

Liberty University School of Divinity

**An Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the
Disciple of Christ**

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The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
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Doctor of Ministry

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Important to realize, is the absence of spiritual transformation in the lives of some Christians within the membership of Simon Temple African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The purpose of this study was to discover if the program's influence on those participants in the experimental group transform into Christlikeness faster than those participants in the control group. This study evaluated transformation of participants in both groups. There were five areas evaluated. These areas included attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine. The findings from this study provided credible and convincing evidence which can be used to encourage mass participation in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program in this present writer's local church and local churches throughout the universal church. Therefore, sincere congregational participation in this program should help to minimize the absence of spiritual transformation in the lives of disciples of Christ in this present and all future generations.

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This thesis project is devoted to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and all present and future disciples of Christ.

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Abbreviations

A.M.E.	<i>African Methodist Episcopal</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>

Chapter One

Introduction: An Overview of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program Study

Moreover, this author has observed over the past nine years, a significant absence of Christlike transformation in the lives of numerous disciples of Christ in his local church. To be more specific, the issue was detected in the areas that encompassed Christian attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine, which are all components of being a disciple of Christ. For the purpose of this study, the term disciple is a universal term for a committed follower of a teacher or a sect or one of Jesus' twelve apostles or a follower who meets Jesus' requirements.¹ To the latter, Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."² Hence, the requirements to deny, take up the cross, and follow Jesus is a biblical mandate. With this in mind, spiritual leaders have a biblical mandate to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching them to observe everything Jesus commanded.³

Therefore, it is requisite upon contemporary spiritual leaders in our local churches to implement and sustain an intentional model for disciple making, that inevitably *moves people unto God's agenda*.⁴ With that said, this author conducted a study of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program at his local church, which claims to be a developmental, small-group discipleship process that helps Christians develop a lifelong, submissive relationship with

¹Avery T. Willis Jr., *The Disciple's Cross: MasterLife* (Nashville, TN: Leadership and Adult Publishing, 1996), 13.

² Luke 9:23. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Tyndale House Publishers Inc, 2007).

³ Matt. 28:19-20.

⁴ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 36.

Christ.⁵ Therefore, this author's thesis is *Christians who participate in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program should transform faster than those Christians who do not participate*. In the subsequent section, a statement of the problem shall be provided.

Statement of the Problem

As mentioned earlier, several Christians within the local congregation of Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church continue to show an absence of spiritual transformation. In brief, the bearing of spiritual fruit is absent in many.⁶ This absence could be attributed to an unwillingness to participate in a structured biblical model of discipleship. To that end, this author believes mass participation in a Christian discipleship making model should increase spiritual transformation in disciples of Christ, thereby minimizing and eventually eradicating the absence of spiritual transformation. For the purpose of this study, Christian discipleship will be defined as, "Developing a personal, lifelong, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which He transforms your character into Christlikeness; changes your values into Kingdom values; and involves you in His mission in the home, the church, and the world."⁷ In order for this local congregation and those throughout the body of Christ to continue fulfilling the Great Commission,⁸ a biblical model with scriptural methods to making disciples of Christ is undisputable.

As a result, an evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program will be conducted at Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church to study its influence on the disciple of Christ. The findings will be used to encourage mass participation in the MasterLife process at this

⁵ Willis Jr., *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

⁶ John 15:2.

⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

⁸ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciples Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 3.

author's local church. Without doubt, the MasterLife process should produce some visible spiritual transformation in its participants, thereby bringing glory to God.⁹ In the next section, information regarding the statement of limitations to this study shall be provided.

Statement of Limitations

Moreover, this study of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program will have some restrictions. First, this study is restricted to Simon Temple, the home church of this author. Secondly, only those people who are members of Simon Temple local church are eligible to participate in this study. Thirdly, this study is restricted to those members of this local church who profess to be born-again,¹⁰ therefore non-Christians are prohibited from participating. Fourthly, all participants must be age eighteen years and older. Next, participants who are recruited will all be African-American, since this local congregation is predominately of this ethnicity. To this restriction, readers who are interested in learning about the influence of this study on Christians of Chinese ethnicity, should be aware that no specific data on that matter will be provided in this study. Furthermore, participants in both the experimental group and control group must have never participated in the MasterLife Discipleship Program prior to start of study. Next, this study is restricted to a quantity of ten to twenty participants. This would include a minimum of five participants per group and a maximum of ten participants per group.

Equally important, the influence of the MasterLife process on its participants will be measured by the use of a specific instrument. Therefore, an attempt to obtain the same measurements through the use of another measuring instrument may not produce the same

⁹ John 15:8.

¹⁰ John 3:3.

findings. Finally, this author's study will be restricted to the time and space elected by the Pastor in Charge since multiple ministry activities, events, and conferences have been previously scheduled according to Simon Temple's church calendar. In the following segment, a theoretical basis for this study will be offered.

Theoretical Basis

To begin, the quandary facing various contemporary local churches although there is a historical language of discipleship, the honest practice of it is far from reliable.¹¹ With this in mind, Hirsch claims we have misplaced the art of disciple making because we have no clear definition and process due impart to the reduction of discipleship to the rational integration of ideas; and partly because consumerism in our own day works unswervingly contrary to a real following of Christ.¹² By the same token, discipleship is not predominantly a matter of what we do, but an outward development of what we are. Given these points, John Koessler claims that if the latter point is correct, it is sensible for persons to expect to see evidence of the genuineness of our commitment to Jesus replicated in the way we live.¹³ Be that as it may, another writer defines the term discipleship, as the state of being a disciple. To elaborate, Hull claims the term discipleship has a nice unending feel, a sense of journey, and the impression of becoming a disciple rather than having been made a disciple.¹⁴ With that said, this author does not agree with Hirsch in that there is no clear definition or process for discipleship since this study of the

¹¹ Allan Hirsch, *Reactivating Apostolic Movement: The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 112.

¹² Hirsch, *Reactivation Apostolic Movement*, 112.

¹³ John Koessler, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 12.

¹⁴ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 35.

MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program should prove there is at least one clear and distinct definition and process to developing disciples of Christ.

In short, this author agrees with the definition provided by John Koessler which is more significant to this study, since it may disclose an outward Christlike development will be the result for the MasterLife experimental group participants.¹⁵ Moreover, the Bible records, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”¹⁶ In the same manner, this passage of scripture is germane to this author’s study since it ultimately reveals the process of making disciples, is to be implemented in the local churches and continued until Jesus returns. In the long run, both Dr. Dave Earley and Dr. Rod Dempsey believe growing disciples encompasses inviting a prospective disciple into a discipleship group where there is shared accountability and learning in the presence of God’s word.¹⁷ In essence, this best practice is pertinent to this study because the experimental group participants will have shared accountability regarding the requirements of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program process as they learn God’s word together. In the next section, a statement of the methodology will be given.

Statement of Methodology

At the present time, Simon Temple African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is predominately African-American. The congregation is led by a single Pastor, two pastoral assistants and a supporting Associate Ministerial Staff numbering thirty-six. This local

¹⁵ Koessler, *True Discipleship*, 12.

¹⁶ Matt. 28:19-20.

¹⁷ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 149.

congregation's membership currently stands at three-thousand, four-hundred and fifty-three people. Based on this author's interaction with multiple professing Christians involving individual, pre-marital, and marital spiritual guidance counseling, the absence of spiritual transformation in attitudes, behaviors, and relationships has been continuously apparent over the last nine years. This is not due to a lack of teaching and proclamation of the word of God which occurs regularly during the week.

With this in mind, this author will evaluate the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program in his local church to determine if those who participate in the experimental group actually grow faster than those who participate in the control group. This study will be conducted at Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church. The control group participants will be utilized as a benchmark to measure the degree of transformation in those who actually participate in the experimental intervention.

In the meantime, the selection process will begin with an announcement of this study by the Pastor to his local congregation during both noon-day and evening Bible study sessions. During both announcements, the Pastor will encourage membership support, participation, and prayer for the success of this author's study. Immediately, following each Bible study session, this author will be positioned in the new fellowship hall in order to pass out recruitment flyers to each church member who shows interests. As stated previously, the selection of the participants will be limited to a minimum of ten and a maximum of twenty people. Once a sufficient number have been recruited, recruitment will cease. The criteria for participation includes the following: (a) Male or female, (b) Age eighteen years and older, (c) African-American, (d) Professed to be born-again, and (e) No previous participation in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program.

Afterwards, those who desire to participate and meet the study criteria will be allowed to choose either the experimental or control group to participate in. Since participants will be allowed to attend MasterLife at either the weekly noon-day or evening session, this author will maintain a list of which group and which session each participant chose to attend. Besides that, this study is confidential. Therefore, participants in both groups will be assigned biblical names in replacement of their original name to protect their identity. In addition, all participants will be instructed to write their assigned pseudonym on each of the three surveys that will be used to collect data from both groups. The control group data will be utilized to substantiate or nullify the data collected from the experimental group. Furthermore, the participants will be instructed to return each completed survey to this author in the designated color envelope for their respective group.

All issued surveys and envelopes will be provided by this author to each group before week one, during week three, and after week six of the study period. Each survey will measure the areas of each participant's attitudes, behaviors, ministry, relationships, and doctrine and will require a one through five rating. These ratings will be used to measure the participant's growth or non-growth. The biblical rationale supporting this intervention, states, "So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, *growing* in the knowledge of God."¹⁸

Pursuing this further, some individual measurements in the experimental group will be measured and compared to some individual measurements in the control group. For this reason, the measurements of participants will be disclosed through the utilization of tables which will

¹⁸ Col. 1:10.

display their transformational rates.¹⁹ Likewise, these tables will measure the effectiveness and change of MasterLife's influence on the experimental participants as displayed by blue line graphs on each table.²⁰ Furthermore, data will also be collected through this author's observation of participants in the experimental group during weekly group sessions, in order to annotate behavioral transformations, reactions, and impact of this intervention during group sessions, and individual encounters with this author.²¹ Then, the findings collected from both groups, will show participants in the experimental intervention transformed faster than those in the control group.

Moreover, this author will discover those in the control group transformed at a slower rate than those in the experimental group who actually participate in the six-week intervention. With that said, these findings will be beneficial to this author's ministry context since they will provide a solution to minimizing and eventually eradicating the absence of spiritual transformation in the members of this author's local congregation. This solution will help those in the membership of Simon Temple grow faster in their faith, which fulfills the biblical foundation of this study. Specifically speaking, this study will put forth the implication that members of Simon Temple who commit to participating in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program will be transformed in their attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine faster, then those who do not participate. To that end, this author will make a recommendation to the Pastor of Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, to approve MasterLife as a requirement for

¹⁹ Avery T. Willis Jr., *MasterLife Leader Guide: A Biblical Process for Growing Disciples* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 1997), 67.

²⁰ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 71.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

full membership for those who are mentally and physically able to participate in the program.

This author will provide a summary of chapters next.

Summary of Chapter

In Chapter One, a description of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program will be offered. In addition, this section shall reveal that this thesis project seeks to determine if those who participate in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program at Simon Temple African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church transform faster than those who do not participate. With this in mind, a synopsis of this project's design, to include what this project does and does not accomplish will be offered. Furthermore, this section will offer data from a biblical, theological, and historical perspective, to include current best practices that relate to Christian discipleship.²² In addition, the reader may expect to find a summary of the contents of each chapter in this section, to include current literature consistent with Christian discipleship.²³

In Chapter Two, a preliminary basis for this *Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the Disciple of Christ* will be offered. This section will contain an elucidation of the ministry context for which this study will take place, and a disclosure of what led this author to initiate this ministry project.²⁴ In addition, an explanation of what this author proposes to achieve through his theoretical and applied research will be presented.

²² Liberty University School of Divinity, *Doctor of Ministry: Thesis Project Handbook* (Lynchburg, VA: LUSOD), 6.

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴ Ibid.

In Chapter Three, this author will offer information regarding his applied research. This information will contain the purpose for this research and those whom this author will be researching.²⁵ In addition, existing academic studies which relate to Christian discipleship models and the influence of the MasterLife process on the participants will be offered.

In Chapter Four, a reporting shall be offered of the most suitable findings from an examination of surveys completed by participants in both the experimental and control group. To point out, a summary of the findings from the surveys shall be depicted through tables that will display a comparison of levels of transformation represented by blue or orange line graphs in the area of Christian attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine.

In Chapter Five, a summary of the chief principles mentioned in this thesis project will be presented. This will include a resolution to the absence of spiritual transformation observed in this author's local ministry setting over the previous nine years and some credible recommendations to assist in making the body of Christ healthier. In the subsequent section, a review of literature will be offered.

Review of Literature

Dissertations

In the first place, *A comparison of The Discipleship Training S.F.C. Campus Ministry and Outstanding Churches* written by Jae Hong Song, will offer exploration data relating to its discipleship training program's restrictions, which will provide validated insights that will assist this author in recognizing restrictions that support or hamper his study. In addition, Hong's study

²⁵ Liberty University, *Doctor of Ministry: Thesis Project Handbook*, 6.

will contribute weighty findings from an analysis of historical research on the discipleship training process that will increase the dependability of this writer's outcomes.²⁶

In the same manner, *Making Disciples of Jesus Christ: Investigating, Identifying, and Implementing an Effective Discipleship System* written by Jeffrey Howell Lynn, will support this writer's study since it will show that an absence of visible Christlike transformation in local church members is due to the present *depressing* state of discipleship training within the body of Christ. Put differently, Lynn's study will reveal there are no discernable influences on congregants by some current models of Christian discipleship. With this in mind, Lynn will offer data on the success and failure of twenty-five Christian discipleship training models, that will disclose evidence of Christlike transformation in the lives of those involved in the training models.²⁷

In similar fashion, *A Pastor's Approach to Discipleship and Its Effect on the Local Church: A Three-Step Approach to Biblical Discipleship* authored by Daniel Allen Smith,²⁸ will offer contributions to this writer's study since it will emphasize the biblical responsibility of spiritual leaders to ensure there is a Christian discipleship model in place that is reoccurring and influencing Christlike transformation. In addition, Smith's three-step model approach which he offers in his study, to transforming Christian disciples, will be contrasted with some approaches offered in the MasterLife's Christian Discipleship model. That is to say, when this contrast has been completed showing both models to be similar in approaches resulting in Christlike

²⁶ Jae Hong Song, "A Comparison of The Discipleship Training of S. F. C. Campus and Outstanding Churches" (PhD diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), iii.

²⁷ Jeffrey Howell Lynn, "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ: Investigating, Identifying, and Implementing an Effective Discipleship System" (PhD diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), iii.

²⁸ Daniel A. Smith, "A Pastor's Approach to Discipleship and Its Effects on the Local Church: A Three-Step Approach to Biblical Discipleship" (PhD diss., Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), iii.

transformation in its participants, then validation of the reliability of this writer's research findings will have additional backing.

Books

Undoubtedly, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* written by Bill Hull,²⁹ will offer established Christian discipleship ideas that will be utilized to support a number of the spiritual disciplines that influence Christlike transformation found in the MasterLife model. For instance, one of Hull's ideas involves the term *environmental discipleship*, which is defined as the way believers get along with other believers.³⁰ Put differently, this refers to a believers' relationship with another believer, which is one of the areas that will be measured in this writer's study of the influence of MasterLife on the disciple of Christ. For this purpose, the writer believes Hulls' idea will offer descriptive data that will bring enlightenment to the visible Christlike transformation of those who participate in the actual experiment of this writer's study as opposed to those non-participants who will be utilized as a benchmark.

By the same token, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* authored by both Doctor's Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey,³¹ is relevant to this author's study since it offers a compilation of different models of discipleship, namely, the stages used by Jesus regarding discipleship. With this in mind, stage one requires becoming a *believer*, stage two a *disciple*, and stage three a *disciple maker*. These stages are identical to the

²⁹ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 2006), 21.

³⁰ Ibid., 20.

³¹ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), ix.

stages of discipleship found in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program. In particular, stage two offers qualities of a disciple that include both *love* and *obedience* according to Earley.³²

Likewise, *Evangelism Is...: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* written by Doctor's Dave Earley and David Wheeler,³³ offers immeasurable support to the fifth spiritual discipline offered in the MasterLife model to its participants. Specifically speaking, that spiritual discipline is a *Witness to the World*.³⁴ Simply put, this is another term for evangelism, which Earley and Dempsey go into great detail to encourage each member of the body of Christ, to do their part in transforming the world for Jesus Christ.³⁵ Therefore, some details of the benefits of sharing the believer's testimony offered by Earley,³⁶ will be utilized to shed light on the participant's newly developed desire to witness to the world in their pursuit of *bearing fruit for Christ*.³⁷ Besides this, the survey questionnaire used in this study poses the following statement under the category of ministry, *A Christian should frequently find ways to tell others about Jesus*,³⁸ which connects to the benefits offered by Earley.

In the same manner, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* written by D. Michael Henderson,³⁹ will be used to further explain the setting at Simon Temple A.M.E.

³² Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 61.

³³ Dave Earley and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is...: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic Publishing Group, 2010), v.

³⁴ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 91.

³⁵ Earley and Wheeler, *Evangelism Is*, v.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 248.

³⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 92.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 139-42.

³⁹ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Wilmore, KY: Rafiki Books, 2016), 91.

Zion church since the ministry there is built on Wesley's model of the class meeting system. In addition, the transformation created in the masses by Wesley's class meeting system will be compared in at least one aspect to transformation of participants in this study, namely the behavioral mode,⁴⁰ which will be explained in Chapter 2, of this author's study.

Continuing on, *Organic Discipleship: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership* written by Dennis McCallum & Jessica Lowery, will make at least one contribution to this study. To point out, McCallum and Lowery offer one of the chief goals of discipleship which will be utilized in this author's study to expound upon the goal of MasterLife.⁴¹

Furthermore, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* written by John Koessler, is an excellent tool that will be used in this study to provide additional understanding concerning the definition of Christian discipleship offered by MasterLife. To demonstrate, MasterLife aims at transforming each participant's character into Christlikeness, resulting in *humility* and *servanthood*,⁴² as they progress through this program's six-month biblically based discipleship training.⁴³ With this in mind, Koessler offers specific information regarding training in Christlikeness, which will be used in this study to gauge a portion of the findings.⁴⁴

Indeed, *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* written by Neil Cole, is another fine asset that will offer significant information to the structure of this author's local

⁴⁰ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Wilmore, KY: Rafiki Books, 2016), 91-109.

