails to articulate what it needs to do in carrying out the great commission. Again, it is a sound good "vision" lacking in specificity because it is shortsighted. The limited scope of such vision is manifested in its tendency to get the attention of those who love theological languages such as the phrase, "the great commission," but as soon as they are drawn to such a church and found it to lack in substance, they will not be able to stay there or just remain there for socialization rather than for any spiritual benefit. The church's increase averages 2.5 persons in a one month period.

Another vaguely stated vision is that of Church Sixteen, which states that its own vision of the church is “Connecting people to God through Christ.” So also is Church Eighteen whose vision, among other things is “To take our neighbor to heaven.” It is difficult to explain this kind of vision to a congregation who is struggling with the concept of heaven. Thus, it is difficult to get the people understand how the church would get them to a place they do not probably believe exists. For this vision to be meaningful, it has to be explicit on the people intended; where they are at presently, what the church intend them to become after connecting them; and how they would be connected. Again, this is a generic statement and in no way would such vision address or meet the needs of the people. It is not surprising that the churches average one person in a one-month period.

Church Eight’s vision states, “We preach Christ to our community, help them realize their potential, train them in ministry, and release them to God’s work.” It would be difficult to share this kind of vision with the congregation because it does not state what the church is to preach; in what kind of community it is to preach; and the target group it is intended to reach in the community. The inability of the church to attract not more than 0.5 persons is an expected outcome.

Comments

It is, therefore, no surprise that the survey findings are exactly as predicted, because the church leaderships either have no vision or have visions that are not clear, makes it difficult for the congregations to be carried along into achieving their churches’ visions and by implication their lives’ purposes. In stating their vision, this author observes that

church leaders describe what they aspire to do, rather than what God has given them as assignment to accomplish. In some cases, the vision does not align with the target areas for evangelism. For instance, Church Four's vision is "Gospel preached in all countries," but the target area for soul-winning is the city. This is why the church's growth rate is less than one person in a one-month period.

This is exactly the picture of the American church today. Going by Barna's standard, some church leaders have no business leading their churches because they have no vision for the church. This is also why the churches are not able to experience exponential growth and spiritual vibrancy. As observed by Earley, "The largest church in the world began as a dream."⁸ Yonggi Cho, the pastor of the largest church himself asserts, "You are only going to grow only as big as your dream."⁹ The low growth rates of churches in this research project is a reflection of the essence of a God-inspired vision without which the church has no motivation for growth.

An evidence of growth is fruitfulness which is typified in the context of church growth by the number of churches planted; and as analyzed in the survey, all the churches are able to reproduce 14 new churches. This is a confirmation that the systems the churches are adopting for their growth is not yielding fruit. However, the strategy of small groups makes the evolution of new churches inevitable, because as the cell groups grow and multiply, new churches are naturally born. Yonggi Cho, expressing his practical experience writes, "Begin to look for needs, loving people and helping them to

⁸ Earley, 15.

⁹ David Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Carnesville, FL: Bridge-Logs Publications, 1981), 168.

start a nucleus of a home cell group. As each cell grows and begin to divide, you'll soon have a church."¹⁰ Mike Slaughter predicts, "If we are not giving birth to new churches, we will become irrelevant to the next generation."¹¹ It is therefore, no wonder that the church is becoming irrelevant in the present American culture because of its inability to give birth to young churches in their neighborhoods.

Training & Development Program and Church Health

Training is an important aspect of church growth because "successful multiplication will never happen without developing potential leaders."¹² In this research, this researcher determined the development program of the churches surveyed by asking pastors to ascertain the different levels attainable in their programs from level 1-5. Fifteen churches which represents 75 percent of the churches have some kinds of training programs, while three churches which represents 15 percent of the churches have no training program of any kind. This is also with the understanding that a standard training program is usually more than one stage because the first stage is usually what churches generally regard as new member's class. This is like an induction program by which new members are familiarized with the church. Out of the fifteen churches that have programs, four of the churches, which represent 20 percent have this one-level kind of training.

¹⁰ Cho, 77.

¹¹ Slaughter, 89.

¹² Earley, 79.

This author's intention is to determine the effectiveness of the churches' training programs based on the anticipated new skills to be acquired by the participants. Thus, pastors are asked to determine what their trainees are expected to be skilled in doing after the training. The following options were available: Taking part in church activities, starting his/her ministry, winning souls, training others, small groups, and others (to be specified).

All respondents indicated multiple choices apart from Church Five which trains for soul-winning; and Churches Seventeen, and Eighteen, which train for church ministries. Therefore, analyzing each factor for its growth effect will be misleading. However, the training and development programs of the churches surveyed are as illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Training and Development Programs on Church Growth

Church	Trgn Levels	Church ministries	Starting ministry	Winning souls	Training others	Small group
1	1					
2	1					
3	3					
4	5					
5	1					
6	-					
7	1					
8	-					
9	5					
10	5					
11	4					
12	2					
13	3					
14	3					
15	2					
16	3					

17	-					
18	2					
19	-					
20	3					
Analysis		90%	15%	50%	40%	35%

The following results are evident from the survey. Ninety percent of the churches determine their members' new skills by their taking part in church activities, or belonging to church ministries; 50 percent determine their members' skills by their ability to win souls; 40 percent determine members skills by their ability to train others; 35 percent determine members skills by their ability to lead small groups; 15 percent determine their members' skills by their ability to start the ministries of their calling/gifting.

Discussion

It is evident from the above results that 90 percent the churches we surveyed are activity motivated. These are churches that believe that spiritual growth of their members is dependent on their members' involvement in church activities like ushering, choir, teaching Sunday school or children ministry. This could also mean members' commitment to some church ministries like men's and women's fellowship, youth, and prayer groups. In these churches, leaders are developed for church activities and programs.