⁴¹ Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Discipleship: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership* (Columbus, OH: New Paradigm Publishing, 2012), 22.

⁴² Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

⁴⁴ McCallum and Lowery, *Organic Discipleship*, 41-42.

church for which the study will take place. For instance, Cole provides some detailed characteristics of a local church that is centralized, that will be used in this study to further explain this author's ministry context at Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church.⁴⁵

In addition, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* authored by both Henry & Richard Blackaby, offers a superb definition to the role of all of spiritual leaders, that will be applied to encourage spiritual leaders to implement the MasterLife discipleship model. In particular, the writers suggest, "Spiritual leaders use spiritual means" to move God's children unto God's agenda, which provides additional rationale for this study.⁴⁶ In particular, the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program will be used to move the experimental participants unto God's agenda by transforming their current values into God's Kingdom values.⁴⁷

Additionally, *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer is significant to this study since he offers a fundamental meaning to Christian discipleship. To point out, Dietrich explains, discipleship means obedience to Jesus, and, because Jesus is the object of that obedience, it must take the method of discipleship.⁴⁸ For this reason, this source will be utilized to give more understanding of those scriptures presented by MasterLife that are designed to develop love, obedience, and fruit in the experimental group adherents.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Neil Cole, *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 131.

⁴⁶ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 36-38.

⁴⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

⁴⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster New York Toronto Sydney, 1995), 59.

⁴⁹ Willis, *Cross*, 18.

Similarly, the book entitled *The Forgotten Ways* by Alan Hirsch is really important to this study because it collaborates MasterLife's strategy to develop followers of Christ through activity in the real world, rather than in small group sessions only.⁵⁰ For instance, MasterLife claims, Jesus Christ desires to involve His followers in His mission in the home, the church and the world.⁵¹ As Hirsch puts it, "discipleship involves activity."⁵² Therefore, this source will be used to support the need for some real-life activities required by participants in MasterLife to further develop their discipleship during the six-week study period.

Internet Source

Equally important, *4 Lessons from St Patrick for Making Disciples the Irish Way* written by Winfield Bevins, is also relevant to this author's study because it offers a model from the Celtic way of discipleship that coincides with some elements of the MasterLife process.⁵³ To illustrate, just as the Celtic Christians understood that mission happens within the confines of the Christian community,⁵⁴ the experimental participants in MasterLife will be made to understand that mission takes place within the context of the body of Christ or the church.⁵⁵ In this case, this source will be used in this study to demonstrate some characteristics of a missional community.⁵⁶

⁵⁰Allan Hirsch, *Reactivating Apostolic Movement: The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016).

⁵¹ Willis, 5.

⁵² Hirsch, 130.

⁵³ Winfield Bevins, "4 Lessons from St. Patrick for Making Disciples the Irish Way," accessed on February 2, 2018, <http://gcdisciple.com/2015/09/14/4-lessons-from-st-patrick-for-making-disciples-the-irish-way/>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 6.

⁵⁶ Bevins, "4 Lessons from St. Patrick."

Lastly, Discipleship authored by Dallas Willard, is vital to this study since it interprets Christian discipleship. That is to say, Willard asserts discipleship is the position inside the disciple in which spiritual transformation happens. In this case, this source will be used to offer insights into discipleship as it relates to Jesus and His disciples.⁵⁷ With attention to, some of these insights will be utilized to interpret some spiritual transformations in the findings as a result of those who actually participate in the experiment.

Scripture Review

Matthew 28:19-20

To begin, Jesus commands, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”⁵⁸ With that said, this text will be used as the biblical basis for this intervention at Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church. Simply put, this study should produce some tangible findings that will help this author’s local congregation fulfill the Great Commission as stated above.

Luke 9:23

Even more, Jesus stated, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”⁵⁹ This verse is relevant to this study because it undergirds MasterLife’s goal to help participants commit to a lifelong, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ With this in mind, participants will reevaluate their standing in relationship with

⁵⁷ Dallas Willard, “Discipleship” accessed on February 2, 2018, dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?

⁵⁸ Matt. 28:19-20.

⁵⁹ Luke 9:23.

⁶⁰ Willis, *The Disciple’s The Disciple’s Cross*, 11.

Jesus Christ during this study period in order to transition from a self-centered lifestyle to Christ-centered lifestyle. For instance, participants will learn through the use of an empty circle with a dot in the middle representing Jesus Christ, how to concentrate on ways He is to be at the center of their life.⁶¹

John 15:5

Continuing on, Jesus asserts, “I am the vine; you are branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing.”⁶² This verse will be used in this study to teach the participants how to remain in Jesus Christ through the six spiritual disciplines offered in MasterLife. With that said, participants will learn in Week 1 of the MasterLife process how to make Jesus Christ their first priority through the spiritual discipline of *Spending Time with the Master*.⁶³

John 8:31-32

Again, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”⁶⁴ These verses will be utilized in the MasterLife process during Week 2 to teach the participants both biblical and experiential reasons for Living in the Word, which is another spiritual discipline offered in MasterLife.⁶⁵ For instance, participants will be asked to memorize one verse each week during the six-week study period,

⁶¹ Willis, *The Disciple's The Disciple's Cross*, 13-14.

⁶² John 15:5.

⁶³ Willis, 10.

⁶⁴ John 8:31-32.

⁶⁵ Willis, 31.

which will help them keep God's word in their mind. In addition, participants will be asked to meditate on God's word, so that it will be kept in their hearts.⁶⁶

John 15:7

Furthermore, the Bible states, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."⁶⁷ This verse will be used in the MasterLife process during Week 4 of the study to help the participants understand the biblical concept of *Praying in Faith*. The participants will learn this concept through activities such as praying for adherents in their group by name, praying with their prayer buddies in person or by phone, and praying for the wishes of others.⁶⁸

John 13:34-35

Besides that, the Bible states, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."⁶⁹ For the purpose of this study, these verses will be used in the MasterLife process to train the participants on the biblical reasons for and how to *Fellowship with Believers*, which is another spiritual discipline offered in the MasterLife process. To demonstrate, participants will be asked to befriend another believer in this local congregation who is not a close friend or a part of their MasterLife group session.⁷⁰ As a result, the influence

⁶⁶ Ibid, 34.

⁶⁷ John 15:7.

⁶⁸ Willis, 53.

⁶⁹ John 13:34-35.

⁷⁰ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 73.

of the MasterLife process on its participants will be shown by their willingness to show love as an act of fellowship with other believers.

John 15:8

Next, the Bible records, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”⁷¹ With that said, this verse will be used in this study to help the participants understand the biblical concept of bearing fruit that brings God glory by becoming a *Witness to the World*. Briefly speaking, they will learn to share Jesus Christ with non-Christians in Week 5 of this study period.⁷² Also, participants will be asked to do a kind act for their non-Christian friend during Week 6, which bears fruit as well.⁷³

John 15:13

In addition, the Bible records, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”⁷⁴ This verse will be used in Week 6, of this study to help the participants understand the biblical concept of *taking up their cross*. In other words, participants will be taught to *Minister to Others*, which is another spiritual discipline offered in MasterLife.⁷⁵ At the same time, this verse will be used as one of the biblical foundations in training the participants to serve others during this study.

Mark 2:18

⁷¹ John 15:8.

⁷² Willis, 91.

⁷³ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 114.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Willis, 114-117.

Again, the Bible records, “Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, ‘How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?’”⁷⁶ This verse is applicable to this study because it mentions three sets of people with disciples that will be used in the MasterLife process. To demonstrate, the participants will be asked to identify the persons or groups who had disciples in this verse. Furthermore, this verse will be used to help the participants understand one of three ways in which the New Testament uses the word disciple.⁷⁷

Luke 14:26

Next, Jesus stated, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers, and sister—yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple.”⁷⁸ This verse is germane to this study as well, since it will help the participants understand that Christ must have priority over people in their lives.⁷⁹ To put it briefly, Christ must be at the center.⁸⁰

1 John 4:14

In similar fashion, the Bibles records, “We love because he first loved us.”⁸¹ This is another key verse that is significant to this study since it will be utilized in Week 2 of the MasterLife process to help the experimental participants understand why they should respond to

⁷⁶ Mark 2:18.

⁷⁷ Willis, 12.

⁷⁸ Luke 14:26-33.

⁷⁹ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 15.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁸¹ 1 John 4:19.

God with love through daily fellowship with Him.⁸² To point out, the participants will be encouraged to have a daily quiet time, which is dynamic to loving an adjoining relationship with God the Father made feasible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.⁸³

Psalm 100:4

Not only that, the participants will learn through the MasterLife process how to approach God in regards to their fellowship with God during their quiet time. With this in mind, the Bible states, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”⁸⁴ This verse will be used during Week 3 of this study to help the participants understand they should always remember to give thanks to God for what He has done whenever they approach Him in prayer and in worship.⁸⁵

Psalm 66:18

In like manner, confession of sin is important for the disciple of Christ and therefore significant to this study as the participants will learn. With that said, the Bible records, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”⁸⁶ This verse is significant to Week 3 of this study since it will be used to teach the participants the biblical importance of confessing wrong thoughts, words, and deeds to God when convicted by the Holy Spirit in order to maintain fellowship with Him.

Hebrews 10:24-25

⁸² Willis, 35-36.

⁸³ Willis, 35-36.

⁸⁴ Ps. 100:4.

⁸⁵ Willis, 57-59.

⁸⁶ Ps. 66:18.

Also, the Bible records, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together..., but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”⁸⁷ Moreover, these verses are relevant to this study because they will help the participants understand the significance of fellowship. In fact, these verses will be utilized in Week 4 of the MasterLife process to teach participants the importance of regularly assembling together with other believers as disciples of Christ.⁸⁸

1 Peter 4:10

Finally, the Bible records, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”⁸⁹ Again, this verse is important to this study as it will be used to help those in the experimental group comprehend their membership in the body of Christ and the usage of their spiritual gifts to serve others.⁹⁰ In ensuing the chapter, this writer will introduce the aim of this research, his ministry setting and purposes for choosing to conduct this thesis project.

⁸⁷ Heb. 10:24-25.

⁸⁸ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 75.

⁸⁹ 1 Pet. 4:10.

⁹⁰ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 76.

Chapter Two

The Target of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Study

To begin with, it should be a priority of all Christian spiritual leaders to either develop or implement an existing successful model that helps to make Christian disciples in their local congregations. To put it another way, one writer emphasizes God has called spiritual leaders to the critical mission of making disciples.⁹¹ Without doubt, a failure to implement a successful model for making disciples will continue to result in the absence of God's holiness in the body of Christ. In fact, one author affirms the body of Christ remains to reproduce God's holiness.⁹² In light of this assertion, Christian spiritual leaders are also responsible for teaching members of the body of Christ to submit to everything Jesus Christ commanded.⁹³ This implies spiritual leaders are teachers.⁹⁴

To point out, Jesus was addressed as "Rabbi" or "Teacher" more than any other name, largely by His followers and the crowds He taught.⁹⁵ In that sense, spiritual leaders who endeavor to follow Christ can do so by teaching as well. Therefore, pastors and others called to spiritual leadership positions must become fully engaged in the discipleship making process. This procedure involves teaching that leads to a reproduction of God's holiness. In the next section, this writer will elaborate on the aim of his research.

⁹¹ John MacArthur and The Master's Seminary Faculty, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 261.

⁹² Ray Stedman, *Bodylife: The Book That Inspired a Return to The Church's Real Meaning and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1772), 27.

⁹³ Matt. 28:20.

⁹⁴ Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard, *The Leadership Lessons of Jesus: Timeless Model for Today's Leaders*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 1997, 43.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

The Aim of this Research

After analyzing the ministry at this writer's local church for some years now, the absence of Christlike transformation in many who proclaimed to be followers of Christ is apparent.⁹⁶ This might be attributed to their unfaithfulness. As one writer puts it, "The cause of their infidelity is summed up in the words of Jesus: They did not hold dearly 'the things of God.' "*He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'* (8:34)."⁹⁷ In order to help eradicate this absence of Christlike transformation in this writer's local church, he has decided to conduct his applied research utilizing the MasterLife program in his local congregation for the purpose of effecting Christlike transformation.⁹⁸ On that note, this writer will set out to explore the question of whether or not those participants who actually participate in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program transform faster than those who do not participate in the program during the research period.

If the findings reflect some participants transformed faster in attitude, behavior, relationship, ministry, and doctrine, then these findings will be used to encourage mass membership participation in the MasterLife program at this writer's local church. Not only that, the findings may also be used to encourage the Senior Pastor to make MasterLife a requirement for full membership. To be more specific, this present writer will make a recommendation to the Senior Pastor to consider making the completion of at least six-weeks of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program a requirement for full membership in his local church. In the

⁹⁶Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 63.

⁹⁷ Andrew Ryder, S.C.J., *Following Christ: Models of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 1999), 33.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

following section, this writer will lay out the model and ministry context of Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church.

The Ministry Context of Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church

At the present time, this writer functions as the Executive Pastor as recognized by the present Senior Pastor. In addition, this writer is an Elder established by the election of a majority of the Annual Conference and by the laying on of the hands of the Bishop and two or more Elders. With this in mind, “An Elder has the authority to preach, conduct Divine Worship, solemnize Matrimony, administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Furthermore, an Elder is the only minister who is authorized to consecrate the elements for Holy Communion.”⁹⁹ Since August 2009 to present, this writer’s full-time vocation has been to assist the Pastor in Charge in multiple functionalities of ministry at Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church.

Some of these functions include the following: (a) Presiding over Sunday worship services, (b) Developing and maintaining schedules for a staff of thirty-six ministers, (c) Officiating weddings and funerals, (d) Performing baptisms and administering holy communion, (e) Supervising a full-time office staff of five personnel, (f) Conducting singles, pre-marital and marital spiritual guidance counseling, (g) Preaching the word of God, and (h) Teaching Bible study, Sunday church school, and discipleship training. In the following section, some basic information about the church office staff will be provided.

The Office Staff

⁹⁹ *The Book of Discipline of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*. (Charlotte, NC: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, 2016), 80.

For the purpose of providing a clearer arrangement of this writer's ministry setting, there are five office staff employees who carry out multiple functions to assist the Senior Pastor and the membership in this ministry. Some of these functions include the following: (1) Maintenance of yearly church calendar, (2) Scheduling membership appointments with the Pastor in Charge, (3) Operating and maintaining financial database, (4) Updating church website and social media outlets, (5) Carrying out mass mailings and running errands, (6) Providing service to one-hundred and twenty-seven class leaders, (7) Coordinating ministry events with higher echelons within the A.M.E. Zion church and those in the community, and (8) Generating, filing, and maintaining numerous reports. Should be noted, the Pastor in Charge efficiently manages this office staff because he maintains a truthful lifeforce and right attitude.¹⁰⁰ In the succeeding sections, some details about the various locations, leadership administration, endeavors of the entire African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church will be provided.

The A.M.E. Zion Church

To start, the A.M.E. Zion Church was systematized in New York, during the year of 1796.¹⁰¹ This denomination covers all of the United States, Canada, Caribbean Islands, England, Africa, India and South America under the administration of twelve elected Bishops. In addition, the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District entails the Central North Carolina, Cape Fear, North Carolina, Albemarle, Virgin Islands and South Africa Conferences. Additionally, Simon Temple Church is also an associate of the Fayetteville District, which is one of the districts located within the Central North Carolina Conference. Furthermore, the A.M.E. Zion church has

¹⁰⁰ Floyd H. Flake, Elaine McCollins Flake and Edwin C. Reed, *African American Church Management Handbook* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press Publishers, 2005), 53.

¹⁰¹ *The Book of Discipline of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, v.

endeavored over the years to offer educational prospects for young individuals by launching secondary and college level schools.¹⁰²

Presently, each school includes full-time instructive curricula which remains to be presented at Livingstone College and Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, NC; Clinton Junior College in Rock Hill, SC; Lomax-Hannon Junior College in Greenville, AL; and the A.M.E. Zion Community College, located in Monrovia, Liberia, and West Africa.¹⁰³ Specifically speaking, the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is to enlarge our love for God and to aid in meeting the needs of humanity by “Loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.”¹⁰⁴ With that said, some details about the history of this present writer’s local church will be discussed in the next section.

Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church

Simon Temple Church is the location where this writer’s research will be conducted. Moreover, several previous pastors have been instrumental in the sustainability and progress of this local church ministry. Point in fact, a deed dating back to November 18, 1873, reveals Isaac McDonald, Isaac Baker, Thomas McKoy, and Robert Kelly who were trustees at that time, purchased a portion of land known as Beaver Creek Chapel from Henry McDonald. Afterwards, Beaver Creek Chapel became an associate of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.¹⁰⁵ Must be remembered, the succeeding pastors played an historic role in the sustainability and progression of this ministry: M. N. Levy (1887), E. Johnson McKoy (1923), J. Z. Siler (1937), J.

¹⁰² Reverend Brian R. Thompson Sr., *Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church: A Guide to Church Membership* (Fayetteville, NC: Simon Temple Ministries, 2005), 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *The Book of Discipline*, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, *A Guide to Church Membership*, 10.

S. Maynor (1950), Dewitt Womack (1968-1973), Cajus B. Howell (1973-1986), George Miller (1986-1988), James Sloan (1988-1990), Franklin L. Rush (1990-2001), and Brian R. Thompson (2001-Present).¹⁰⁶

It is important to realize, as the leadership changed the church's designation also changed. This designation was changed from Beaver Creek to Simon Temple in November 1976, in honor of the African male, Simon of Cyrene, who aided Jesus in carrying his cross up to Calvary as Jesus became fatigued physically (Mk. 15:21). Besides this, each pastor's contribution has led to the development of multiple innovative ministries, and building projects that included a recent thirty-three thousand square foot worship facility.¹⁰⁷ In the ensuing part, some details about the operations of this ministry setting will be disclosed.

Simon Temple's Ministry Operations

While some ministries within this writer's local district are diligently pursuing resolutions to meet their objectives, the ministry at Simon Temple church continues to progress well in meeting ministry needs and goals because of the contemporary preparation and use of human resources that are being properly managed by the current Senior Pastor. As Meeks puts it, contemporary planning focuses more on people dynamisms and aims to be accomplished.¹⁰⁸ Be that as it may, the absence of Christlike transformation in many remains an issue. Simon Temple is open for God's business on Tuesdays 10am – 6pm; Wednesdays 10am – 8pm; Thursdays

¹⁰⁶ Thompson, *A Guide to Church Membership*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 10-12.