With 50 percent of churches developing their members for soul winning, it shows that about half of the churches in the country depend on seekers to come into their churches to find salvation rather than their members going out to extend salvation to them. This shows that about half of the churches have no program for making their members soul winners. This also shows that half of the churches' congregations are mere

spectators on the pews who are in the church just to “watch” how the pastors and other people “perform” on Sunday service. This is also an indication of an unhealthy Body of Christ. When half of the congregation is not active in discipling others, it is evident that the body of Christ is paraplegic—one side paralysis—which makes the whole body ineffective.

A true disciple should be able to train other disciples. In the survey, 40 percent train their members for the purpose of making them trainers of others. Unless the church makes the conscious effort of making the converted the converters, the church cannot grow.

Those who train their members to lead small groups constitute 35 percent of the respondents. What this shows is that the churches do not design their small groups for church growth and members’ spiritual development. This is a great omission by the church. As ascertained by this researcher in Chapter Three, small group is the most effective structure for church growth. This is a proof of the inability of church leaders to maintain a healthy condition, and why they are in a state of stagnation or decline.

The Bible makes it clear that God has given gifts to every member of the Body of Christ;¹³ and it is the responsibility of the pastor to help them develop those gifts.¹⁴ However, when only 15 percent of the churches develop their members for the purpose of developing and deploying their gifts, it is completely at variance with God expectation of the church. This shows that pastors are interested in keeping members in their churches

¹³ 1 Pet 4:10, KJV

¹⁴ Eph 4:11=12, KJV

¹⁴ Earley, 88.

for building their churches, rather than developing and deploying them to build God's kingdom

Comments

Without a clear strategy of developing leaders, the church cannot grow. The process though is involving, is a worthwhile process, which every church should determine to undertake. Earley states, "It is hard work. And it is worth it. When you know people you've developed are leading healthy, growing, multiplying groups, you'll be glad you paid the price and so will they."¹⁵ It is so unfortunate that churches have no clear-cut development programs for potential leaders who have the untapped and undeveloped skills of leading small groups, and winning souls. This has been the bane of the church, which this researcher is emphasizing to church leaders to up turn and thereby, make their churches spiritually healthy and vibrant.

Soul-winning Methods and Church Health

The church is called into the task of winning souls, and the church which is successful in this venture by utilizing the most effective methods is a healthy church. This researcher's intention is to find out the methods which the churches are using and how effective those methods have been. The following are the methods listed in the questionnaire, which the pastors are required to choose from as practiced by their

¹⁵ Earley, 88.

churches: Tele-evangelism, door to door, crusades/programs/revivals, small groups, existing members, others (to be specified).

These are the pastors' responses. One church (Church Six), which represents 5 percent of the churches has no specific model, with the resultant zero increase in a one-month period. Church Twelve, (5%), which adopts only one method which is "door to door" has an average increase of six persons within the same time frame. All other churches (90%), make use of combination of 2-5 methods, which make the effectiveness of each of the methods unpredictable. One church (5%) make use of tele-evangelism method. 14 Churches, (70%) go door to door; 5 Churches (25%) use program/crusades method; 12 Churches (60%) make use of small groups; and 13 Churches (65%) make use of existing members. The churches' evangelism model and the effects on their church growth are illustrated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Soul Winning Methods and Effect on Church Growth

Church	Tele-evangelism	Door-door	Program	Small gps	Members	guests	Retention rate
1						15	4.5
2						5	1.5
3						5	1.5
4						5	0.5
5						15	10.5
6	No model					5	0
7						5	2.5
8						5	0.5
9						5	1.5
10						60	42
11						15	0.5
12						90	9
13						5	0.5
14						5	0.5
15						5	2
16						15	1.5
17						5	0.5
18						5	0.5
19						5	0.5
20						15	1.5
Analysis	5%	75%	30%	60%	65%	300	83.5

Discussion

Tele-evangelism method is the widest in coverage, and also the most expensive. For 5 percent of the churches to be involved in this method is understandable. It is very likely to be the cost factor, which many of the churches are not able to afford.

Door to door method is surprisingly the dominant method as 75 percent of the churches take to it, despite the increasing resentment of the society of this method. This is why it is not yielding the best result. It is therefore, evident that churches keep knocking at doors probably because they have no way of shunning the tradition.

Making use of existing members has some implications. It is the second highest method after “door to door” with 70 percent of the churches, even though 50 percent of the churches surveyed claim to train their members for soul-winning (Table 4.3.). This means that most of the churches which make use of this model do not specifically train their members for the purpose. This is an indication that although churches are aware of the effectiveness of this method, they do not have the training in place for their members. The result is that members are not effective in what they do.

Small groups are not effectively utilized for soul winning as only 60 percent of the churches make use of them. This shows that about two-thirds of the churches make use of the most effective method of reaching the greatest number of people, while one-third does not. While churches have the communities as their target areas, they do not have the right method for reaching out to them effectively. The result is an unhealthy church.

It is surprising that only 30 percent of the churches organize programs for enticing seekers into the church. This is an indication that churches are getting conscious of the

ineffectiveness of this method in getting their target groups into the church. This is a healthy diversion from the traditional approach that had been the bane of the church for years.

Comments

As in the other factors under consideration, the effectiveness of the methods of evangelism adopted by the churches are suspect as the twenty churches surveyed are collectively able to attract 300 guests to the churches in a one month period, and could retain only 83.5 persons, which is 28 percent of the guests. This is an indication of the ineffectiveness of the methods of evangelism used by the churches. The combination of these methods leaves a large door of exit, as more people from the churches than they come in. This is a “leaking system” which is typical of almost all the churches, and which is the cause of their church decline. It shows that the churches need to adopt a more sustainable and attractive method that could keep new members attracted and connected.

The evangelical efforts of churches are not bringing the desired result because they are not using the right methods, and the members they are using are not well trained for the task. This is why this researcher intends to proffer for church leaders the best method, and the best approach, which would keep the churches vibrant and members spiritually healthy. It could be seen very clearly that what drives the churches is maintenance survival, and evangelism rather than discipleship and activities.