¹⁰⁸ M Douglas Meeks, "Hope and The Ministry of Planning and Management," *Anglican Theological Review* 64, no. 2 (April 1982): 147-162, accessed December 8, 2016, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000793974&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

10am – 7pm; Fridays 9am – 2pm; and Sundays 8am – 2pm, respectively. When this present writer became a full member of this local church in May 2003, there were about four-hundred members on the rolls. Presently, there are an estimated thirty-three hundred members on the rolls. Currently, this ministry ranks as the fastest growing congregation in its denomination. With that said, Simon Temple would be considered to be a combination of the traditional, attractional, and hybrid church models.

To clarify, one author suggests a traditional model church is one that has a Senior Pastor who manages the programs and ministries of the local church.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Simon Temple church fits this characterization since it has a Senior Pastor who exercises oversight over all programs, boards, clubs, and ministries. In addition, one writer proclaims the Attractional Church Model is conceivably better known by the term *seeker church*, and its viewpoint describes what may be referred to as the “mega” church.¹¹⁰ With that, Simon Temple falls in the mega church category based on the size of its membership. Although this ministry impacts its surrounding communities, it struggles with accomplishing intimacy within its local congregation because of its membership size. To put it another way, “‘Mega’ churches love the impact they are having in their community but will readily admit that their greatest struggle is achieving intimacy within their Body.”¹¹¹ Although this may be true, the Senior Pastor of this ministry has recently assembled a Pastor’s Advisory Board composed of a variety of members who are prominent leaders in their communities. One of their present tasks is to brainstorm some

¹⁰⁹ Earley and Dempsey, *Discipleship Making Is*, 230.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹¹¹ Dave Browning, *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy & Impact* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010),

measures that will help the Senior Pastor bring some solutions to the subject of ways to restore intimacy.

Furthermore, Dempsey suggests the membership of an attractional church model tends to exercise a strategy of evangelism called *invest* and *invite*.¹¹² Given each of his points, Simon Temple is an Attractional Church Model too, since some of the membership believes in sharing Christ with the lost. This happened because a heavy emphasis was put on the practice of sharing Jesus Christ with others, inviting them to weekly church services and Bible studies, and investing time in those who visit. In addition, the practice of bringing in renowned gospel artists to minister in song, demonstrates that Simon Temple bears another feature of the Attractional Church Model because this is a strategy used to inspire unbelievers to *come* and *see*.¹¹³ By the same token, Simon Temple reflects the Hybrid Church Model viewpoint, since it is also considered to be complex because of the competing philosophies of “come and see” and “go and make.”¹¹⁴

Even more, Simon Temple transports and serves meals in the community five days per week. This ministry is called the Meals on Wheels Ministry. Not only that, this local ministry conducts outreach in the surrounding community on each Saturday between the hours of 7am – 10am. This ministry is called the Good Samaritan Ministry and provides evangelism, food, and an invitation to Simon Temple. Furthermore, Simon Temple offers various ministries for practically every age group. These ministries include the following: (1) Men of Zion, (2) Women of Excellence, (3) Joshua Generation, (4) Daughters of Excellence, (5) Marriage Ministry, (6)

¹¹² Earley and Dempsey, *Discipleship*, 232.

¹¹³ Ibid., 232-233.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 234.

Singles Ministry, (7) Men's Empowerment Ministry, (8) Women's Empowerment Ministry, (9) Children Energizer's Ministry, (10) Book Club Ministry, and lastly (11) Discipleship Class. In the succeeding section, more thorough information on the purpose for initiating this ministry project will be unveiled.

The Purpose for Initiating this Thesis Project

Accordingly, when spiritual transformation fails to happen in the life of the disciple of Christ, the right intervention may provide some resolutions to help minimize interferences and improve discipleship. Yet before this can happen, goals for discipleship should be established. Without doubt, one of the finest ways to think about the process of making disciples is to ponder what you desire to see in well disciplined individuals.¹¹⁵ In that case, this writer would like to see transformation in attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine in the disciples of Christ within his local church. Put another way, progressive transformation in character, understanding, and ministry competence, are some solid goals for discipleship that would surely improve this writer's local church health and effectiveness.¹¹⁶

As a result, Simon Temple Church would be considered to be more God-centered. As Perman puts it, "To be God-centered, then, is to make God the source of your guidance, security, and meaning."¹¹⁷ Perhaps, this is exactly what the spiritual leadership in this writer's local church seeks to accomplish. In the following part, another justification for this thesis project will be presented.

¹¹⁵ McCallum and Lowery, *Organic Discipleship*, 22.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹¹⁷ Matt Perman, *What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 54.

The Disciple of Christ's Absence of Transformation in Attitudes

The Absence of Forgiving Attitudes

Admittedly, this present writer has observed on numerous occasions during Bible studies, marital counseling, and individual counseling sessions, the absence of a forgiving attitude.¹¹⁸ Most importantly, this attitude is prevalent among some who professed to be disciples of Christ. Although the Senior Pastor has preached and taught on the subject of forgiveness on multiple occasions, there still remains an absence of transformation in this area. In other words, there is a blatant disregard for the word of God in this area. To counter this disregard, the Bible states, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ in God forgave you.”¹¹⁹ To neglect God’s word is to neglect His power of spiritual influence which leads to visible transformation.

For this reason, one writer asserts, “God’s Word influences how I see myself. How I see myself influences how I live. How I live reflects God’s artwork on the canvas of my life.”¹²⁰ In addition, this author believes God’s plan for forgiveness is systematic and, when followed, makes an endless transformation in the lives of those who obey.¹²¹ Pursuing this further, the attitude of confessing and correcting wrongs will be offered in the ensuing segment.

¹¹⁸ Avery T. Willis Jr., *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

¹¹⁹ Eph. 4:32.

¹²⁰ Dr. Ken Nichols, *Masterpiece: Seeing Yourself as God’s Work of Art Changes Everything* (Dickinson, TX: Baxter Press, 2014), 20.

¹²¹ Dr. Ken Nichols, *The Healing Freedom of Forgiveness: How to Give and Receive Forgiveness That Lasts A Lifetime* (EJ Cajon, CA: Alive Counseling Ministries, 1997), 8.

The Absence of An Attitude of Confessing and Correcting Personal Wrongdoing

Nobody denies, there are those who professed to be Christian disciples in this writer's local congregation who simply fail to be transformed in the area of going to someone they have offended to confess and correct their individual wrongdoing.¹²² Point in fact, this sort of attitude ruins fellowship among disciples of Christ and non-followers of Christ. The absence of transformation in this area can be categorized as emotionally unhealthy. Scazzero believes a person is emotionally unhealthy when they are deficient in perception of how others experience them.¹²³ With that said, this attitude is inexcusable as it relates to professing disciples of Christ. Again, the Bible says, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."¹²⁴ This biblical requirement is practical and necessary to improve church health and spiritual effectiveness. In the same way, some instances of the absence of behavior transformation will be offered now in the succeeding unit.

The Disciple of Christ's Absence of Transformation in Behavior

The Absence of Reading and Studying the Bible

Obviously, the spiritual discipline of unceasingly reading and studying the Bible is an absolute necessity to eradicating the absence of transformation in the disciples of Christ's behavior. Charles G. Finney is a great example of what God can do through a willing vessel who emerges himself into the spiritual discipline of reading and studying the Bible. In fact, one author

¹²² Willis, 139-42.

¹²³ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 25.

¹²⁴ Matt. 18:15.

explains, Finney found so many references to the Scriptures in his law books, that he chose to purchase a personal Bible, and became profoundly engrossed in the study of it.¹²⁵ Once Finney concluded the Bible was the true word of God from reading and studying it, God would eventually use him to lead more than one hundred thousand souls to Jesus Christ as an indirect and direct result of his labors in 1857-58.¹²⁶ In this case, it is easy to see the impact God's word makes in an individual's life who practices reading and studying their Bible.

Be that as it may, this is simply one more reason why this present writer decided to conduct this evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's influence on the disciple of Christ. That is, to study the impact of God's word on the lives of those who daily partake in it, in comparison to those who go on with their normal Christian living. Besides that, the absence of transformation in the area of sexual immorality is also present in some of the lives of those who profess to be disciples of Christ in this local congregation. An instance of the lack of transformation in this area will be presented in the next subsection.

The Absence of Transformation in Avoiding Sexual Immorality

More often than not, those in married and single relationships who have sought spiritual guidance counseling from this writer over the last nine years involved some aspect of sexual immorality. Clearly then, there is no need to provide details since the Bible declares any form of sexual immorality is to be absent in the lives God's people. To this point, the Bible says, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or greed,

¹²⁵ James Gilchrist Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* (Lexington, KY: JawboneDigital.com, 2016), 136.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 135-137.

because these are improper for God's holy people."¹²⁷ Yet, the evidence shows some have not been properly disciplined in the area of circumventing conditions that might lead to temptation by sexual immorality.¹²⁸ In this situation, disciples of Christ should be made to understand there are consequences to this type of immoral behavior. Point in fact, Paul encourages the Corinthian believers not to commit sexual immorality, as some of the Israelites did and in one single day, twenty-three thousand of them died under God's judgment.¹²⁹ This current writer has noticed the absence of transformation in the relationships of some people in his local church. Therefore, he will offer some examples of this spiritual deficiency in the subsequent section.

The Disciple of Christ's Absence of Transformation in Relationships

The Absence of Setting Themselves Apart from Unhealthy Relationships

To be sure, some who profess to be disciples of Christ are struggling to set themselves apart from close relationships with people who hamper their expression of Christian morals and principles.¹³⁰ In other words, these professing disciples of Christ are struggling to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Jesus Christ.¹³¹ As Willis puts it, denying themselves means repudiating all of self for Jesus Christ.¹³² He goes on to suggest, no individual can become a disciple who is not ready to deny himself or herself in order to make Christ the number one precedence in their lives.¹³³ This would include those close relationships

¹²⁷ Eph. 5:3.

¹²⁸ Willis, *Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

¹²⁹ 1 Cor. 10:8.

¹³⁰ Willis, 139-42.

¹³¹ Luke 9:23.

¹³² Willis, 13.

¹³³ Ibid., 13-14.

with individuals who negatively influence the disciple's relationship with Jesus Christ and other disciples of Christ. The Bible points to this in the following way, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciples."¹³⁴ With this in mind, disciples of Christ should be made to understand the importance of dodging close relationships that disregard this mandate given by Jesus Christ. In the succeeding segment, some examples of the absence of transformation in ministry of some individuals in this existing writer's congregation will be presented.

The Absence of Confidence in God

Continuing on, a lack of confidence in God has been evident in the lives of several professing disciples of Christ within this writer's local church. On countless occasions during the last seven years, this writer has ministered to members and non-members of his local church whose lives are filled with stress and anxiety.¹³⁵ The common denominator of most of these cases has been the absence of confidence in God attributed to an incorrect perspective of Him. It can be noted, several found it difficult to trust in God because they truly did not understand the promises of God. A lack of understanding of the promises of God diminishes one's confidence in God and Who He is. One writer emphasizes, "Diminished confidence always results in diminished courage. Confidence is about what I believe and courage is about how I behave."¹³⁶

With this in mind, disciples of Christ should be taught to keep the right perspective of God in all of life challenges, to minimize stress and anxiety. In fact, another writer states it this

¹³⁴ Luke 14:26.

¹³⁵ Willis, 139-42.

¹³⁶ Dr. Ken Nichols, *The Power of Perspective: Seeing Clearly When Life is Out of Focus* (Dickinson, TX: Alive Counseling Ministries, 2014), 32.

way, “Get the right perspective. When Goliath came against the Israelites, the soldiers thought, ‘He’s so big we can never kill him.’ David looked at the same giant and thought, ‘He’s so big I can’t miss.’”¹³⁷ As a result, teaching disciples of Christ to keep the correct perspective is one more reason this writer has chosen this Thesis Writing Project. Moving to the next segment of this discussion, some instances of the absence of ministry transformation will be offered.

The Disciple of Christ’s Absence of Transformation in Ministry

The Absence of Sharing Jesus Christ with Others

Specifically speaking, there is an absence of sharing Christ with others in this current writer’s local congregation. This is true for at least two reasons. First, many in the membership have not been adequately trained in sharing Jesus Christ with others and therefore, do not know how to basically explain the gospel of Jesus Christ to another person.¹³⁸ Secondly, some are simply unaware of their God-given responsibility to be witnesses for Christ to others.¹³⁹ In other words, some may not know that to be a Christian is to be a disciple of Christ and to be a disciple of Christ is to be on mission with Christ. To clarify, being on mission entails telling the lost people about Christ and representing the love of Christ.¹⁴⁰ What does the mission include?

Sprinkle tells his readers, the mission involves speaking to people about Jesus, calling them to faith and repentance, and teaching them about the biblical story of God.¹⁴¹ This is not all that is required in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition to the witness, extending an

¹³⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹³⁸ Willis, *Cross*, 139-42.

¹³⁹ Acts 1:8.

¹⁴⁰ Preston Sprinkle, *Go: Returning Discipleship to the Front Line of Faith* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2016), 114.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

invitation to the individual should follow. In fact, each time the gospel of Christ is offered in an isolated dialog, people should be invited to repent and believe in Jesus, if the presentation of the gospel of Christ is to be comprehensive.¹⁴² Be that as it may, this mind-set of ministry is certainly absent in some of the members of this local congregation. Another important factor in the disciple of Christ's life is Christian doctrine. This writer will offer some instances of the absence of Christian doctrine in the resulting section.

The Disciple of Christ's Absence of Transformation in Christian Doctrine

The Absence of Wisdom for Christian Living

Unquestionably, some in this membership are experiencing the absence of wisdom for Christian living as evidenced by secular ways of thinking. In other words, these persons are relatively self-centered rather than God-centered. To point out, the consistent giving of the tithe is a requirement in Christian living, yet, it is absent in the actions of many in this membership. Although the Bible clearly commands the disciple of Christ to bring the tithe into God's storehouse, many react adversely to this biblical doctrine.¹⁴³ This reaction may be attributed to the lack of understanding for giving and all that God has done for them. As one novelist writes, "We give because God has already given us his best gifts—the gifts of abundant and eternal life and of unfailing love."¹⁴⁴ On the one hand, a lack of strong relationship with God could also be an attributing factor to this adverse reaction. On the other hand, people who have a strong relationship with God express it through giving cheerfully and out of gratitude for all that God

¹⁴² Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on The Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 52.

¹⁴³ Mal. 3:10.

¹⁴⁴ Floyd H. Flake, Elaine McCollins Flake, and Edwin C. Reed, *African American: Church Management Handbook* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 67.

has performed for them.¹⁴⁵ Now, the final example of the absence of Christian doctrine will be offered in the next part.

The Absence of the Bible as the Authoritative Source in Decision-Making

On the negative side, some in the congregation continue to seek secular sources as their authoritative source rather than the Bible. For the Bible says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”¹⁴⁶ Even though this is true, some simply do not seek the Bible’s guidance until they have personally run out of those secular options that fail to resolve their issue. This writer has witnessed and experienced the absence of biblical guidance in the decision-making process of others during multiple Christian counseling sessions. As a discerning spiritual leader, patterns of the absence of biblical doctrine become obvious over the years during Christian counseling sessions. Although, this writer used the authority of the word of God and the influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ to give these persons the truth, some simply chose not to put that biblical guidance into practice.¹⁴⁷ This was again evidenced in the subsequent counseling session by their own self-admission.

For example, members who receive private Christian counseling from the Senior Pastor or this present writer are normally given a homework assignment to be completed and returned at the succeeding session for discussion. Simply stated, in some cases these assignments were not completed and returned as directed. This writer will now offer another key point regarding the absence of Christian doctrine in the following portion.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 68.

¹⁴⁶ 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

¹⁴⁷ John MacArthur, *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 141.

The Absence of Sufficient Attendance at Bible Study and Sunday Church School

For some unknown sufficient reason to this writer, most in his local church do not attend Bible study nor do they attend Sunday Church school. To point out, of the estimated three thousand plus members in full-membership and another one thousand plus on probation, an average of one-hundred attend noon-day Bible study and an average of two-hundred attend evening Bible study. Not only that, average attendance at Sunday Church School is around forty. If members are only attending Sunday worship service, then how are they being consistently nurtured in their faith as disciples of Christ? From this writer's perspective, those members are not being properly nurtured because of the absence of Bible study and Sunday Church School in their lives. In fact, one author believes the church is significant for complete discipling to manifest. In addition, Willis believes the Christian will not have the support needed to grow spiritually short of regular participation in an environment of church nurturing disciplines.¹⁴⁸

Likewise, some in this congregation simply have not yet grasps the truth that God's word is the spiritual food required to nourish their spiritual life. As Prime proclaims, "It is through His word that we gain glimpses of Christ's glory so that our characters are transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).¹⁴⁹ With that said, members in this current writer's congregation have to be inspired to make attending Bible study and Sunday Church School a priority in their Christian living. For this purpose, disciples of Christ should be taught consistently on the value in attending these means of grace, which is to help them remain

¹⁴⁸ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Derek J. Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being A Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 91.

in Jesus Christ. With that said, a discussion on some instances of the absence of remaining in Christ will be offered next.

The Absence of Transformation in Fruit Bearing as Related to Remaining in Christ

Consequently, the absence of remaining in Christ will certainly result in the absence of fruit bearing. For the Bible says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”¹⁵⁰ It is easy to see in this passage, Jesus is telling His followers to stay connected to Him. The alternative to not staying connected to Jesus Christ, who is the vine in this verse, results in a fruitless life. This would equate to a life that does not fulfill the purposes of God and certainly a life that does not bring God any glory. This is another issue that would describe some of the members in this writer’s local congregation. Some are just living but not living to bring glory to God. This writer sees this is true because he only sees the majority of the membership on Sundays. Not only that, the fruit of leading souls to Christ is definitely absent in the lives of many in this local membership.

To point out, a few weeks ago during one of our Bible studies, this present writer posed a question to the attendees. Here is the question that was asked. By a show of hands, how many of you have led a soul to Christ before? Immediately, an estimated twelve hands were raised from an attendance of about one-hundred and twenty. This remaining number reflects the lives of the unfruitful. Interestingly enough, Earley describes unfruitful Christians like this:

We have all met them. They are nice, clean, friendly people who have been to numerous Christian seminars, completed dozens of Christian courses, and filled out a vast variety of workbooks. They attend church services faithfully. They do not drink, smoke, cuss, or gamble. Many even have diplomas from Christian schools of higher learning. Yet, they have never led a person to Christ. Jesus is not living evidently through them. They would

¹⁵⁰ John 15:5.

have no idea how to start and lead a missional home group focused on reaching their neighborhood with the gospel. They are not making disciples. Are they disciples?¹⁵¹

In the rest of his discussion, he reminds the reader that true discipleship outcomes are spiritual transformation and reproduction.¹⁵² True spiritual transformation and reproduction will happen only when those members of this current writer's local church learn and practice staying connected to Jesus Christ. Pursuing this further, there are at least two more instances of the absence of fruit bearing among some members of this local church. They can be summed up in one's love and obedience to Jesus Christ. In regards to the fruit of obedience, Jesus declares to His listeners, "'Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?'"¹⁵³ To rephrase it, if Jesus is your Lord, then be obedient to what He commands.

Then again, Jesus tells His disciples, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."¹⁵⁴ Put another way, those who claim to follow Jesus must be kind, forgiving, gentle, patient, supportive, and encouraging to one another. These attributes can be seen in the nature of Christ which He displayed continually towards His followers. Lastly, the Bible proclaims, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."¹⁵⁵ Collectively, they mean as Jesus lives in you and you live in Him, obedience, love and fruit are evidential to those in your environment.¹⁵⁶

That is to say, people will see a change in the way the individual, thinks, talks, and lives when they follow Christ. It seems clear from all that has been mentioned in this chapter, there is

¹⁵¹ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making*, 5.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Luke 6:46.

¹⁵⁴ John 13:34.

¹⁵⁵ John 15:8.

¹⁵⁶ Willis, *Disciple's Cross*, 18.

a clear case for this intervention within the ministry context of this current writer. In the succeeding chapter, this present writer will try to introduce his applied research as it relates to the Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the Disciple of Christ.

Chapter Three

The Particulars of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Study

Within this project the writer will explain in detail his applied research regarding the Evaluation of MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program. This chapter will include a brief description of the MasterLife model and its author. In addition, this writer will reveal his purpose for choosing this nature of research. In the same fashion, the selection process of participants in both the experimental and control groups will be offered in much detail. Pursuing this further, this material will be followed by an account of the research subjects and sampling sizes. Next, some information on the instrument utilized by this writer to collect data from both groups will be offered. This will be followed by an explanation of the methods applied by this current writer to collect his thesis project's data. Lastly, this writer will offer historical and present academic models which correlate to the MasterLife discipleship model.

Obviously, when Jesus called men to follow Him as disciples (cf. Luke 14:25-35), He was not calling men to be born again only. The call at this point was a call to follow Him as a learner, which recaps the meaning of disciple. With that said, discipleship is subsequent to being born again.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, it is easy to see that Christians require continuous discipleship training throughout their lifetime. With this in mind, this present writer believes the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Model plays a critical role in this lifelong process. In the next section, a description of this program will be offered.

A Description of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Model

¹⁵⁷ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 343

Of greatest significance is the author's purpose for writing the MasterLife Program. The author's purpose for writing MasterLife was to help true followers of Christ make the following definition of discipleship a permanent way of life: Christian discipleship is developing an individual, lifetime, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which He transforms your character into Christlikeness; changes your values into Kingdom values; and includes you in His mission in the home, the church, and world.¹⁵⁸ Besides that, Mark Labberton asserts, "Jesus does not say, "Believe me," but rather, "Follow Me."¹⁵⁹ With that, those who participate in this model will learn how to deepen their relationships with Christ through a twenty-four week discipleship process that consists of the following four six-week studies: (1) *MasterLife 1: The Disciple's Cross*, (2) *MasterLife 2: The Disciple's Personality*, (3) *MasterLife 3: The Disciple's Victory*, and (4) *MasterLife 4: The Disciple's Mission*.¹⁶⁰

Pursuing this further, each course builds on the other and is a precondition for the one that supervenes. Furthermore, each weekly course employs an interactive learning process. That is to say, each day for five days a week, participants are expected to study a portion of the material and complete correlated activities. Also, each day's study necessitates an estimated twenty to thirty minutes of study time.¹⁶¹ Additionally, each day's activities are designed to lead participants into a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ.¹⁶² The *weekly assignments* include real-life experiences that will change the participant's lives. It is easy to see, the author of MasterLife believes discipleship is a relationship. That is to say, discipleship is not something

¹⁵⁸ Willis, *MasterLife Leader Guide*, 5.

¹⁵⁹ The Legacy, *15 Age and Stage Milestones: The D3 Model of Discerning, Developing, and Deploying Disciples* (Columbia, SC: Ohio Ministry Network, 2018), 54.

¹⁶⁰ Willis, 5.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Willis, *MasterLife Guide*, 5.

participants do by themselves. Therefore, participants need human replicas, teaching, coaching, and accountability to be fashioned into what their Creator intends for them to be. For this purpose, a *leader* is needed to bring these things to fruition during the process of discipleship.¹⁶³

Following this further, the weekly group sessions help participants reflect on the impressions and experiences in MasterLife and help them apply the ideas to their individual lives. By the same token, the author of MasterLife believes *Christ* is the actual Discipler; therefore, participants are really His disciples throughout this process. Dr. Willis suggests the body of Christ, the *church*, is significant for complete discipling to be fulfilled. That is to say, participants depend on other believers for fellowship, strength, and ministry opportunities. Therefore, if the church is absent, then participants would not have the needed support to grow in Jesus Christ during the MasterLife process of discipleship.¹⁶⁴ This current writer will now offer some details about the author of MasterLife in the ensuing section.

The Author of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program

Dr. Avery T. Willis Jr., was born on February 21, 1934 in Lepanto, Arkansas and transitioned to be with Jesus Christ on July 30, 2010, at the age of 76. He is the author and developer of MasterLife. He was one of the former senior vice-presidents of overseas procedures at the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁶⁵ The first MasterLife: Discipleship Training for Leaders, printed in 1980, has been utilized by more than 250,000 people in the United States and has been rendered into more than 50 different languages for use by uncountable thousands. Following this further, Dr. Willis has authored books involving

¹⁶³ Willis, *MasterLife Guide*, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 4.

Indonesian Revival: Why Two Million Came to Christ, The Biblical Basis of Missions, Master Builder: Multiplying Leaders, Bible Guide to Discipleship and Doctrine, and numerous books in Indonesian.¹⁶⁶

In the same fashion, Dr. Willis served for 10 years as a pastor in Oklahoma and Texas and for 14 years as a missionary to Indonesia, throughout which he served for 6 years as the president of the Indonesia Baptist Theological Seminary. Afterwards, he served as the Director of the Adult Department of the Discipleship and Family Development Division, the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (now LifeWay Christian Resources), where he introduced the Lay Institute for Equipping (LIFE), a sequence of in-depth discipleship courses.¹⁶⁷ As can be seen, Dr. Willis made lasting contributions to Christian discipleship. In the subsequent section, the purpose for choosing this nature of research will be offered.

The Purpose for Choosing this Nature of Research

Certainly, the biblical foundation for research of this nature can be traced back to the Book of Daniel. In fact, the Bible teaches after the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar captured Daniel and his friends, one of the king's chief officials by the intervention of God gave Daniel and his friends permission, not to defile themselves with the king's food and wine. In addition, the chief official permitted Daniel and his friends to eat only vegetables and water for a period of ten days to determine if Daniel and his friends would look healthier and be better nourished than those young men who ate the king's food. Immediately after the ten-day testing period, the chief

¹⁶⁶ Willis, *MasterLife Guide*, 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

official noticed that Daniel and his friends looked healthier and more nourished than the other young men who had partaken of the king's food and wine.¹⁶⁸

Although this is true, another writer in his dissertation, explains, due to his recent research, the plight of discipleship which he defines as individuals becoming conformed to the image of Christ by implementing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, scripture reading, fasting, and community evangelism, is at an historical low in America.¹⁶⁹ With that, the question becomes, why are some members at Simon Temple not being transformed? To this inquiry, another writer in his dissertation suggests the following two reasons for this major challenge: (1) People read and study the Bible for information (formation) alone, and (2) People read the Bible to find answers to problems.¹⁷⁰ Given these two points, this present writer chose to measure the changes in attitudes, behaviors, ministry, doctrine, and relationships of those who participated in a six week study of the MasterLife model as compared to those non-participants who simply went on with their normal Christian living. The purpose for choosing this type of research was to offer quantifiable data that demonstrated a positive and quicker trend in transformation to Christlikeness in participants as opposed to non-participants. In the ensuing section, the selection process of subjects for this study will be addressed.

An Account of the Selection Process for Participants in this Study

A point often overlooked, is one of the significant purposes for maintaining a productive discipleship model in our local churches. That is to say, to build reliable members of the body of

¹⁶⁸ Dan. 1:8-16.

¹⁶⁹ Jeffrey Howell Lynn, "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ: Investigating, Identifying, and Implementing an Effective Discipleship System" (PhD diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 22.

¹⁷⁰ Daniel A. Smith, "A Pastor's Approach to Discipleship and Its Effects on the Local Church: A Three-Step Approach to Biblical Discipleship" (PhD diss., Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 102.

Christ who will allow God to use them to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the next generation. The Apostle Paul in his second dynamic letter to Timothy encourages him to entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others, those things he heard Paul say in the presence of multiple witnesses.¹⁷¹ For this reason, this present writer prayed to God that He would send reliable people to participate in this study and He did. This was the first step in the selection process for this study. Secondly, this writer petitioned the Senior Pastor to make an announcement of this study to the membership at both noonday and evening Bible study sessions. The actual script of the announcement will not be included in the ensuing appendixes. The purpose of this announcement was to elicit prayer, support, and faithful participation in this study from this local church membership. Thirdly, this writer developed a recruitment flyer for the purpose of explaining the qualifications and purpose of his study to those interested. This flyer will not be included in the appendixes as well.

Besides, as the noon-day and evening Bible study sessions were dismissed, this writer positioned himself at a table in the new fellowship hall where members could meet him, receive a flyer, and asked questions. Afterwards, this writer identified prospective subjects who met the following qualifications by self-admission and church records: (1) Profess to be born again according to John 3:3, (2) African American, (3) Member in good standing, (4) Age 18 years and older, and (5) Has never participated in the MasterLife program before; then the next step was obtaining their consent through use of the approved consent form. With this in mind, this writer provided a copy of the consent form to qualified persons who contacted him by phone, email, or in person.

¹⁷¹ 2 Tim. 2:2.

Due to the various schedules of those persons who showed interest, this writer was unable to schedule a meeting with all subjects at one time. Therefore, he had to make himself available to some individually. This resulted in mostly one on one meetings in which he explained the language of the consent form and obtained the subject's signature. After obtaining the subject's signature, a copy of the consent form was provided to each individual soon after. At this point, the participants were given the option to choose which group they desired to participate in. Moreover, this study required no particular criteria for choice of group. In addition, each participant was made aware they would be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and they were instructed to write their pseudonym on each of the three surveys required in this study. Participants were made aware that they could identify themselves by their individual pseudonym in this writer's thesis project. Even more, all participants were excited to be a part of this study and there were no rewards or incentives promised for participation in this study. In the next section, a collective description of the research subjects will be offered.

A Description of the Research Subjects Who Participated in this Study

To repeat, the subjects who participated in this study were all African-American. This study included those of both male and female genders. Some were single males and females and others were married males and females. Following this further, the age of all participants ranged from twenty-five to seventy-three. In addition, participants educational levels varied from high school graduates, current college students, and college graduates. Some were employed as school teachers, church office staff, FedEx employees, church musicians, retired military, retired bankers, automotive mechanics, and church security. All professed to be born again. The majority of these participants attend Simon Temple's Sunday worship service habitually.

Meanwhile, all are not regular attendees at Bible study or Sunday Church School. In the succeeding section, a description of the sampling size will be offered.

A Description of the Sampling Size for Both Groups in this Study

Admittedly, this study was limited to a minimum of ten persons and a maximum of twenty. Simply stated, the purpose of choosing the minimum and maximum numbers was to ensure that more than enough data would be collected to complete the study. On the one side, the sampling size for the experimental group consisted of two males and six-females. On the other side, the sampling size for the control group consisted of three males and five females. To repeat, the experimental group actually participated in six-weeks of the MasterLife program. Participants in the control group did not participate in the MasterLife program and was used as a benchmark for the experimental group. In the succeeding segment, a description of the research instrument utilized to measure the influence of the MasterLife program on each disciple of Christ will be presented.

A Description of the Instrument Utilized in this Study

To begin, it is important to differentiate the strengths and weaknesses in the disciple of Christ's development.¹⁷² Therefore, this present writer used a modification of the MasterLife Discipleship Inventory,¹⁷³ as his instrument to measure the influence of MasterLife on the attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine of each participant in both the experimental and control groups.¹⁷⁴ With this in mind, each participant and non-participant was asked to respond to a total of twenty-five questions divided into five categories on three separate

¹⁷² Willis, *MasterLife Leader's Guide*, 67.

¹⁷³ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-143.

¹⁷⁴ Willis, *Guide*, 67.

occasions. Participants and non-participants were asked the following question on the instrument: How correct is each of the following statements of you? With that, each participant would choose from answers such as the succeeding: (a) 1 = Never correct, (b) 2 = Rarely correct, (c) 3 = Sometimes correct, (d) 4 = Often correct, and (e) 5 = Almost always correct.¹⁷⁵

Pursuing this further, each participant completed the first instrument at the start of the study, the second instrument, during the middle of the study and the final instrument, at the end of the study. During all occasions, the same instrument was used. The reason this present writer had each participant take the instrument the first time was to ascertain a start point for individual transformation.¹⁷⁶ The reason each participant took the instrument a second and third time was so that this writer could ascertain their individual rate of transformation.¹⁷⁷ The instrument utilized in this study is called *The Survey Questionnaire of Christian Discipleship Practices* and can be seen in the appendixes below. In the next section, a description of the method used to collect all data for this study will be offered.

A Description of the Method Utilized to Collect Data for this Study

Since participants were allowed to choose either the experimental or control group to participate in, the names of the individuals were compiled in a list according to which group they chose. With that, participants in both groups were assigned a biblical pseudonym by this writer to protect their identities, as mentioned earlier. All participants were instructed to write their assigned pseudonym on each of the three instruments taken during the study period. During the week prior to the start of the intervention, each person in each group were given a brown or

¹⁷⁵ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139.

¹⁷⁶ Willis, *Guide*, 67.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

white envelope with their initial survey and pseudonym located on the inside. They were instructed to return the instrument sealed in the envelope to this writer prior to the start of the intervention. This method was repeated again during the third and final weeks of the study.

Most of the participants proved faithful in complying. In other words, most were faithful in completing the instruments, writing their pseudonyms in the upper right corner, and insuring the sealed envelope was returned to this writer in a timely fashion. There were only two occasions in which this writer actually went to the place of employment of two participants to collect their instruments and both occasions were successful. In regards to confidentiality, each assigned pseudonym was utilized by this writer to help conceal the identity of those participants, which will be referenced in the succeeding chapter of this thesis project.

Important to realize, only this writer and each individual participant will know his or her biblical pseudonym. This list is now secured separately in a locked safe, stored away from the instruments that could be used to identify any participants in this study. In addition, all forty-eight instruments given at the start, middle, and end of the study period, are separately secured from the list of pseudonyms in another locked safe. This writer will now offer both a historical and current discipleship model which correlate with the aim of the MasterLife model.

Some Discipleship Models Which Correlate with the Aim of the MasterLife Model

Important to realize, the aim of MasterLife is for everyone who participates in the program to become more like Christ. To put it differently, the aim of MasterLife is to transform people's character and values into Christlikeness.¹⁷⁸ For Christlike attributes to manifest in the individual's life, a process of spiritual formation must occur. When this present writer refers to

¹⁷⁸ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

the term spiritual formation, he is denoting the process of transformation of the innermost components of the human being, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will.¹⁷⁹ Put differently, this term refers to all attempts, means, directives, and disciplines implemented towards developing the individual's Christian faith and spiritual growth in Christlikeness.¹⁸⁰

Likewise, when this writer refers to the term model, he is referring to what one writer identifies as a graphic description of a system, theory, or spectacle that accounts for its known or anecdotal assets and may be utilized for further examination of its characteristics. Therefore, the term model in this thesis project denotes a description of a system.¹⁸¹ In essence, this MasterLife model is being used as a study that will serve as another option for advanced discipleship research.¹⁸² With that being said, this writer will now present several Christian discipleship models that aims at developing Christlikeness in its participants. But first, some brief insights and challenges of discipleship in the medieval church will be examined.

Some Insights, Challenges, and Successes to Discipleship in the Medieval Church

According to a Christian history interview with John Van Engen, from A.D. 500 to 1517, the medieval church maintained a strong belief to love God not just with their hearts and souls, but also with their entire bodies. For this reason, they believed the true Christian life entailed a certain measure of self-denial, which involved the degradation of the physical body. Therefore,

¹⁷⁹ Dallas Willard, "Spiritual Formation: What it is, and How it is Done," accessed March 22, 2017, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artid=58>.

¹⁸⁰ HarperCollins Website, *Spiritual Formation in Christ: A Perspective on What it is and How it Might be done*. Published in *The Great Omission*, San Francisco: 2006, accessed March 22, 2017, www.harpercollins.com.

¹⁸¹ Rod Dempsey, "Disciple Making Is Evaluating Different Church Models," accessed March 1, 2018, <https://www.learn.liberty.edu/>.

¹⁸² Robert Brow, *"Go Make Learners": A New Model for Discipleship in The Church* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1981), 11.

their spiritual formation would include disciplines of prayer, confession, fasting, going on a pilgrimage, and even torture of the physical body to eradicate things like covetousness and greediness. Be that as it may, there were some challenges to discipleship in medieval church. The first challenge included teaching an illiterate culture. The second challenge entailed encouraging people to appreciate the Latin Mass although most of them did not comprehend Latin. And the third challenge was eliminating superstition.

Despite the challenges, by the sixteenth century, all of Europe (apart from the Jews), was in attitude – Christian, and multiple people were fervent believers; all this happened in a prolonged area that a thousand years prior had few Christians. Even so, in spite of additional challenges such as absence of radio and television, a poor system of transportation, and stubborn regionalism, there remained a unified understanding of how people should live and act in this culture.¹⁸³ In the next segment, a discipleship model engineered by a Christian who baptized over 100,000 people and literally drove paganism from the shores of Ireland,¹⁸⁴ will be offered.