This is why this researcher is recommending, as already established in Chapter Three that churches should establish home groups which is a guaranteed model for exponential growth, with built-in members’ spiritual growth. This model would make it

possible for churches to develop disciples, and raise leaders who would be able to develop other leaders and keep outsiders attracted and connected.

Small Groups and Church Health

This researcher has identified small group structure as the most favorable for church growth and spiritual edification of members. Henry Clouds and John Townsend attest to this fact when they write, “We’ve come to believe that small group is without a doubt one of the most powerful tools of life change and spiritual growth.”¹⁶ In his own research findings, Joel Comiskey, saw a correlation between his findings and what a research finding of 2002 revealed. He discovered, “Cell churches not only grew faster but were far healthier in every area” In terms of growth, he found out that “cell churches demonstrate an average growth rate almost double that of non-cell churches.”¹⁷

In establishing his own finding, this researcher stated the following criteria in establishing the use of small groups in the surveyed churches for pastors to choose from: for attracting and retaining members, as church ministry groups, as prayer groups as community support groups, and as men’s and women’s groups. The respondents’ responses are as illustrated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Small Groups and Effects on Church Growth

Church	*NMC	Evang	Devpt	Church group	Prayer Group	Support group	Guest	Growth Rate

¹⁶ Henry Clouds and John Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 14.

¹⁷ Joel Comiskey, *The Church that Multiplies: Growing a Healthy Cell Church in North America* (Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2007), 50.

1							15	4.5
2							5	1.5
3							5	1.5
4							5	0.5
5							15	10.5
6							5	0
7							5	2.5
8							5	0.5
9							15	1.5
10							60	42
11							15	1.5
12							90	9
13							5	0.5
14							5	0.5
15							5	2
16							15	1.5
17							5	0.5
18							5	0.5
19							5	0.5
20							10	1.5
Analysis	80%	55%	60%	70%	60%	50%	300	83.5

*NMC means New Members' Class

Summary

Sixteen Churches (80%) claim to have small groups for new members' class, while thirteen Churches (65%) use small groups for soul winning purposes. This point has been highlighted in the previous considerations above. Twelve Churches (60%) use their small groups for developing members; and fourteen Churches (65%) have ministry groups that function to foster church activities and services. Twelve Churches (60%) have prayer groups, while ten Churches (50%) have support groups.

Discussion

Four churches (Churches Three, Nine, Sixteen, and Twenty) have all the different kinds of small groups and collectively have 45 guests in a one month period, out of whom they are able to retain 6 persons = 13 percent. This represents an average of one person per church and in a one-month period. These kind of churches could be regarded as the attractional type, otherwise known as churches of small groups.

Churches One, Five and Nineteen which have two kinds of groups respectively have a total of 16.5 members in a one month period = 5.5 members each; whereas the three churches shown above have all kinds of groups, but could only attract one members each in a one month period. What this shows is that it is not really the number of small groups which a church has that makes the difference, but the structure of such groups and their effectiveness in attracting and retaining members.

There is no church out of all the churches surveyed which operates as an organic church, in which the whole church is a group. All the churches operate as churches with small groups, as they regard small groups as part of their structure. This is why they have groups like prayer groups, support groups, church groups all at the same time. They are categorized as hybrid kind of structure.

It is evident that these churches are not operating the kind of structure that could generate exponential growth expected of churches with well-structured, intentional and attractive small groups. This is what makes the difference in the level of growth three churches experience and how spiritually engaged their members are. Thus, it is not a question of how well these churches are operating their current system, rather, it is a question of having a complete integration of a new system. George Barna is of the same opinion when he writes, "Doing more of what you're doing will not take you to the next

level; doing more of the same and doing it better won't get you there either. You will need to integrate new strategies and new tactics to climb to a higher plane of ministry impact and lifestyle purity."¹⁸

Comments

George Barna predicted in one of his surveys, that the traditional church structures are only likely to appeal to 35 percent of the overall population.¹⁹ This researcher's findings however, attest to the same conclusion, but with a lower rate of 28 percent, which the churches are able to appeal to with their present structure.

The concluding chapter that follows will include the following sub-titles: summary of findings, problems relating to the current research, and recommendations for successful church growth and effective discipleship.

¹⁸ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water brook Press, 2001), 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Following the analysis of the research findings in the previous chapter, this researcher would want to reflect on what could be referred to as God's reward system as highlighted in the Parable of the Talents.¹ Since the Scripture is given, among other things, for "reprove and correction,"² this author wants to bring out the relevance of the parable to today's churches to serve as a warning, and also a lesson for the church to learn from. The following issues are relevant to the church:

First, just as the talents were distributed by the "Master" to his "servants in the parable, it shows that everyone who is in God's vineyard is by implication the Master's servant. Jesus taught this lesson to His disciples, when He told them, ". . . but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."³ Therefore, we are all servants in God's service.

Second, just as the master gave talents to "everyone according to his several ability,"⁴ so does the Holy Spirit "divide to every man severally as he will,"⁵ which

¹ Matt 25: 14-25, KJV

² 2 Tim 3:16, KJV

³ Matt 20:26-28, KJV

⁴ Matt 25:15, KJV

⁵ 1 Cor 12:11, KJV

affirms the issue of servanthood emphasized above. Third, just as the Master's expectation is for the servants to make the best use of their talents by doubling it, so is the Holy Spirit "given to every man to profit withal."⁶ Another translation say, "For the common good."⁷ Fourth, just as the servants were unequivocal as to what they were to do with the talents,⁸ especially in the parallel parable as recorded in Luke, it specifies, "Occupy till I come."⁹ So also are the instructions to the serving ministers clear as in the Great Commission,¹⁰ the Great Commandment,¹¹ and the New Commandment.¹²

Fifth, just as the Master rewards the first two servants who doubled their talents with commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of the Lord;" and condemnation to the third servant who buried his own, "thou wicked, slothful and unfaithful servant;"¹³ so is it going to be for the serving servants. The Bible says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad¹⁴." The same understanding is reflected in 1 Cor 3:13, "Every man's work shall be made manifest; . . . and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

⁶ 1 Cor 12:7, KJV

⁷ 1 Cor 12:7, NIV

⁸ Matt 25:21-23, KJV

⁹ Lk 19:13, KJV

¹⁰ Matt 28:19-20, KJV

¹¹ Matt 22:37-40, KJV

¹² Jn 20:35, KJV

¹³ Matt 25:26, 30, KJV

¹⁴ 2 Cor 5:10, KJV

It should therefore, be a thing of concern for every serving servant of God how Christ would reckon with believers if they were to appear before Him for assessment. With the church's current level of performance, would Christ have commended believers as He did with the first two servants, or condemn them as with the third servant? The research findings attest more to the former than the latter.