The Celtic Way Discipleship Model

No doubt, it was Saint Patrick who was responsible for initiating a campaign in Ireland that facilitated the preservation of Christianity throughout the medieval church tenure. But not only that, Saint Patrick is also the founding leader of the Celtic Christian church and was personally accountable for ordaining hundreds of priests.¹⁸⁵ In his own words, Saint Patrick received his call from God in the following way: “I had a vision in my dreams of a man who

¹⁸³ "Everyday Faith In the Middle Ages: Christian History Interview - Stepping Into a Christian Culture," accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/Issues/Issue-49/everyday-faith-In-middle-ages-christian-history-Interview.html>.

¹⁸⁴ Winfield Bevins, “4 Lessons from St. Patrick for Making Disciples the Irish Way,” accessed on February 2, 2018, <http://gcdisciple.com/2015/09/14/4-lessons-from-st-patrick-for-making-disciples-the-irish-way/>.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

seemed to come from Ireland. His name was Victoricius, and he carried countless letters, one of which he handed over to me. I read aloud where it began: ‘The voice of the Irish...We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come home and walk among us.’ I was deeply moved in heart and I could read no further, so I awoke.”¹⁸⁶ Indeed, this dream had a moral effect on Saint Patrick and so he instantly made arrangements to return to Ireland, the land of his former captivity.

His decision would later lead him to become the Bishop of Ireland in which his mission would be responsible for planting over 700 churches in that country. Another key point, is that the missionary legacy of Saint Patrick would lead to the Celtic Christian monastic crusade following his death. These monasteries transformed into spiritual centers and discipleship training hubs that deployed missionaries all over Western Europe. Hence, this would result in the practice and implementation of four spiritual disciplines involved in their approach to discipleship training. These four spiritual disciplines include the succeeding: (1) Doing Ministry as a Team, (2) A Holistic Faith, (3) Missional Community, and (4) Biblical Hospitality.¹⁸⁷ Although, all four disciplines are relevant to this study in various ways, this present writer will only put forth some insights of how the Celtic Christian’s holistic faith approach to discipleship correlates to the MasterLife program’s approach to discipleship.

Before the correlations between the two are offered, must be understood that a key problem with a considerable measure of North American discipleship is that it is one-dimensional. To clarify, numerous Christians view themselves as either evangelical, sacramental, charismatic, etc.¹⁸⁸ A point often overlooked, like an equilateral, the Christian faith has many

¹⁸⁶ Winfield Bevins, “4 Lessons from St. Patrick for Making Disciples the Irish Way.”

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

dimensions. Interestingly enough, the Celtic Christians understood the multifaceted nature of the Christian faith and endeavored to structure a faith encounter that encouraged Christlikeness on countless stages. As one writer puts it, “What made the Celtic way of discipleship successful was their commitment to making disciples not just converts by infusing evangelism and discipleship.” This is a wonderful example, since numerous contemporary churches concentrate more on evangelism at the cost of discipleship by looking to win converts instead of making disciples.¹⁸⁹

Some Correlations Between the MasterLife Model and the Celtic Way Model

Similar to the Celtic Way of Discipleship Model, the MasterLife program model seeks to make disciples and not just converts by incorporating evangelism in its process of making disciples of Christ. For example, in week five, of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program model, participants in this study spent one week learning the fifth spiritual discipline termed *Witness to the World*. During this week of study, participants were asked to make a new friend who is not a Christian, learn all they can about their new friend, and to be prepared to tell their MasterLife group about him or her.¹⁹⁰ The Celtic’s model was similar, since they were asked to engage in friendships by identifying with non-Christians in their communities. Not only that, another aspect of the Celtic’s model of discipleship was their practice of voluntary periods of solitude in an isolated natural setting such as a grove of trees near a stream where they could be alone with Jesus.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Winfield Bevins, “4 Lessons from St. Patrick for Making Disciples the Irish Way.”

¹⁹⁰ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 91.

¹⁹¹ Bevins, “4 Lessons.”

In the same way that the Celtic model encouraged individual time with Jesus in a secluded place, the MasterLife program model encourages individual quiet time with Christ. In fact, participants in this study learned this as their first spiritual discipline during week one, termed *Spend Time with the Master*.¹⁹² During the first week of this writer's study, participants learned how to have a quiet time with Christ.¹⁹³ First, they were taught the following as reasons for having a daily quiet time: (1) To know God through fellowship with Him, (2) To receive direction and guidance for daily decisions, (3) To bring needs before God, and (4) To bear spiritual fruit.¹⁹⁴

Secondly, they were given the following instructions on how to have a daily quiet time: (1) Make a personal quiet time the highest priority of your day: Choose a time to spend with God that fits your schedule, (2) Prepare the evening before: If your quiet time is in the morning, set your alarm and choose a location where you can be alone, (3) Develop a sensible plan of Bible reading and prayer: Pray for direction during your quiet time and follow a methodical plan to read your Bible, (4) Be tenacious until you are consistent: Strive for constancy rather than for length of time spent, and (5) Concentrate on Christ rather than on the habit of having quiet time with Him.¹⁹⁵

With these in mind, Christ offered the chief example of living faithfully in relationship to the Creator. For instance, Jesus pursued God's Presence and leading in the desert and in the garden. Both were times of doubt that led to discernment, affirmation, and a certainty of God's

¹⁹² Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 10.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 19-20.

divine companionship.¹⁹⁶ Continuing on, another key correlation between the Celtic's discipleship model and the MasterLife discipleship model is the practice of biblical recitation or saying the memory verse out loud. To emphasize, members of the Celtic community joined in the mutual life which entailed learning and biblical recitation.¹⁹⁷ In other words, just as those who participated in this study of the MasterLife discipleship model were required to say the weekly memory verse from memory,¹⁹⁸ this was also a requirement of the historic Celtic's model of discipleship. In the ensuing section, first the discipleship model of Jesus will be offered, followed by its correlation to the MasterLife model.

The Discipleship Model of Jesus

Most important information, is the three stages of the discipleship model of Jesus Christ offered by Dave Earley. With that, the three stages of this model include the *declaration stage*, the *development stage*, and the *deployment stage*,¹⁹⁹ of which the declaration stage will be correlated later to this writer's study of participants in the MasterLife program. To gain a better understanding of the stages in this model, the following summary is offered by the author:

1. The initial stage asks the question: *Will you believe in Jesus?* The next stage asks: *Will you follow Jesus?* The final stage asks: *Will you go for Jesus?*
2. The initial stage ends in *regeneration*. The next stage yields *transformation*. And the final stage results in *reproduction* and *multiplication*.

¹⁹⁶ Jennifer L. Isbell, *Leading Quakers: Discipleship Leadership, A Friends Model* (Richmond, IN: Earlham School of Religion Publications, 2008), 98.

¹⁹⁷ Bevins, "4 Lessons."

¹⁹⁸ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 21.

¹⁹⁹ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 58-60.

3. The initial stage consists of *laying aside your doubts*. The next stage entails *leaving your "nets."* The final stage contains *launching out*.
4. The initial stage includes being *born again*. The next stage entails being *trained*. The final stage comprises being *sent*.
5. The initial stage involves *coming* to Jesus. The next stage consists of *being* with Jesus. The final stage embraces *going* for Jesus.
6. The initial stage is a matter of Jesus being your *Savior*. The next stage comprises Jesus being your *Master*. The final stage entails Jesus being your *Commissioning Officer*.
7. The initial stage is a matter of becoming a *committed believer*. The next stage comprises becoming a *devoted follower*. The final stage embraces becoming a *multiplying leader*.
8. The initial stage concentrates on a *committed belief*. The next stage concentrates on *reckless obedience*. The final stage consists of *radical reproduction*.²⁰⁰

Equally important, this author believes discipleship only happens as the disciple takes the action of dependence upon, obedience to, and abandonment for Christ.²⁰¹ With this in mind, some correlations between the MasterLife model of discipleship and the Jesus model of discipleship will be discussed.

A Correlation Amid the MasterLife Discipleship Model and the Jesus Discipleship Model

Interestingly enough, the MasterLife model teaches its participants the same principles, yet in different idioms as mentioned by Earley above. For example, where the Jesus model

²⁰⁰ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 60.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

teaches abandonment for Christ,²⁰² the MasterLife model teaches participants to make Jesus their first priority during the first week of this study.²⁰³ Again, the Jesus model teaches obedience to Christ,²⁰⁴ and the MasterLife model teaches participants how to be under Christ's control.²⁰⁵ In addition to this principle, the MasterLife model teaches participants to obey Christ's commands necessitates two things: knowing them and doing them.²⁰⁶ Participants learned this during the first week of this writer's study. Furthermore, as the Jesus' model teaches dependence on Christ,²⁰⁷ the MasterLife model teaches its participants to rely on Christ during the fifth week of this study.²⁰⁸ It seems clear from this, some correlations exist between the two models. Yet, there are more.

Simply stated, the Jesus model of discipleship asked the question in stage one: *Will you believe in Jesus?*²⁰⁹ The author categorizes this stage as the declaration, which he describes as an inquiry leading to penitence and faith in Jesus. The author goes on to explain stage one as a call to explore the person and work of Christ, which is designed to help the individual arrive at a place of steadfast belief.²¹⁰ In the same way, the MasterLife model seeks to encourage a declaration of committed belief in what one author calls, the three historical jewels of our faith in Christ. These historical jewels include the following: (1) "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;" (2) "that he was buried"; and (3) "that he was raised on the third day

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 11.

²⁰⁴ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 60.

²⁰⁵ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 15.

²⁰⁶ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 22.

²⁰⁷ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 60.

²⁰⁸ Willis, 96.

²⁰⁹ Earley, 60.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 59.

according to the Scriptures.”²¹¹ As this author puts it, believing in these truths is what still saves all who develop a committed belief in Jesus.²¹² With that, as the participants proceed into the fifth week of this study, they encounter the following intervention regarding a committed belief in Jesus Christ:

As you have proceeded through MasterLife 1: The Disciple’s Cross, you may have experienced some questions about where you stand in your commitment to Christ. As you have read about being totally committed to Christ, you may not be able to state firmly that you have taken that initial step of following Him that occurs when you receive Christ in salvation. MasterLife was designed for persons who want to learn what it means to be His true followers. If you find that you cannot say with 100-percent surety that you have made that commitment, you can accept Him now by inviting Him into your life. If you wish, use this sample prayer to express your commitment:

*Lord Jesus, I need You. I want You to be my Savior and my Lord. I accept Your death on the cross as the payment for my sins, and I now entrust my life to Your care. Thank You for forgiving me and for giving me new life. Please help me grow as a Christian so that my life will bring glory and honor to You. Amen.*²¹³

As can be seen from above, the Masterlife Christian Discipleship Model has correlations to the Celtic’s discipleship model and the discipleship model of Jesus. Accordingly, each correlation has the aim of producing Christlikeness in those who participate in order to fulfil the callings of Jesus Christ. Indeed, His call is continuously a call to accountability, a call to action, and a call to service!²¹⁴ In the succeeding chapter, this writer will offer an overview of the findings of his applied research. This overview will include scoring tables, which will depict the transformation rate of those who participated in the experimental group, as opposed to the

²¹¹ Ronald T. Habermas, *The Complete Disciple: A Model for Cultivating God’s Image in Us* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministry, 2003), 229.

²¹² Ibid., 230.

²¹³ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 106.

²¹⁴ Gary L. McIntosh, *Growing God’s Church: How People Are Actually Coming to Faith Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 53.

benchmark represented by some individuals of the control group. Lastly, some highlights of the chief focus of the survey instrument will be offered.

Chapter Four

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on the Disciple of Christ

First thing to remember, this writer set out to investigate whether those who actually participated in the MasterLife intervention conducted on the grounds of Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, transformed at a faster rate than those who did not participate in the program over a six-week study period. Important to also realize, is the hope that these findings would minimize the following spiritual absences among congregants in this local church: (1) The absence of an attitude of confessing and correcting personal wrongdoing, (2) The absence of forgiving attitudes, (3) The absence of reading and studying scriptures, (4) The absence of transformation in avoiding sexual immorality, (5) The absence of setting themselves apart from unhealthy relationships, (6) The absence of confidence in God, and lastly, (7) The absence of knowing how to share Jesus Christ with others.

Indeed, transformation in these areas would certainly require a divine work of Jesus Christ on the inside of each participant. As Ortberg suggests, Jesus does not come to reposition the outside of our life the way we want, but the inside of our life the way God wants.²¹⁵ With that, change must begin on the inside of a disciple of Christ as in the way one thinks in order to be seen on the outside as in the way a disciple behaves.²¹⁶ Furthermore, the main focus of the survey instrument was to ascertain data that could be measured in the areas of the disciple of Christ's attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine as was revealed in the previous

²¹⁵ John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 2010), 63.

²¹⁶ Rom. 12:2.

chapter. With these in mind, the ten most appropriate survey statements utilized in the findings will be offered next.

The Ten Most Appropriate Survey Statements Utilized in the Findings

Although, this study utilized twenty-five questions in the survey instrument to ascertain data that would give credence to this thesis project, all were not necessary to document in the body of this material. Therefore, ten of the most appropriate survey statements have been selected that were utilized in the research findings. The following is a list of those statements:

1. Attitudes

- a) Since God has forgiven me, I respond with a forgiving attitude when others wrong me.
- b) When I become aware that I have offended someone, I go to him or her to confess and correct my wrongdoing.

2. Behaviors

- c) I have given volunteer time at my church to teach, lead, serve on a committee, or help with a program or event.
- d) I avoid conditions in which I might be tempted by sexual immorality.

3. Relationships

- e) I dodge close relationships with other people who hinder the expression of my Christian values and principles.
- f) My life is filled with stress and worry.

4. Ministry

- g) I know how to explain the gospel plainly to another person without relying on an evangelistic tract.
- h) I pray for the salvation of friends and associates who are not professing Christians.

5. Doctrines

- i) After death, a non-Christian goes to a place called hell.
- j) Jesus Christ, during His incarnate life on earth, was fully God and fully man.²¹⁷

As a result of these ten survey statements, a report of this writer's applied research findings relating to an *Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the Disciple of Christ* will be presented next.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on Simon Peter as Compared to Manasseh

To begin, each participant and non-participant was asked on three distinct occasions to respond to the same twenty-five questions which were separated into five classes. Participants and non-participants were asked the following question to begin the instrument: How correct is each of the following statements of you? Then, each participant was given the option to choose from the following responses: (a) 1 = Never correct, (b) 2 = Rarely correct, (c) 3 = Sometimes correct, (d) 4 = Often correct, and (e) 5 = Almost always correct.²¹⁸ Their responses were utilized to graph their transformation rate on each respective table. Keep in mind, the data extracted for use in this study was selected from the survey instruments of six experimental group participants and five control group participants. All three survey instruments from Week 1, 2, and 3 of each group members selected were utilized to formulate individual transformation rates.

Therefore, the tables below will reflect the transformation rate of a participant in the experimental group as compared to the transformation rate of the non-participant. Key point: the transformation rate of the non-participant in each table was used as the benchmark for the participant in the experimental group. With that said, the attitude of a disciple of Christ towards

²¹⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 139.

others should be similar to that of Jesus Christ Himself. In fact, Paul encourages those who follow Jesus Christ, to have the mindset of Jesus Christ in our interactions with one another.²¹⁹ To point out, this research sought to measure the Christlike attitudes of those participants and non-participants during this study. Therefore, data was analyzed from the survey instruments of Simon Peter and Philip of the experimental group and Manasseh, John, and Israel of the control group. The following table reflects the transformation rate of Simon Peter as opposed to the transformation rate of Manasseh:

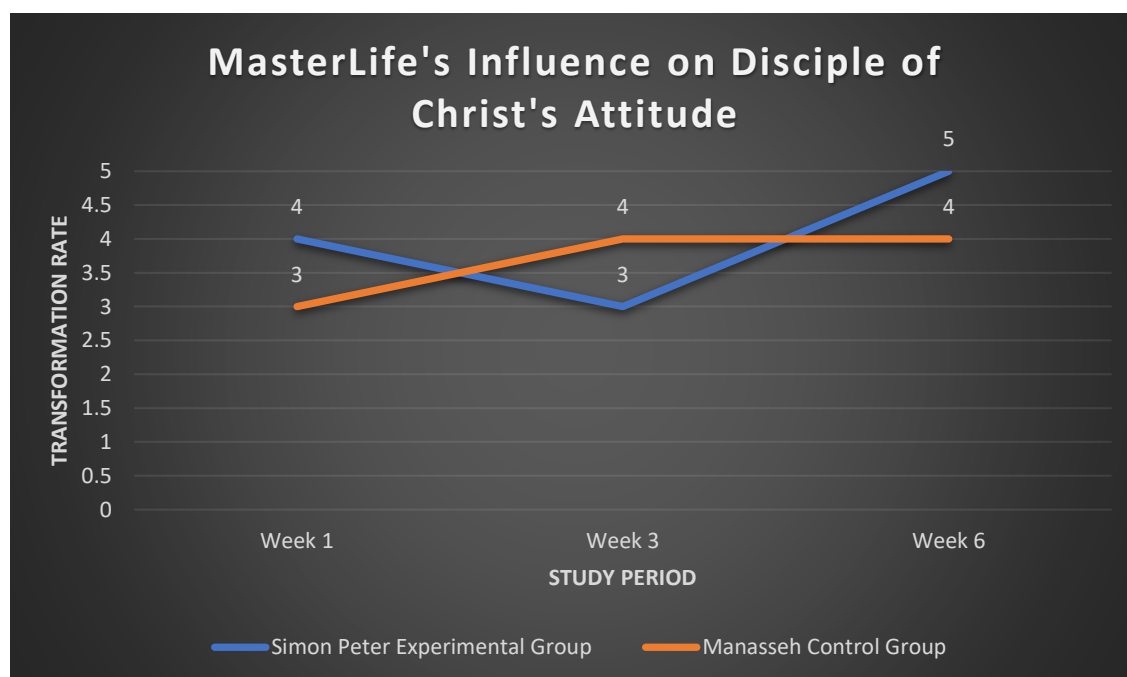


Table 1.1. Changes in Simon Peter and Manasseh's attitude according to biblical principles and guidelines

The findings in this table denotes the transformation rate of both Simon Peter and Manasseh at Week 1, Week 3, and Week 6 concerning the following statement: "Since God has

²¹⁹ Phil. 2:5.

forgiven me, I respond with a forgiving attitude when others wrong me.”²²⁰ As mentioned in the *Scripture Review* section of Chapter 1 of this thesis project, Jesus stated, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”²²¹ To this end, following Jesus means forgiving others since Jesus has forgiven all true Christians. With that, as can be seen in the Table 1.1., above, the graph shows Simon Peter denoted at the start of Week 1, this is (4) *often correct* of him as opposed to Manasseh who denoted this is (3) *sometimes correct* of him as it relates to the survey statement. The table shows Simon Peter’s transformation rate was initially higher than that of Manasseh.