Assessment of the Church

The Churches' Growth Rate

In a situation in which the growth rate of the 20 churches surveyed was 28 percent in a one month period, which amounts to 300 new worshippers/converts within the same time frame, with the church retaining only 83.5 of them, it seems that the church is "slothful and faithfulness" in its performance. Thus in a year, the churches would have polled 3,360, and retained 945. The average for each church for the year is 8.4 persons; and for the average year of service for the pastors at 8.3 it means that each pastor would have 70 converts for their years of service. Based on the yardstick of discipling nations, and teaching them to observe all things that Jesus has commanded them, there is doubt that the church has not effectively used their skills and abilities to yield multiplied measures. This kind of performance is not short of the servant who buried his talent under the earth. In other words, the church has not effectively directed its abilities in ways that would bring into the kingdom souls that are lingering all around them "like sheep without shepherd."¹⁵

¹⁵ Matt 9:34, KJV

The Church's Vision

Jesus' assignment for the church has always been clear as recorded by the four gospels, and the Book of Acts.¹⁶ It is however, surprising that church leaders do not have clear-cut and articulate vision of what they are called to do. This is very true of the biblical stipulation that "where there is no vision, the people perish."¹⁷ Any church leader who is not able to articulate his calling is either not called, or not fit to be in the position of leadership. The reality of lack of vision or a clear one is shown in the growth rate of the church that corresponds with Yonggi Cho's opinion, "You are only going to grow only as big as your dream"¹⁸

This is exactly the case with Church Six, which has no stated vision, and which has zero growth. The same goes for Churches Four, Seven, Eleven, Seventeen, and Eighteen, which have vision that sounds like the Great Commission. The churches predictably have their growth rate in the range of 0.5 and 2.5 persons per month.

Compared with the church that has the highest number of increase of 42 persons in a one-month period, it has a vision that embodies development and edification of its members, with the intention to transform them into position of leadership. The vision states, "To educate, edify, and develop leaders, teachers, and others." The vision contains the essence of discipleship, "Being not conformed to the world" and missional, "To be the role model to the community." Such a clear vision makes fruitfulness possible as the congregation could identify and run with it for its fulfillment.

¹⁶ Matt 28:19-20; Mk 15:15-20; Lk 24:48; Jn 20:21; Acts 1:8, KJV

¹⁷ Prov 29:18, KJV

¹⁸ Cho, 81.

This researcher would like to make the following recommendations to church leaders who either do not have a vision or have one that is not workable. First, since the Holy Spirit is the distributor of gifts and calling,¹⁹ it is advisable for church leaders to seek Him for direction as to what exactly he wants them to accomplish in ministry. If the Holy Spirit has really called them, He would show them what He has called them to do; and this would form their vision.

Second, in stating their vision, they should ensure that it follows the following criteria: It should be concise, which means that the vision should be stated in a sentence or two that would be easy to remember by everyone. The vision should be clear, which means that it must have clarity and be easily understood. It must also be consistent with the overall mission of the church.²⁰ The pastor must ensure that the vision is compelling which means that it must be captivating in such a way that it should be worth rallying around, and generate the people's passion. Lastly, the vision must be communicable, which means that the statement must be worded in such a way that it should be easily spoken and remembered. People must be able to communicate the vision

The church's vision is so essential that any effort it takes to get it right by following the above guidelines is worth all the time. This is because the church's vision is so important that it is what motivates and energizes the church; and provides the yardstick for measuring its progress. Leaving the church with no vision or one that is not clear makes the church appear like the proverbial blind leading the blind with both predictably heading for the ditch, which has been the picture of the church hitherto.

¹⁹ 1 Cor 12: 7-11; Eph 4:11, KJV

²⁰ Matt 28:19-20, KJV

The Church's Soul-winning Strategy

This is the main task of the church, and in whatever way souls are won for Christ, the result must show in its consistency quality and quantity. However, this researcher observes the following in the soul-winning efforts of the church. First, as important and fundamental the task of soul winning is for the church, it is surprising that Church Six has no method at all, and the result as expected is zero increase. The following three churches adopt only one method--door to door, namely, Churches Five, Eight, and Fourteen. Others which has one method each include Church Twelve (programs), and Church Seventeen (small groups). The other churches have combination of two to five methods.

Second, Church Twelve, which has programs as its only strategy of evangelism is able to attract sixty guests, but could retain only six in a one-month period. Many factors could be responsible for this. It could be that most of the people that visit are attracted from other churches just to benefit from the program; and return to their respective churches after the program is over. Another possibility is that the guests are genuine seekers, but because the church has no proven and systematic structure of retaining and equipping them, the people find their way out of the church back to their communities without any noticeable change in them. Mike Slaughter asks, "How many people who come to our church and are involved in our programs are being transformed into disciples?"²¹ He provides the answer, "The true measure of your church's effectiveness is the ratio between the number of people attending, the number of people active in discipleship cells, and the number answering the call of God through service."²² This is

²¹ Mike Slaughter, *Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 51.

²² *Ibid.*, 51.

like the parameter this researcher has uses in determining the effectiveness of the churches in their spiritual activities. In this instance, Church Twelve, which attracted sixty people to its programs and retain six has ten percent efficiency in discipleship-- assuming all the sixty people are successfully transformed into soul-winning disciples.