At the end of Week 3, using the very same survey statement, Simon Peter denoted this is (3) *sometimes correct* of him, as opposed to Manasseh who denoted this is (4) *often correct* of him. At this point of the study, Manasseh from the control group has transformed at a higher rate as compared to Simon Peter of the experimental group. Again, at the end of Week 6 of the study period, the same survey statement was given. The graph shows Simon Peter’s transformation rate at the end of the study period to be (5) *almost always correct* as opposed to Manasseh’s sustained (4) *often correct*. Therefore, this table shows Simon Peter who participated in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program, ultimately transformed at a higher rate by the end of the six-week study period as opposed to Manasseh who did not participate in the program.

In addition, Simon Peter was asked at the end of Week 3 of the intervention if he would mind sharing some ways MasterLife had transformed his thinking and behavior. In the first place, Simon shared that he is now slower to anger and mindful to walk away from unchristian like situations. Secondly, he also shared that he has now created a quiet time in which he is

²²⁰ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

²²¹ Luke 9:23.

reading and studying the Bible more and more. Third, Simon shared he now enjoys spending time with the Lord and that he is learning how to pray and how to ask for forgiveness. Lastly, Simon Peter shared he really enjoys fellowshiping with fellow believers in MasterLife and his understanding of the word of God is increasing because of the MasterLife program. In the succeeding Table 1.2., the findings of this program's influence on the attitude of Philip of the experimental group in comparison to John of the control group will be presented.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on Philip as Compared to John

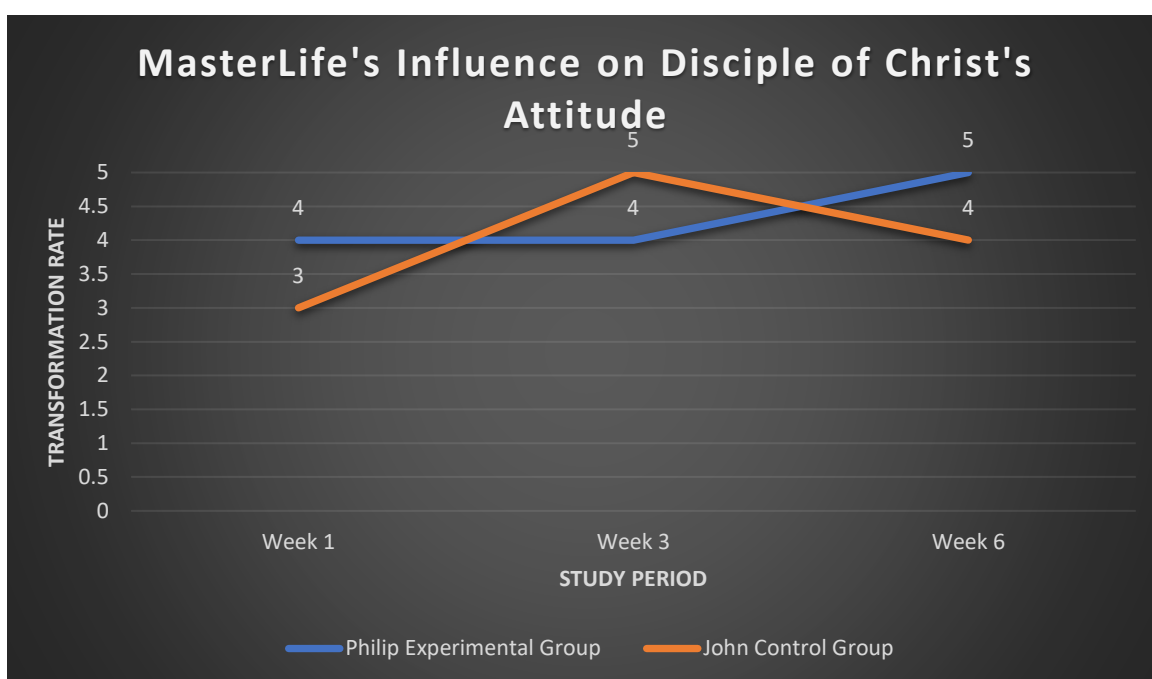


Table 1.2. Changes in Philip and John's accountability to others

In similar fashion, Table 1.2. illustrates at the start of Week 1, Philip who is represented by the blue line of the table was initially graphed at a higher transformation rate than that of John, who is represented by an orange line. Nonetheless, the graph shows no transformation with Philip from the start of Week 1 throughout Week 3 regarding the following statement: "When I become aware that I have offended someone, I go to him or her to confess and correct my

wrongdoing.”²²² With this in mind, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”²²³ One of God’s teachings in regards to the above survey statement is disciples of Christ should confess their sins to each other.²²⁴ In other words, if the disciple of Christ has sinned against another human being, he or she must ask him or her to forgive them.²²⁵ Interestingly enough, the graph shows John’s transformation rate increased from (3) *sometimes correct* to (5) *almost always correct* from start of Week 1 to the end of Week 3.

Although this is true for John of the control group in Week 1 through Week 3, his transformation rate decreased from Week 3 to Week 6 of the study as can be seen above in Table 1.2. Be that as it may, being accountable to others by going to them and admitting one’s faults requires integrity with people, which is certainly a matter of character.²²⁶ For this reason, John may have encountered a situation during this study period which caused him to designate this is (4) *often correct* of him at the end of Week 6, rather than this is (5) *almost always correct* of him as reflected at the midpoint of this study. Nonetheless, the graph depicts that at the end of the six-week study period, Philip who participated in the MasterLife program ultimately transformed at a higher rate as represented by a (5) *almost always correct* as opposed to the designated (4) *often correct* by John of the control group. Again, when it relates to the disciple of Christ’s accountability to others for their wrong actions, this graph shows the MasterLife’s participant at the end of the study period finally transformed faster than the non-participant.

²²² Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

²²³ Jas. 8:31.

²²⁴ Jas. 5:16.

²²⁵ *Life Application Study Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2007), 2094.

²²⁶ John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1993), 117.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on Philip as Compared to Israel

Continuing on, Philip of the experimental group was also compared to Israel of the control group in Table 1.3., below as it relates to the same statement. Again, the statement was as follows: “When I become aware that I have offended someone, I go to him or her to confess and correct my wrongdoing.”²²⁷ First thing to remember in being accountable to others, is detailed confessions help persuade others that the disciple of Christ is justly facing up to what they have done, which makes it easier for them to forgive the disciple.²²⁸

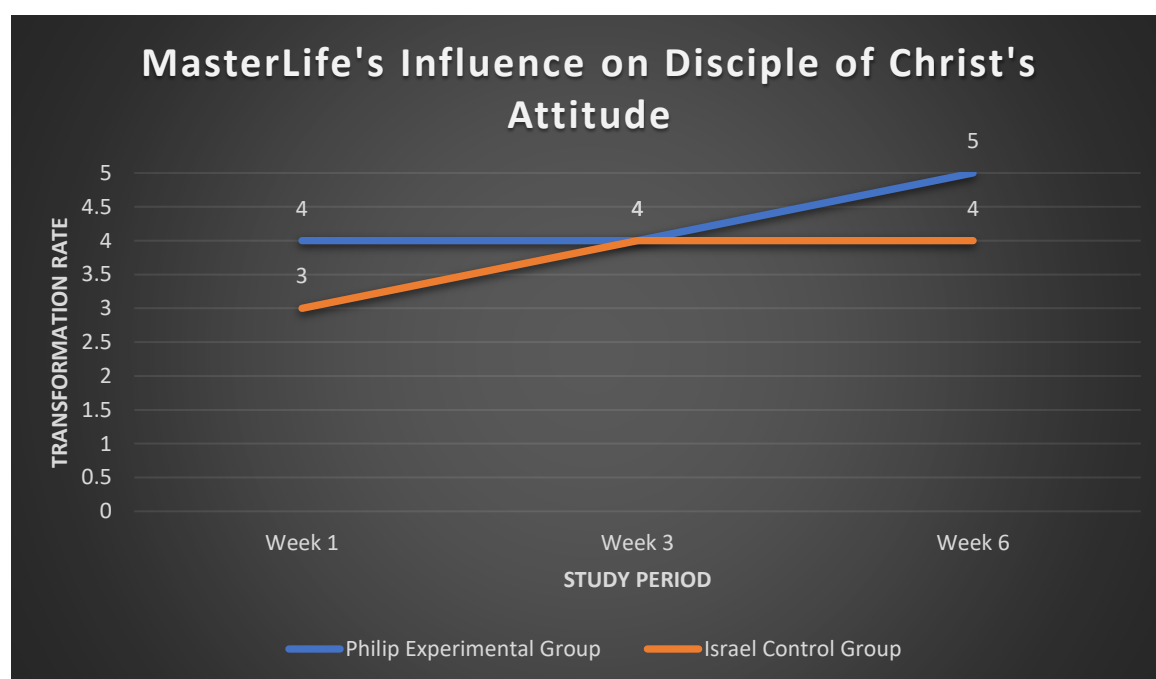


Table 1.3. Changes in Philip and Israel's accountability to others

²²⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

²²⁸ Ken Sande, *The Peace Maker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2004), 128.

Opposite to Israel is Philip who began at a higher transformation rate as can be seen above in Table 1.3. at the start of Week 1. Whereas Israel of the control group began at (3) *sometimes correct*, Philip of the experimental group began at (4) *often correct*. At the midway point of Week 3, Table 1.3. shows Israel transformed to a rate of (4) *often correct*, which was sustained throughout Week 6, with no additional transformation. Ultimately, the graph shows Philip's trajectory of transformation exceeded that of Israel's from Week 3 to Week 6. Philip's trajectory from (4) to (5) shows the MasterLife program positively influenced his thinking and behavior in the category of a disciple of Christ's attitude. In the following table, the findings of MasterLife's influence on James Son of Zebedee as compared to Manasseh will be presented.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on James as Compared to Manasseh

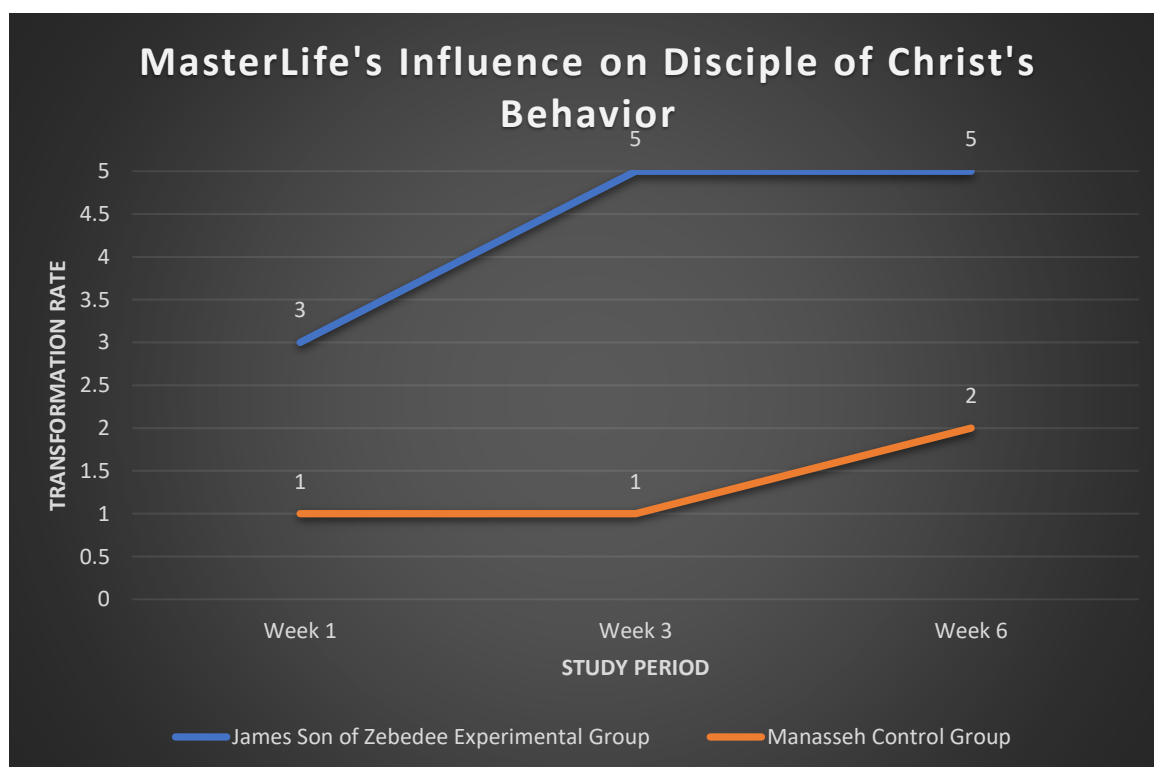


Table 1.4. Changes in James and Manasseh's use of time for God's purposes

Just as James at the start of Week 1, transformation rate in behavior is represented in Table 1.4., above as (3) *sometimes correct*, Manasseh started at (1) *never correct* to the survey statement, “I have given volunteer time at my church to teach, lead, serve on a committee, or help with a program or event.”²²⁹ To this statement, Peter encourages all disciples of Christ with these words, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”²³⁰ Simply put, a disciple of Christ is to serve in their local church and in their community using those spiritual gifts and talents to make life better for others. With this in mind, the MasterLife program caused James Son of Zebedee’s transformation rate to increase from a (3) *sometimes correct* in Week 1 to a (5) *almost always correct* in Week 3, whereas Israel’s transformation rate remained at a (1) *never correct* in Week 3, which was identical to his transformation rate in Week 1. At the end of the six-week study period, Table 1.4., denotes James transformation rate was sustained from Week 3 throughout Week 6, versus Manasseh’s transformation rate which increased from a (1) *never correct* to a (2) *rarely correct*.

Key point, those in the MasterLife program were encouraged to serve others throughout the six-week study period through the spiritual discipline of *Minister to others*.²³¹ This practice would surely account for the transformation rate surge of James as opposed to Manasseh in this category. Overall, Table 1.4., above shows MasterLife truly influenced the transformation of James’ behavior faster than that of Manasseh who did not participate in the MasterLife

²²⁹ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

²³⁰ 1 Pet. 4:10.

²³¹ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 114.

intervention. In the next section, a second table representing the findings of MasterLife's influence in the category of a disciple of Christ's behavior will be offered.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on the Behavior of Philip as Compared to Israel

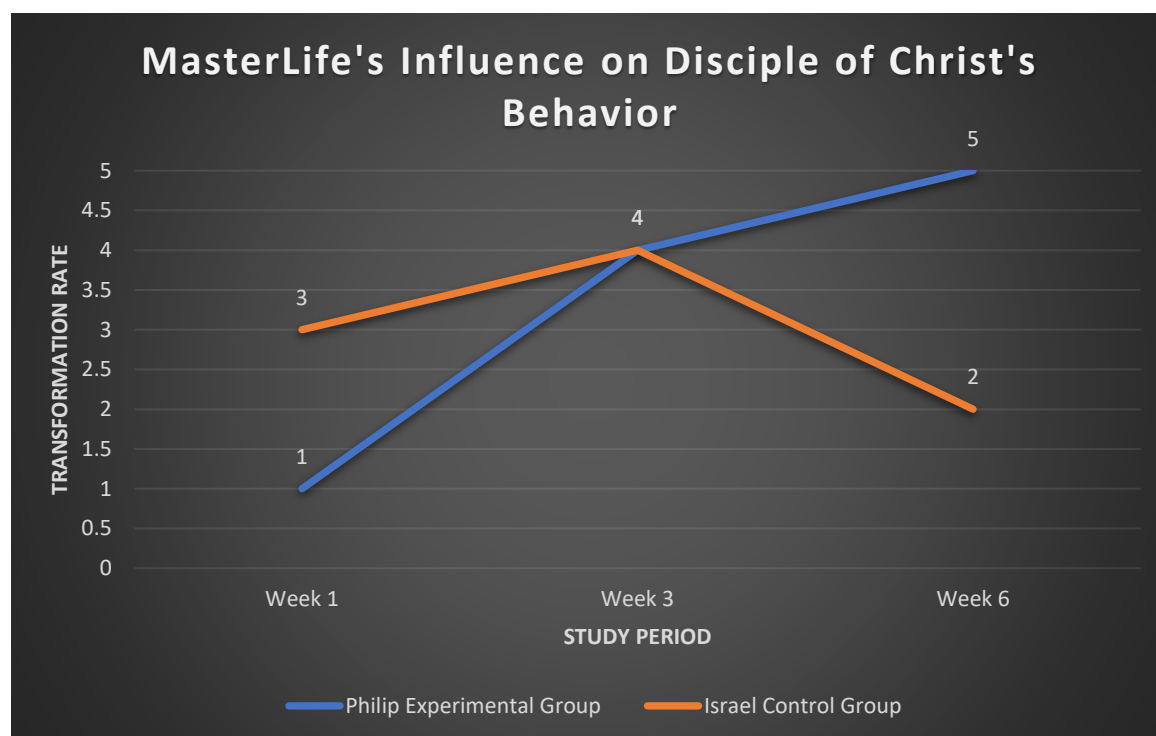


Table 1.5. Changes in Philip and Israel's behavior toward the opposite sex

Important to realize, not all Christians practice avoiding conditions in which they might be tempted by sexual immorality. This is certainly true in many of the spiritual counseling cases this writer has encountered over the last nine years in fulltime vocation at Simon Temple. This is evident in Table 1.5. with Israel, who did not participate in the MasterLife program intervention but rather the control group. According to the data, Israel's transformation rate at the start of Week 1 is represented by (3) *sometimes correct* to the survey statement, "I avoid conditions in

which I might be tempted by sexual immorality.”²³² On the other hand, Philip’s transformation rate begins at a (1) *never correct* to this statement. Whereas Philip at this point does not show any signs of denying himself in this spiritual matter, Israel’s data shows on some occasions he avoids these situations. As Jesus puts it, “Whomever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”²³³ In general, denying oneself certainly involves avoiding works of the sinful nature which includes sexually immorality.²³⁴ The survey statement puts this present writer’s mind on the biblical story of David and Bathsheba. One author suggests, Bathsheba may have been intentionally bathing in full view of the imperial palace, to bait the king into temptation, and if so, then her mourning at Uriah’s death is a fake sorrow produced only for the occasion.²³⁵ Nonetheless, David chose not to avoid this condition which led him to be tempted by sexual immorality.

Not so with Philip, whose behavior in this area was influenced positively by the MasterLife program as shown in Table 1.5., above. Although Philip began with a (1) *never correct*, by Week 3, his transformation rate sharply increased to a (4) *often correct*, whereas Israel’s transformation rate increased moderately from a (3) *sometimes correct* to a (4) *often correct*. By Week 6, Philip’s transformation rate continued to increase moderately from (4) *often correct* to (5) *almost always correct*, whereas Israel transformation rate took a sharp decline from (4) *often correct* to a (2) *rarely correct* according to data. In any event, as shown by the graph above, Philip ultimately transformed faster in the area of avoiding conditions that may lead to temptation by sexual immorality than did Israel. Again, the MasterLife program has shown a

²³² Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

²³³ Luke 9:23.

²³⁴ Gal. 5:19.

²³⁵ Don N. Howell, Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 93.

positive influence on the behavior of the disciple of Christ as opposed to Israel who did not participate in the program. In conjunction with this, the findings of MasterLife's influence on the disciple of Christ's relationship will be offered next.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on Matthew's Relationships as Compared to Ephraim's Relationships

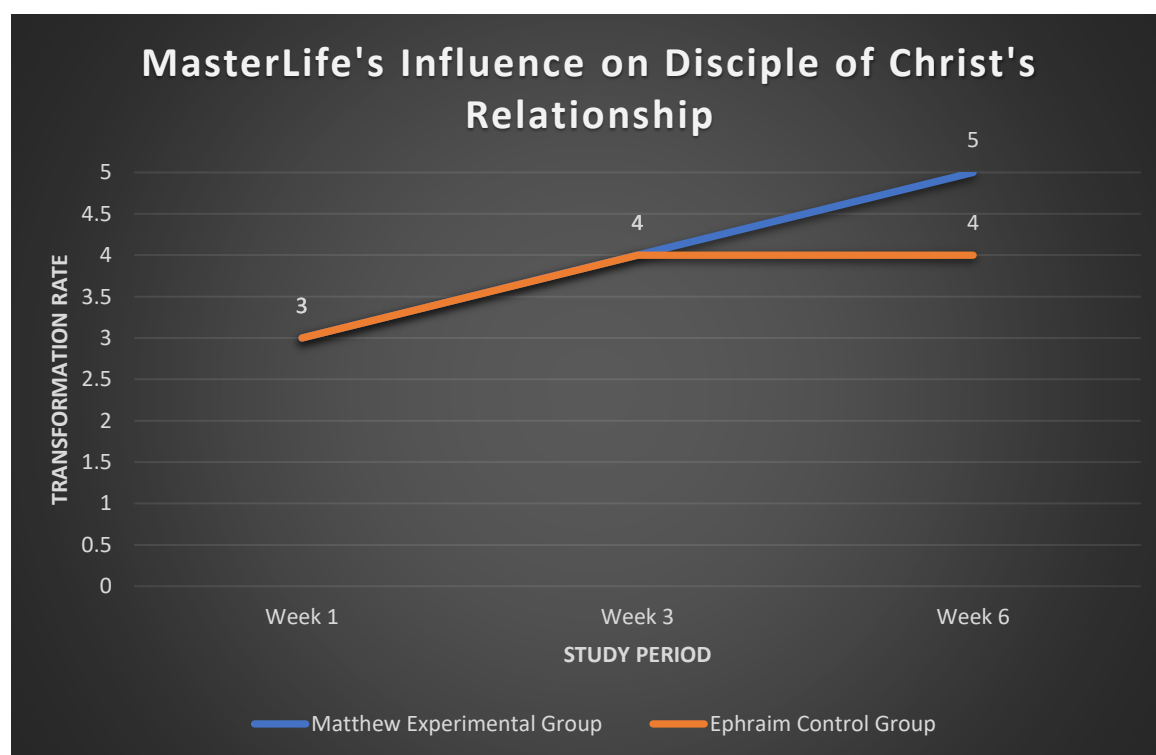


Table 1.6. Changes in Matthew and Ephraim's unhealthy relationship with others

As can be seen in Table 1.6., above, both Matthew of the experimental group and Ephraim of the control group begin at a transformation rate of (3) *sometimes correct* at the start of the six-week study period. Their transformation rate was in response to the survey statement, "I dodge close relationships with other people who hinder the expression of my Christian values

and principles.”²³⁶ This statement stems from the assertion of Jesus made when He said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.”²³⁷ With that, participants in the MasterLife program intervention were taught in Week 1, Jesus’ followers must love Him more than any other person, possession, or purpose. Continuing on, Table 1.6. shows both Matthew and Ephraim’s transformation rate increased to (4) *often correct* when it comes to loving Jesus more than people,²³⁸ who hinder their expression of Christian values and principles. Yet, as the study period moves on from Week 3 towards Week 6, something spectacular happened. Matthew’s graph shows he continued to transform at higher rate than that of Ephraim whose transformation rate remained the same as it was in Week 3. In fact, Matthew’s transformation rate reached an all-time high of (5) *almost always correct*. Again, this provides evidence of the MasterLife program’s influence on Matthew’s relationship with Jesus as His disciple improved. Looking ahead at Table 1.7., further findings will be offered on Matthew and Ephraim’s relationship regarding the statement, “My life is filled with stress and worry.”²³⁹

The Findings of MasterLife’s Influence on Matthew’s Worrying as Compared to Ephraim’s Worrying

Before the findings of Matthew and Ephraim in Table 1.7. are offered concerning the category of Christian relationships, it must be remembered that all positive relationships are constructed on common interests and values. To put it differently, they build upon an

²³⁶ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

²³⁷ Luke 14:26.

²³⁸ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 15.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 139-42.

arrangement rather than a discrepancy.²⁴⁰ With that, it must be understood that the transformation rates to the survey instrument statement, “My life is filled with stress and worry” are now to be utilized in a reversed order. In other words, (1) *never correct*, is the higher transformation rate response, rather than (5) *almost always correct*, which is the lowest transformation rate response. With this change in mind, Ephraim of the control group in Table 1.7., below begin with a transformation rate of (4) *often correct*, whereas Matthew of the experimental group begin with a transformation rate of (3) *sometimes correct*, regarding their response to the survey instrument statement, “My life is filled with stress and worry.”²⁴¹ With that said, this present writer is reminded that Jesus implied, Christians prove they are really His disciples when they obey His teachings.²⁴² To this point, one of those teachings which Jesus expects His disciples to obey is they are to avoid worrying about what they will eat, drink, or wear, alluding to God will take care of their basic needs provided they sought God’s will first in all of their life’s challenges.²⁴³

In conjunction with this, another glance at Table 1.7. below, illustrates at the midway point of Week 3, Matthew’s transformation rate decreased to a (2) *rarely correct*, as compared to the decrease of Ephraim’s transformation rate of (3) *sometimes correct*. This graph appears to show Matthew is beginning to rely more on his relationship with God based on MasterLife’s influence on his faith at this point of the study period. In fact, in Week 1, the participants in the MasterLife program intervention were taught the following: (a) The secret of discipleship is

²⁴⁰ John C. Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2010), 125.

²⁴¹ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

²⁴² John 8:31.

²⁴³ Matt. 6:31-33.

lordship, (2) When you truly acknowledge Jesus as Lord in all areas of your life, He lives in you in the ampleness of His Spirit, and (3) Christ offers what you need to be like Him and to do His will.²⁴⁴

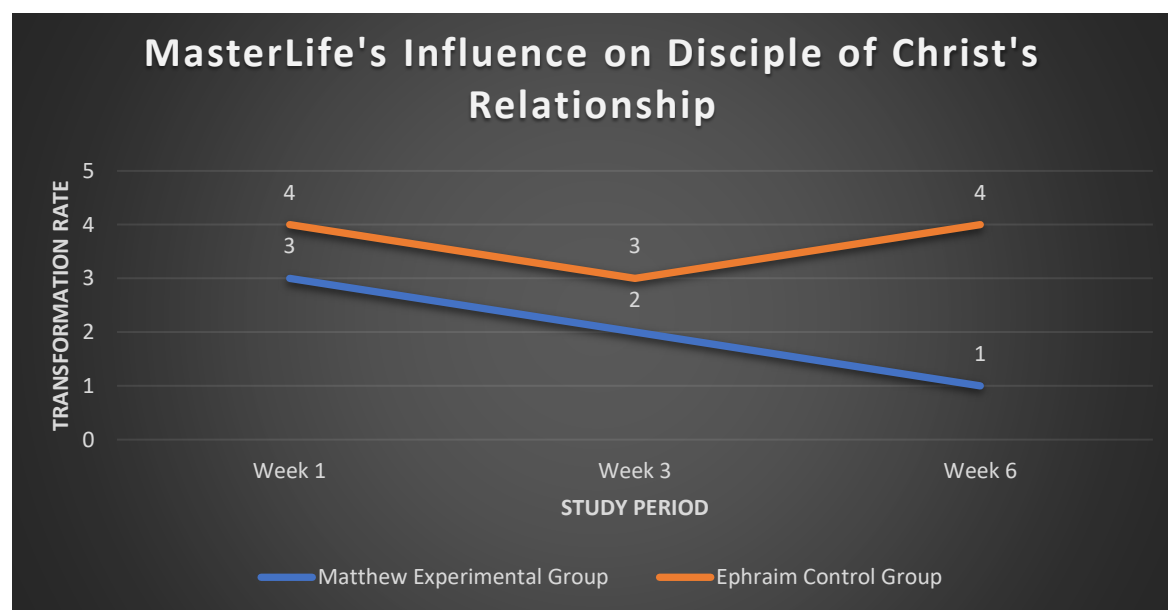


Table 1.7. Changes in Matthew and Ephraim's trust in Jesus at times of adversity

Without doubt, Matthew's reliance on some or all of these biblical principles encouraged him to concentrate more on Jesus and what Jesus can do in his life, rather than focusing on his life's challenges. Certainly, the cause of his diminished levels of stress and worry can be accredited to his MasterLife experience. Nonetheless, as the study period continued from Week 3 into Week 6, Matthew's transformation rate decreased to the highest positive response of (1) *never correct* as compared to Ephraim's increased negative response of (4) *often correct*. The findings in Table 1.7. offer further support of the transforming influence MasterLife had on Matthew's relationship with Jesus. Matthew's final transformation rate response at Week 6, shows stress and worry were no longer a major factor in his relationship with Jesus Christ.

²⁴⁴ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 18.

Important to realize, Matthew's participation in the MasterLife program caused him to transform faster or at a higher rate in the area of relationship, than Ephraim who did not participate in the MasterLife program as seen below. The next section examines Thaddaeus and Manasseh.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on the Ministry of Thaddaeus as Compared to Manasseh's Ministry

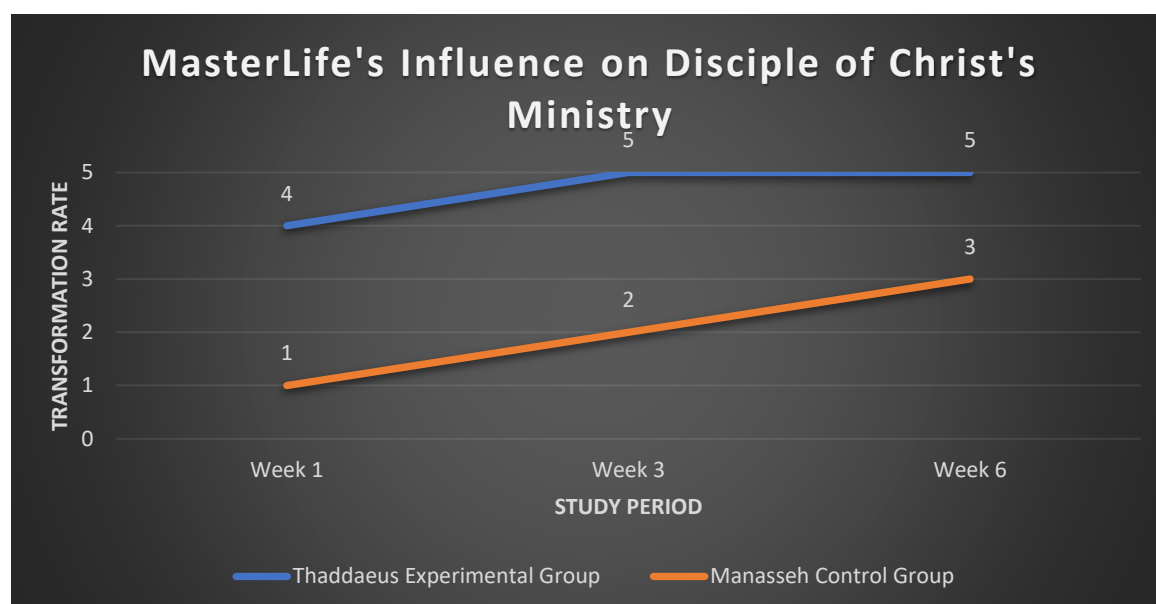


Table 1.8. Changes in Thaddaeus and Manasseh's ability to explain the gospel of Jesus Christ without use of an evangelistic tract

Nobody denies, the responsibility for introducing ministry in the local church ultimately resides in the senior pastor as the principal visionary.²⁴⁵ Be that as it may, MasterLife teaches its participants when God's love flows through Jesus Christ to them and others, they will desire to share the good news of Jesus with those they encounter.²⁴⁶ Not only that, this program emphasizes to each disciple of Christ, if they continue to fellowship with other believers as they

²⁴⁵ Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 214.

²⁴⁶ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 92.

live their daily lives in God's word and praying in faith, they will naturally and normally share with people the Christ who lives in them.²⁴⁷ In consideration of these two points, Table 1.8. shows the transformation rate responses of both Thaddaeus of the experimental group and Manasseh of the control group, to the survey statement, "I know how to explain the gospel plainly to another person without relying on an evangelistic tract."²⁴⁸ As can be seen, Thaddaeus began at a transformation rate of (4) *often correct* to this survey statement as compared to Manasseh who began at a (1) *never correct*.

Most importantly, from Week 1 to Week 3, Thaddaeus under the influence of the MasterLife program transformation rate increased to a (5) *almost always correct*, in comparison to Manasseh's transformation rate of a (2) *rarely correct*. In the final analysis, the graph shows Thaddaeus' transformation rate stayed at a (5) almost always correct from Week 3 into Week 6, in comparison to Manasseh's transformation rate increase from a (2) *rarely correct* to a (3) *sometimes correct*. Although the graph in Table 1.8. shows both Thaddaeus and Manasseh's transformation rate increased, obviously Matthew's rate of (5) *almost always correct* in being able to explain the gospel plainly to lost souls without a tract, shows more maturity in discipleship development than that of being able to explain it sometimes. There are many people in our society who are still lost, not to mention in our local churches. Therefore, disciples of Christ should live their lives before others as Christian examples and always be prepared to witness to all unbelievers in an instant, whether a tract is available or not.

²⁴⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 92.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 139-42.

Besides, as one writer puts it, if you walk the walk and not just talk the talk, lost souls will come to you and want to know what you believe.²⁴⁹ Not only that, this writer goes on to suggest a disciple of Christ's probabilities to be a witness will increase since lost souls will look to them for hope and prayers, particularly when adversities come into their lives.²⁵⁰ In final consideration, Table 1.8. offers more credibility to the statement, participants in the MasterLife program transform faster in the category of ministry than those who do not participate in the program. In the succeeding section, another finding in the category of ministry will be offered as to MasterLife's influence on the disciple of Christ.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on Matthew's Prayer Life in Comparison to Gad's Prayer Life

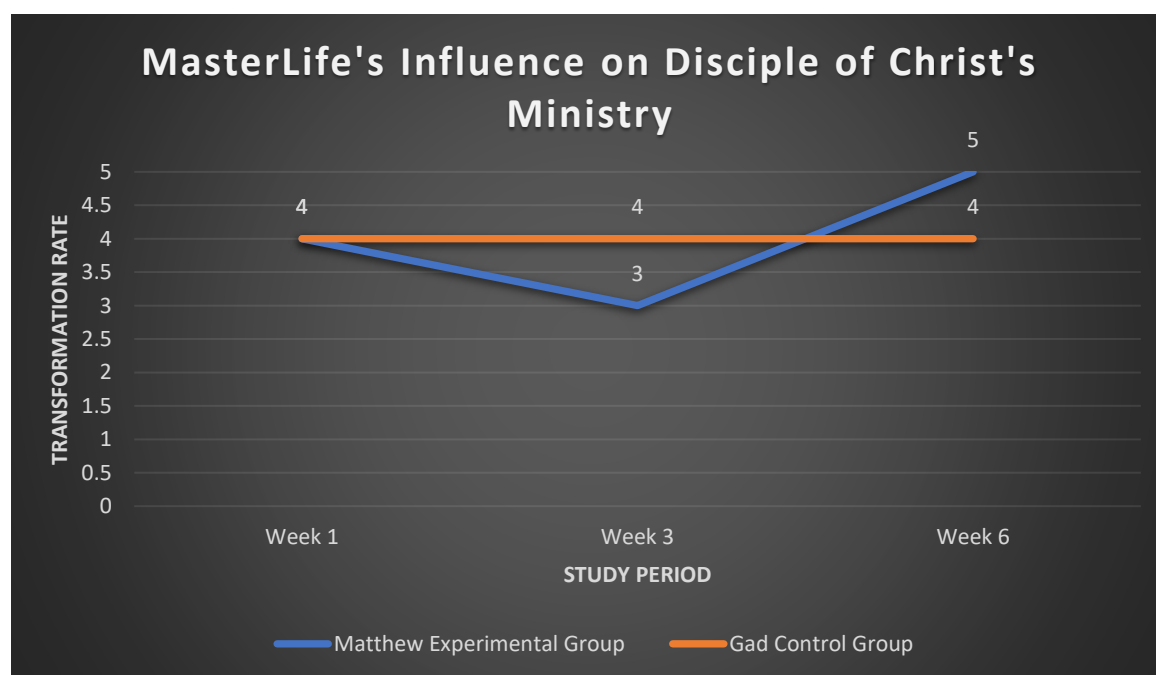


Table 1.9. Changes in Matthew and Gad's practice of prayer for the salvation of others

²⁴⁹ Dennis C. Olson, *The Church Needs a New Model: The Present One is too Weak* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2012), 29.