Third, Church Seventeen which claims to have employed small group strategy for winning souls is able to attract five guests in a one month period, and retain 0.5. This researcher observes that the kind of small group that this church has is certainly not the kind that this researcher is advocating for the churches' vitality and growth. This is confirmed when the kind of small groups the church has is broken down as it appears in Table 4.5. The small groups are, new member's class, prayer group, and church groups like the choir. This explains why its growth rate is less than one person in a one-month period. The point this researcher is making is that unless the cell groups are designed specifically for attracting outsiders, it cannot make for increase in the church. Yonggi Cho attest to this fact when he writes, "There is only one way that the home cell group system will be successful in a church, if that system is to be used as a tool of evangelism."²³

In order to facilitate the small groups for the purpose of soul-winning, this researcher will make some recommendations later in this section both for the church leaders who are not familiar with the small group structure, and those who claim to have them but are not getting the best from their small groups.

²³ Yonggi Cho, 103.

The Churches' Training and Development Programs

The basic responsibility of the church is indisputably discipling of nations.²⁴ For this purpose, the church has been endowed with ministry gifts. Paul writes, “And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”²⁵ This passage confirms that church leaders are in office specifically for equipping their members, and not necessarily to make them members to be used for performing church functions.

In the survey, (Table 4.3.) 50 percent of the churches train to impart soul-winning skills to their members; and 40 percent train their members for the purpose of being other members' trainers. Both statistics show that about half of the churches show some concern in making their members productive in soul-winning; whereas, the other half are dormant, just counting on their members as numbers, which is tantamount to helping them to “bury their talents.”

Concerning training for ministry, only 15 percent of the churches train their members to assume the ministry of their calling or gifts. What church leaders are doing in effect is building up members to build up their churches for egoistic reasons. This is why church leaders pay so much attention to the size of their churches in terms of membership—also as a measure of their success in ministry. This is also why the church planting efforts are minimal. Allen Hadidian addresses this issue when he writes, “Discipling strengthens the church body, and perpetuates God's work by developing godly leaders for the church.”²⁶

²⁴ Matt 28:19, KJV

²⁵ Eph 4: 11-13, KJV

²⁶ Allen Hadidian, *Successful Discipling* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1979), 16.

He adds that the goal of the church for “discipling others is to develop people who are multipliers.”²⁷ Thus, by the churches’ efforts in soul-winning, the rate of increase cannot be described as multiplying. Rather, it could at best be described as nominal because at 28 percent increase it is impossible to effectively disciple all nations.

Problems Relating to the Research

As comprehensive as the research questions seem for this research project, it is evident that not all the expected grounds could be covered. For instance, it is not known for how long a church that has a growth rate of 1.5 persons in a one-month period, has been at that level. It is not also clear if the church had ever enjoyed some period of growth before the stagnation or decline. In other words, is the church on the verge of going under, or still has some years to hang in the precipice? Such information would have made it possible to determine the survival chance of such a church. So also is a church that is experiencing low growth rate due to reasons other than those highlighted in the research questionnaire. For instance, a church having some internal conflict might experience the same effect culminating in its stagnation or decline, which is outside the purview of this research.

Another problem is the researcher’s inability to physically assess the operations of the churches which could have been necessary in order to determine the professionalism of the pastor, especially, the kind of spiritual food he is feeding the congregation with. However, such a stance would have contravened the issue of the church’s and pastor’s anonymity which this research project is poised to uphold.

²⁷ Ibid., 37.

There is also the problem of determining the kind of small groups the churches operate, and the effectiveness of the leadership of such groups. It is easy for respondents to indicate that they have some number of small groups without an idea of how effective the leadership of such groups is. The same is true of the membership. In small churches, membership of groups could be ubiquitous, in which case the same set of people might be involved in prayer group, men's and women's group, choir, etc., to the effect that whatever happens in one group in terms of leadership performance is likely to happen to all the groups which the survey is not also able to pick up as a prevalent issue.

A basic issue with this kind of research is the quality of the disciples the churches claim to produce, since there is no standard way of measuring the skills of such disciples. Therefore, the assumption is that all the disciples and leaders of the churches are equally skilled as claimed by the respondents. Equally important is the cultural and theological inclinations of the churches, which is difficult to ascertain. For instance, some churches might decide to train some specific kind of people for specific positions. For example, Mark Driscoll, the pastor of Mars Hill church in Seattle, contends that he does not train and appoint women as "elder pastors" because according to him, it "violates the Bible's clear commands, examples, and precedents set forth by the male Old Testament priests, and Jesus' male apostles."²⁸ Therefore, in a research of this nature, it is difficult to ascertain clearly the divergent theological views of the churches on the issues of race, gender, and economic status, and how such issues affect the training for positions in the churches.

²⁸ Mark Driscoll, *A Book you'll actually Read: On Church Leadership* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 45.

However, despite the apparent difficulties as identified in this section, the researcher believes that the data collected for this research are the true representation of the churches positions on the issues considered; and are enough to determine the growth level and health condition of the churches, leading to the convincing conclusion that small group structure is the most appropriate structure under which churches could experience their optimal growth and vibrancy.

Recommendations for Church Growth and Effective Leadership

From the Metaphoric to the Empirical

Identifying the Problem

In this segment, we provide a componential analysis by looking at the dichotomy of the metaphoric and the empirical application. There is a continuum between the realm of the physical and that of the spiritual. This would explain why the Lord employed the pedagogy of the parables in making sense of heavenly things on earth. What we have discovered as the main problem of the church as shown in the survey analysis can be summed up in one word: unfruitfulness.

Fruitfulness is the crucible of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ made it such a central discourse in His parting theology that He devoted quality time to teaching them the overarching value of fruitfulness in the continuation of the ministry, the mantle of which He was about to cast on the shoulders of those apostles. Take for example, in John 15: 1-11, the Lord invoked the organic metaphor of the vine, the vinedresser and the branches, where there is a responsorial relationship among the three, and that the most essential relationship is fruitfulness. Without fruitfulness that relationship turns sour and

even deadly because the vine and vinedresser would not continue to keep a branch that is unfruitful. They would destroy it. In this deep discourse, Christ said poignantly:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.²⁹

This research has further revealed that the church is yet to discover the principle of fruitfulness by which it would be able to spread to the ends of the earth. This is because for any living organism that needs to multiply and spread, it needs to be fruitful. Fruitfulness was the original language that the God uttered to speak the blessing of procreation and multiplicity to mankind when in Genesis 1: 28, He said, “Be fruitful and multiply...” Hundreds of years after God’s pronouncement of the blessing of fruitfulness, Paul spoke to the Christians in Philippians about his desire for the believers’ fruit to abound.³⁰

Fruitfulness is therefore, an essential condition for growth and existence. Thus, for the church to multiply and disciple nations, it must first and foremost be fruitful. Michael Adebiyi, writes pointedly, “The day you begin to apply the system of fruitfulness is the day your journey to making global impact begins.”³¹ He defines

²⁹ Jn. 15:1-8, AMP

³⁰ Phil 4:17, KJV

³¹ Michael Adebiyi, *Fruitfulness: Processing Your Potential* (Stone Mountain, GA: Principled Press Inc., 2012), 3.

fruitfulness as “The process of one’s potential to produce viable output. It can be described as healthy growth, the ability to bear fruit in abundance, to be prolific, or productive.”³² Therefore, anything that wants to dominate its environment must bear fruit, because it is when it bears fruit that it can multiply through its seeds, fill the earth, and subdue it.³³

When this principle is applied to the church, it could be seen that the church, in its present situation of unfruitfulness cannot multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.

Evidences of unfruitfulness of the church is in its sluggish growth at 28 percent; and in its slow spiritual growth in which 90 percent of the churches develop their members for church activities instead of the productive task of soul-winning and being of help to others.

The implications are that the potentials of the members are untapped and undeveloped or underdeveloped, since as defined above, fruitfulness entails “the processing of one’s potential to produce viable output.”³⁴ As a result of the untapped potential, the people do not have the capacity to reproduce and as such, the church remains unproductive and unhealthy.

For the church to be fruitful, it has to establish a system whereby the members would be able to discover, develop, and deploy their potentials.³⁵ This author will provide a systematic approach to the church’s evolvement to fruitfulness following the three

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Ibid., 13.

³⁴ Adebisi, 11.

³⁵ Ibid., 38.

stages identified here. The theological support for this approach is traceable to Jesus' Words, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognizable by its fruit."³⁶ The system by which the tree would be made good, for it to bear good fruit is what the church needs to put in place and which this author will establish in this section.

System of Fruitfulness

Stage One: Discovery

Discovery, in the agriculture context, is the process of discovering the seed, the land, and the weeds. This implies that every seed is made to produce on a particular kind of soil. Thus, it is for the farmer to identify his seed, and determine the kind of land that is most suitable for the seed. Then, the farmer is to ensure that the growth and productivity of the seed is taken care of. What is the implication of this principle to the church?

As established earlier, every believer is endowed with the seed of greatness that is referred to variously as talent, gifts, calling, and ability. The Bible confirms, "The Holy Spirit . . . dividing to everyone severally as he will."³⁷ This implies that every believer, irrespective of their background or physical make up, has got a kind of gift, skill or ability for God's service, which the church leaders are expected to help them to discover, develop and deploy.³⁸

³⁶ Matt 12:23, NIV

³⁷ 1 Cor 12:11, KJV

³⁸ Eph 4:12, KJV

However, the present system of the church by which members are kept on the pews for years as spectators without involving them productively in church activities has not been helping them to develop their gifts. Some of them do not even know they have some kinds of gifts, making the skills unutilized and therefore, unproductive.

For the seed to produce, it needs the right kind of soil. Similarly, the right kind of environment, which this author will recommend for the members to bring forth their gifts and skills, is the environment of small groups. This is the place where the leadership, administrative, healing, evangelism, and other gifts could be discovered and helped to blossom. In small groups, “Each one has an opportunity to be used by God to minister to the other in the group.”³⁹ Thus, it is in the “environment” of small groups that individual could be motivated to bring out the best in them as they are given the opportunity to exhibit their skills, unlike in the church environment where the opportunity is limited to a few members. This is why Adebisi surmises, “If you do not create an enabling environment for your seed, it will not yield.”⁴⁰

It is also in small groups that every form of obstructions that could affect the growth of the seed could be effectively taken care of, such as character flaws like anger, ignorance, covetousness, and laziness. This is why it is possible for members of the church to put up double personalities; one kind of personality in the church, and another kind outside the church. However, in small groups, it is not easy for double personalities to be displayed because such flaws could easily catch the attention of other members of the group, and they would rally round to help the person in default to overcome his flaws

³⁹ David Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publications, 1981), 49.

⁴⁰ Adebisi, 48.

through prayer and the Word of God. Allen Hadidian expresses the same idea in his analogy of natural parents nurturing their children to maturity. He opined that it is natural to assume that in the spiritual realm, those who are more mature are to care of those who are less mature.⁴¹ He deposed that many struggle with sin in the church because there is no one who is willing to show personal concern.⁴² Without any doubt, the small groups provide the right structure for the moral discipline of their members, which the bigger structure of the church might find quite difficult to accomplish.

Stage Two: Development

In the plant culture, the most critical stage in its development process is nurturing the plant to fruition. It is whatever happens to the plant at this point that determines its productivity, or a lack thereof. So it is in the spiritual growth of individuals that we would be able to determine the life or death of the Church. As Adebisi has rightly noted, “Seeds naturally look tiny, but when sowed, they unfold great potentials.⁴³” He warns, “Don’t be deceived by the size of your seed; it is not usually big.”⁴⁴ A well-nurtured seed has an unlimited potential. This fact is predicated on the assumption that fruitfulness is an attribute of nature and nurture, the latter being a greater responsibility of the human effort. This is directly applicable to the spiritual realm. As already pointed out the church has neglected the potentials of their members for too long, perhaps due to its seeming

⁴¹ Hadidian, 10

⁴² Ibid.,

⁴³ Adebisi, 50.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

unnoticeable appearance. This is also due to the unusual environment of the church, which did not make the members' skills and abilities noticeable for equipping. This is the same reason Paul warned Timothy, "Neglect not the gifts that is in thee."⁴⁵ However, given the right environment of small groups, Francis Cosgrove noted, "A disciple is able to demonstrate the fruit of the spirit by an attractive relationship with Christ and his fellow men (Acts 16:1-2; 1 Cor 3:4-7; Gal 5:22-23)."³⁰⁴⁶ This is why Barna, in defining discipleship writes, "It is not a program. It is not a ministry. It is a lifelong commitment to a lifestyle."⁴⁷

This researcher wants to observe that the church has not done enough in this area, and that is why many of the members do not reflect any noticeable difference from the unchurched." However, when the church determines to provide the necessary training and nurturing ground for the converts, and their members, there would be much difference in the members' spiritual development. What makes this principle workable is the fact that every group leader has the mandate to develop an apprentice who would be released to start his/her own group as evidence of their spiritual maturity.

Apart from the apprentice, every member has one responsibility or the other to carry out in the group, which aids the growth and development of their potentials. For instance, there are people who prepare the meeting venue, and make sure that the place is made ready for the group meetings. Another person could be in charge of following up with the absentees to know why they could not attend, while another could be the praise leader. All these responsibilities and activities could assist in the development of their

⁴⁵ 1 Tim 4:14, KJV

⁴⁶ Francis Cosgrove Jr., *Essentials of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009), 85.

⁴⁷ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water brook Press, 2001), 19.

leadership skills. In the process, the hitherto dormant potential would begin to emerge, and be developed into maturity. This is the key to fruitfulness, which this author is recommending for every church to adopt for the spiritual growth of their members, culminating in the growth of the church as a whole.

Stage Three: Deployment

As described by Adebisi, “This is the maturing stage of your talent . . . and the time for launching out.”⁴⁸ However, this stage requires hard work, and it is also a time of celebration. This is the stage in which a leader sees a mature apprentice graduates to start his/her own group. Thus, the onetime ordinary person launches out to start an extraordinary fit, which is made possible by his small group experience. Someone says that the most exciting time in the life of a Christian when he sees his convert lead another convert to Christ. John Westerhoff sees a challenge in the church becoming a community of faith. Yet, he finds the answer in the church’s “creating educational designs which would equip groups for responsible Christian social action, and living the word in small groups.”⁴⁹

As the groups keep splitting and multiplying, so is the church growing because the underlining reason for the groups togetherness is to bring more people from the community into their fold. Yonggi Cho states, “Groups that meet without having evangelism as a goal do not produce growth in the church.”⁵⁰ It is also when groups keep splitting that new churches are planted. Yonggi Cho also states, “As each cell grows and

⁴⁸ Adebisi, 52.

⁴⁹ John Westerhoff, *Tomorrow’s Church: A Community of Change* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 2001), 105.

⁵⁰ Cho, 113.

begins to divide, you'll soon have a church."⁵¹ This is the same principle that multinational companies use in having their influence spread to the nations of the world. Adebisi wrote about Chick-Fil-A which started in 1946 as a restaurant, but which today has 975 franchises through an effective system of distribution of its fruit.⁵² This is why this author is advocating that the small group system would enable the church to spread to the communities, cities, and to all nations of the earth; and then they would be able to fulfill the Great Commission of discipling nations.

Conclusion

The recommendation of fruitfulness, which this author has emphasized, is not a sort of happenstance approach, but a principle that is workable anywhere, and in any culture or environment. This is because "methods may change, but principles never do."⁵³ It is therefore this author's submission that while churches adopt the principle of fruitfulness, they should look into method that suits their culture and church context. For instance, there are some places where people would not want to come to church no matter the inducement. However, when they are invited to homes, it is very likely that they would be much more disposed to honoring the invitation; and with proper presentation of the gospel, the person could be led to Christ and eventually to the church.

There are also some churches that already have small groups like the ones identified in the survey. The best approach is to disband such groups slowly, as they are

⁵¹ Ibid., 77.

⁵² Adebisi, 55.

⁵³ Towns, Stetzer, and Bird, 15.

replaced by the productive small groups. Also, church leaders must be actively involved in small groups, and should be the promoter of the groups. This is because if the pastor is not involved, the groups cannot be effective. Yonggi Cho, writing from his experience says, “Without the pastor, the system will not hold together”⁵⁴ In addition, groups must be conscious that they are together for one purpose only—for evangelism. It has been proved that “groups that meet without having evangelism as a goal do not produce growth in the church.”⁵⁵

The church leaders have the responsibility of communicating the process and activities of the small groups to the members of the church, so that it becomes the church’s culture, especially with emphasis that every member should belong to one group or the other. Communication should be an ongoing process through the church’s newsletter, notice board, church bulletin, and other announcement opportunities.

When the churches begin this all-involving process, and enabling environment for growth and fruitfulness, there is no doubt that they would begin to experience the kind of growth and relevance expected of them, and the community would begin to experience their impact with members demonstrating their distinct differences from unbelievers. This is what the church is designed for and what would make it to fulfill its task of reaching out to the nations of the world, thereby fulfilling the Master’s mandate and the servants receiving His commendation.

Final Thoughts

⁵⁴ Cho, 103.

⁵⁵ Cho, 113.

I could not possibly round up this research without a reflection on three pertinent issues that agitated my intellectual curiosity in this scholarly journey: The first is what actually surprised me the most in the course of this exercise; the second was what I thought I would get but which I did not; and the third is what I would hope that down the road I am able to continue to explore.

Result that Surprised this Researcher

From the whole research analysis, the result that surprised this researcher the most is the lack of vision or unclear vision of the church leadership. For church leaders not to have a clear reason for leading their churches amounts to having no Promised Land in focus, a fact which if it were to be in the secular corporate language would be considered extreme malpractice. This is surprising because this researcher regards the issue of vision as foremost in every calling; and when the vision is unclear, there is nothing to start the ministry on; there is no mandate to propel the principal actor into a viable action. Also, this researcher believes from personal experience that every single ministry training should have as its primary focus, the issue of vision. The Biblical injunction is a guide, “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables that he may run that readeth it.”⁵⁶ A vision that is not plain is impossible for anyone to run with it. The whole thing boils down to the authenticity of the church leaders’ calling, which could also be responsible for the church’s performance and its influence in the society.

Anticipated Result not got from the Research

⁵⁶ Hab 2:2, KJV.

This second thing that caught this researcher's attention was his expectation that more than 25 percent of churches would be involved in programs and crusades, and make them a significant and integral parts of their regular activities, especially as tools for attracting the unchurched to the church. This is based on two personal observations. First, churches having healing and prophetic programs usually attract more people into their services than churches that do not have such programs. This may be due to the large number of people who are hurting in the society, and would want a kind of quick fix to their problems. Second, most times when this researcher goes to the shopping malls and public places, there are always invitations dished out to people from different churches for some programs. However, it is either that the churches surveyed are not program oriented, or are changing from programs because of its presumed ineffectiveness to other means of attracting people to their churches. This researcher anticipated a surge towards this but was disappointed that this would not be the case.

Other Anticipated Areas of Research

Third, given financial, emotional, time, spiritual and other factors, this researcher would hope to be actively engaged in further research on the effect of secular education on ministries, especially, leaders' performance in their ministries. Although, knowledge constitute power, and those who hold knowledge hold power, I had personally wondered about the performance of some of my own members who hold post graduate qualifications, compared with those who do not. Ironically, many of those who do not hold such postgraduate qualifications have often appeared to be more dependable and reliable as leaders than the former.

Also, from the researcher's personal experience, leaders without postgraduate qualifications seem to be better small group motivators and instructors than the former. Could this be purely coincidental or peculiar to the researcher's ministry, or even peculiar to the individual persons concerned? The same question goes for seminary training and other kinds of training for church leaders. How far does seminary training affect the performance of church leaders, vis-à-vis other kinds of training, including ministry's in-house training? All things being equal, these are areas of scholarly interest, which this researcher hopes that post-doctoral opportunities would make available for further research.

However, as the wise king once said, "And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."⁵⁷ It seems there is no end to how much and how far one could reflect over knowledge that is acquired under the sun. I hope, above all that these intellectual interests that this research has triggered in me would facilitate breaking into higher grounds in the work of the ministry because even as good as graduate studies are, they are a means to an end, not an end by themselves. It's all, in the words of Paul, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ecc 12:12, KJV

⁵⁸ Phil 3:10-14, KJV

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1) Do you think your church has a shared vision which motivates your church's activities?
If yes, what is the vision? -----

- 2) If no, why so?
----- No need
----- Still working it out
----- We are guided by the mother church's vision
----- Had one, but needs to be modified
----- Others (Specify) -----
- 3) For how long have you been the pastor of your church?
----- Years
- 4) On the average, about how many first time guests do you have in your services in a one month period?
----- None
----- 1- 10
----- 10 - 20
-----20 - 30
-----30 - 40
-----50 - 60
- 5) What is the process of attracting and retaining new members? (Mark all that apply)
----- New members' class
----- Small groups
----- Showing concern for their needs
----- Regular visits
----- Phone calls/Mails
----- Others (Please specify) -----
- 6) If through small groups what type of small groups do you have? (Mark all that apply)
----- Ministry/service groups
----- Prayer
----- Fellowship
----- Men's/women's groups
----- Support groups
----- Others (Please specify)
- 7) What is the retention ratio of guests?

- None
- 1- 20%
- 20 - 40%
- 40 - 60%
- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100%

8) On the average, how many decisions for Christ do you have in a one month period?

- None
- 1 - 20
- 20 - 40
- 40 - 60
- 60 - 80
- 80 - 100

9) What is the church's focus of evangelism?

- Community
- City
- County
- Nation
- Continent
- World

10) What evangelical program does your church have in place for reaching out to your focus area?

- Tele-evangelism
- Door to door
- Crusade/Programs
- Small groups
- Through members
- No specific system
- Others (Specify) -----

11) Does your church have a leadership development program?

If yes, how many stages of training does a member have to complete before attaining maturity

- 1 Stage
- 2 Stages
- 3 Stages
- 4 Stages
- 5 Stages
- Any other (Specify) -----

12) How does the church determine members' success in the program? (Mark all that apply)

- Taking part in church activities
- Belonging to a church ministry

- Starting his/her ministry
- Leading a small group
- Winning souls
- Training other leaders
- Others (Specify) -----

13) If no, Why? (Mark all that apply)

- Leaders develop naturally
- Leaders are developed by Mother Church
- No teaching facilities
- No training resources
- Members not interested in training

14) Is your church involved in church planting efforts?

If yes, how many churches have you planted over the past 5 years?

- 1 – 2
- 3 – 5
- 5 – 7
- 8 – 9
- Over 10

15) If no, why not?

- No interest
- No personnel
- No experienced church planter
- No resources
- Community already saturated with churches
- Others (Specify) -----

16) Is there anything else you would like to say about your ministry, which has not been covered in this questionnaire? -----Yes ----No (If Yes, please write in one or two sentences below)

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VITA

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IRB EXCEMPT LETTER

April 12, 2013

Victor Ogundiran IRB Exemption 1584.041213:
Making Disciples of Jesus Christ: Investigating, Identifying, and Implementing an
Effective Discipleship Strategy

Dear Victor,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D. Professor, IRB Chair Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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