²⁵⁰ Dennis C. Olson, *The Church Needs New Model*, 29.

Next, Matthew of the experimental group and Gad of the control group gave their transformation rate responses to the survey statement, “I pray for the salvation of friends and associates who are not professing Christians.”²⁵¹ To this statement, the Bible is clear in two ways regarding the word of God. First, disciples of Christ are encouraged to practice intercessory prayer on behalf of all people which is pleasing to God.²⁵² And secondly, it is God’s desire that all people come to salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.²⁵³ With both of these in mind, Matthew and Gad both begin at a transformation rate of (4) *often correct* in their intercession for lost souls, as reflected in Table 1.9. But then, something drastic happens from Week 1 to Week 3, regarding Matthew of the experimental group. As shown above, Matthew’s transformation rate declines to a (3) *sometimes correct*, while Gad’s transformation rate is sustained at a (4) *often correct*. This writer has no absolute explanation for Matthew’s decline in this category at the midway point of the study period. Although, one possibility could be the importance of *intercession* or prayer for others, was not covered in the MasterLife program until Day 5, of Week 3. This is the point in the study period where MasterLife participants such as Matthew were taught, the Bible instructs them to pray for others in the same way they pray for themselves.²⁵⁴

Keeping this mind, as Matthew and Gad moved from Week 3 into Week 6, as shown in Table 1.9, Matthew’s transformation rate response increases from a (3) *sometimes correct*, to a (5) *almost always correct*, in comparison to Gad’s transformation rate response of (4) *often correct*. Although Gad’s transformation rate was sustained from Week 1 to Week 6, Matthew’s

²⁵¹ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 139-42.

²⁵² 1 Tim. 2:1-3.

²⁵³ 2 Pet. 3:9.

²⁵⁴ Willis, *The Disciple’s Cross*, 68-70.

transformation rate seems to have been influenced by the MasterLife teaching in Week 3 on intercession, as seen in his response of higher transformation rate than Gad at the end of the six-week study period. The graph shows Matthew transformed ultimately to a higher rate than Gad, due to the influence of MasterLife. With that, this writer will now offer findings relating to the category of Christian doctrine below.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on Andrew's Bible Doctrine in Comparison to Ephraim's Bible Doctrine

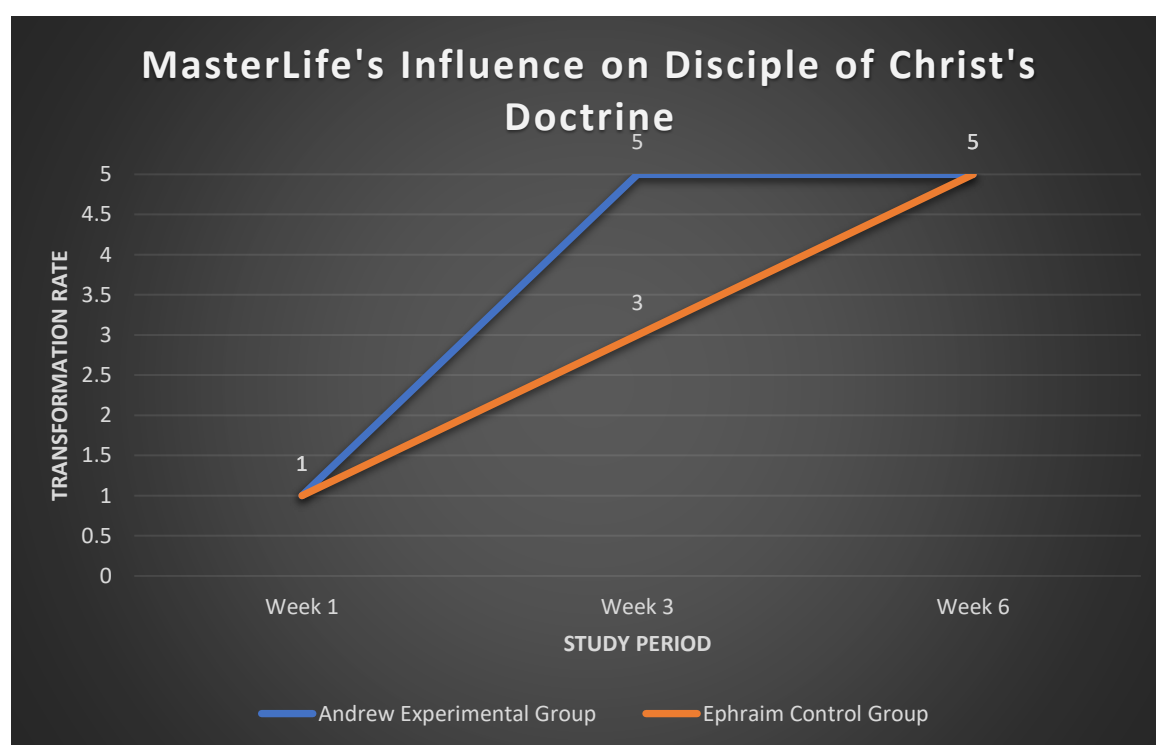


Table 1.10. Changes in Andrew and Ephraim's knowledge that Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God

Although, at first glance of Table 1.10., above, it would seem clear that both Andrew of the experimental group and Ephraim of the control group transformed to the highest transformation rate of (5) *almost always correct*, at about the same time, Andrew actually transformed to the highest rate faster. This will be explained later in this section. Interestingly

enough, both Andrew and Ephraim's response at the start of Week 1, to the survey statement, "Jesus Christ, during His incarnate life on earth, was fully God and fully man,"²⁵⁵ is illustrated in the table above by the same transformation rate of (1) *never correct*. Both responses reflect a form of spiritual deception. In fact, one writer asserts, the disciple of Christ's necessity for the divine guidance of God the Holy Spirit will become progressively significant as humanity gets closer and closer to the end of history, for this is when spiritual deception will become even more widespread. Furthermore, this author believes the disciple of Christ obtains direct revelation about God and learns His wonderful promises in only one place, and that is the Bible.²⁵⁶ Therefore, at this time period of the study it seems Andrew and Ephraim do not have any direct revelation from God and His word in this matter.

As both Andrew and Ephraim move from Week 1 to Week 3 of the study period, a second glance at Table 1.10., above shows a significant surge in the transformation rate of Andrew in comparison to that of Ephraim. In fact, at Week 3 of Table 1.10., above it can be noted that Andrew's transformation rate developed to a (5) which means he now almost always believes Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man when He lived on the earth. Not so with Ephraim, whose transformation rate increased to a (3) designating he sometimes believes Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man when He lived on the earth. The reason Andrew transformed faster than Ephraim regarding this survey statement could be attributed to MasterLife's influence. To point out, participants in this six-week study were taught on Day 5 of Week 2, the reason why it was necessary for Jesus to pray, even though He was the Son of God.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

²⁵⁶ Wayne Cordeiro, *The Divine Mentor: Growing your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2007), 44.

²⁵⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 48.

In addition, they were taught Jesus emptied Himself of His equality with God and became a human being as He entered this earthly realm through His mother Mary (see Phil. 2:6). Furthermore, the participants were taught that Jesus positioned Himself in the very same identical relationship they have with God: that of a learner (see Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:7-9).²⁵⁸ Another glance at Table 1.10., shows both Andrew and Ephraim at the end of Week 6, reached the highest transformation rate on the table of (5) *almost always correct*. Yet, the table shows Andrew reached the highest point of transformation much faster than Ephraim, due to MasterLife's influence. The final section of this chapter will present the findings of Matthew and Ephraim regarding the last survey statement on Christian doctrine.

The Findings of MasterLife's Influence on Matthew's Bible Doctrine in Comparison to Ephraim's Bible Doctrine

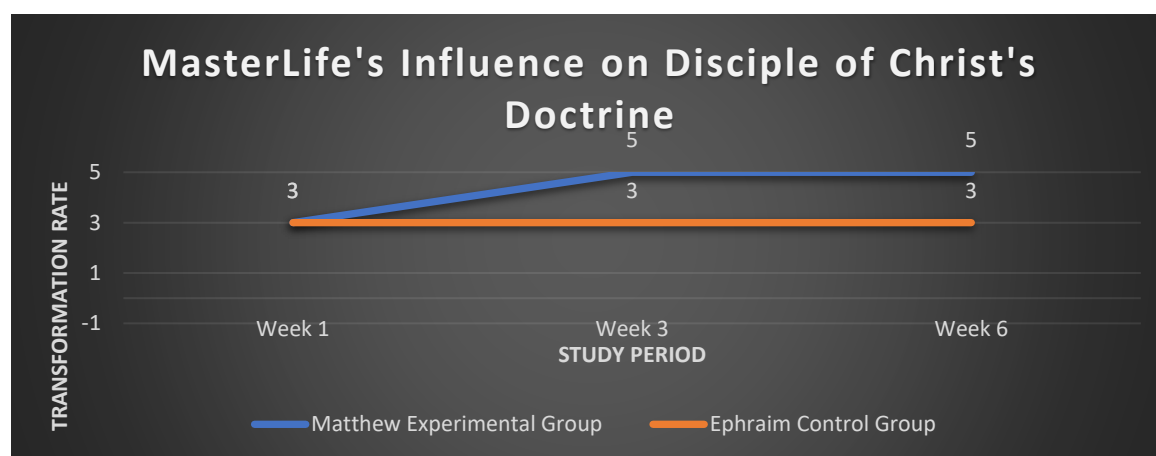


Table 1.11. Changes in Matthew and Ephraim's knowledge that hell is the final abode of those who reject Jesus Christ as Savior

Examination of Table 1.11. offers further support regarding MasterLife's influence on the transformation of disciples who participated in this process. Some may not believe it is possible to measure a disciple of Christ's life change. Yet, one writer asserts, yes, we can measure an

²⁵⁸ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 48.

individual's life-change. For example, the writer illustrates this measurement in the following way: "Can you tell me how many people you could call at 2:00 a.m. if you really needed to talk? Sure, you can, and that's one way to measure Christian community."²⁵⁹ With that, this present writer has endeavored to measure the transformation of various disciples of Christ in this chapter and will now end with his closing findings. In regards to Matthew of the experimental group and Ephraim of the control group, both begin at a transformation rate of (3) *sometimes correct* as shown in their graphs. This rate was in response to the survey statement, "After death, a non-Christian goes to a place called hell."²⁶⁰ This response shows both were not always certain regarding this biblical doctrine.

Nonetheless, an important transformation occurs with Matthew in this category. Case in point, as Matthew proceeds from Week 1 into Week 3, his transformation rate surged to a (5) *almost always correct* from the previous rate of a (3) *sometimes correct*. This acceleration in Matthew's transformation could be attributed to the many insights into the Scriptures, which were provided during Week 1, 2, and 3, regarding Jesus' teachings.²⁶¹ On the other hand, Ephraim's transformation rate showed no increase or decrease from Week 1 to Week 3. Another glance at Table 1.11., shows Matthew's transformation rate was maintained at a (5) almost always correct, in comparison to Ephraim's continual transformation rate of a (3) sometimes correct. As can be seen in each of the previous tables, the findings concerning MasterLife's influence on the disciple of Christ are auspicious.

²⁵⁹ Will Mancini, *Innovating Discipleship: Four Paths to Real Discipleship Results* (Columbia, SC: Church Unique Intentional Leader Series, 2013), 24.

²⁶⁰ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5-72.

During the study period, this writer asked Matthew to share some ways in which the MasterLife program has influenced his life. Matthew shared he has seen tremendous growth since beginning his participation in this program. He shared he now thinks about the good and bad outcomes his actions may have, before he reacts to troubling issues. Not only that, Matthew shared his prayer life has increased by at least seventy-five percent since he began the MasterLife program. Specifically, he shares he went from not praying at all, to praying to God instinctively. Lastly, Matthew shared he has started to write down things that he believes the Holy Spirit says directly to him and the scriptures he needs to review again. In the final chapter, this writer will recapitulate all the foremost points made throughout his thesis project and make a definite statement concerning the answer to the problem addressed.

Chapter Five

The Conclusion of the Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the Disciple of Christ

Often overlooked are the symptoms of sickness that some local churches continue to experience, without considering the fact that radical biblical doctrinal change is necessary. On the one hand, one writer suggests there are over 150,000 churches in this country that embody some symptoms of sickness as of 2014. On the other hand, this same author further concludes that only about ten percent of the churches in America are healthy.²⁶² Although both points are reasonable, Simon Temple as a whole is significantly healthy, since the leadership works to maintain a steadiness of focusing on both the needs of those outside and inside the church.²⁶³ With that, this present writer suggests his local church can further improve its church health by treating the cause of those symptoms of unhealthiness found in areas relating to attitudes, behaviors, and relationships. This assertion is substantiated by the findings of his *Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence* on those participants in this study. In the next section, a recapitulation of the overview of the study will be offered.

A Recapitulation of the Overview of the MasterLife Program's Study

As stated in Chapter One, this writer has witnessed the absence of Christlike transformation in the lives of numerous members during his tenure in the function as Associate Pastor in his local church. With this in mind, he will now attempt to recapitulate the foremost arguments made throughout this thesis project. A plausible assertion will then be offered

²⁶² Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Alive* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 87.

²⁶³ Ibid.

concerning a solution to the absence of Christlike transformation in his local church. At the outset of the study, this writer endeavored to learn whether participation in the MasterLife discipleship program propagated transformation into Christlikeness faster than those who did not participate in this program intervention. If so, not only would this help this writer's local ministry context, but possibly those of both current and future local congregations experiencing some or all of the same absences of Christlike transformation in their membership.

On that note, the findings from this study could have far reaching implications for future generations who are seeking a discipleship model which develops and transforms individuals into Christlikeness. This is certainly possible, since the MasterLife program has been utilized by over 250,000 people in the United States as of 1996, since being published in 1980.²⁶⁴ Keeping this in mind, the following text is one of many biblical basis for this study: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."²⁶⁵ In addition, Christian discipleship in this study was defined as developing a personal, lifelong, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which He transformed the participant's character into Christlikeness; changed their values into Kingdom values; and involved them in His mission in the home, the church, and the world.²⁶⁶ This personal relationship as one author shares regarding men and women Jesus allows to be in

²⁶⁴ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 4.

²⁶⁵ Matt. 28:19-20.

²⁶⁶ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

relationship with Him, leads to a transformation in their lives, an awakening of their hearts and minds, and a pressing desire to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.²⁶⁷

Additionally, even though several theoretical foundations for this study have been mentioned, Koessler's is the one that will be specified in this chapter. He claims it is sensible for persons to expect to see evidence of the genuineness of a disciple of Christ's commitment to Jesus depicted in the way they live.²⁶⁸ In other words, there should be some visible evidence of Christlike transformation in the attitudes and behaviors of committed followers of Christ. It must be remembered, the criteria for participation in this study included the ensuing: (a) Male or female, (b) Age eighteen years and older, (c) African-American, (d) Professed to born-again, and (e) No previous participation in the MasterLife program. Outside of this, participants who met the criteria were allowed to choose either the experimental or control group to partake in for which a record was maintained. In conjunction with this, each participant in this study was issued a survey questionnaire before Week 1, after Week 3, and after Week 6, that was utilized to capture data.

All three surveys of each participant and non-participant selected for data collection was used to graph their transformation rate on each respective preceding tables. Besides this, the data selected, collected, and analyzed from various individual surveys of the control group, was used as a benchmark for the data collected from various individual surveys of the experimental group. With that, data was collected from areas of the survey instrument which included their attitudes, behaviors, relationships, ministry, and doctrine. Furthermore, each area on the survey offered a

²⁶⁷ Margaret Ghosn, *Encounters between Jesus and Women: Models of Discipleship* (Eugene, OR: Morning Star Publishing, 2017), 85.

²⁶⁸ Koessler, *True Discipleship*, 12.

one through five rating. A copy of the survey instrument, which offers the numerical ratings, may be viewed in the corresponding appendix. Continuing on, the data collected from the survey instruments was represented by either a blue line graph for the experimental group and an orange line graph for the control group on each table, to identify which disciple of Christ transformed at a faster rate. Equally important, the book entitled *The Forgotten Ways* by Alan Hirsch,²⁶⁹ was really significant to this study since it collaborated MasterLife's strategy to develop disciples of Christ through activity in the real world, rather than in small group sessions only. For example, throughout the six-week study period, MasterLife participants were given homework assignments which required them to engage people outside of group sessions. To point out, participant in Week 3, of the study were required to show God's love to an individual who was not a Christian.²⁷⁰ This would include doing something to befriend them, like inviting them to breakfast and paying for the meal. In the ensuing section, a recapitulation of the target of this study will be offered.

A Recapitulation of the Target of the MasterLife Program's Study

When Christlike transformation fails to occur in the life of the disciple of Christ, the correct intervention may offer some solutions to help minimize interferences and advance discipleship. With this in mind, some goals for discipleship must be established. Accordingly, one of the best practices to think about regarding the process of making disciples is for the Pastor or spiritual leader to ponder what they desire to notice in well disciplined Christians.²⁷¹ Moreover,

²⁶⁹ Allan Hirsch, *Reactivating Apostolic Movement: The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016).

²⁷⁰ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 53.

²⁷¹ McCallum and Lowery, *Organic Discipleship*, 22.

comparable to Lot's distress,²⁷² this present writer desires to observe Christlike transformation in the disciples of Christ whom he dwells and worships among. Therefore, the target of this applied research is to inspire mass participation at his local church with the findings of this study, while presenting an optimistic goal that a minimum of six weeks of MasterLife participation will become a future requirement for full membership in his local church.

A Recapitulation of the Absences of Christlike Transformation

On another note, the following offers areas which transformation to Christlikeness was absent in members of this writer's local church: (1) The absence of forgiving attitudes, (2) The absence of an attitude of confessing and correcting personal wrongdoing, (3) The absence of reading and studying the Bible, (4) The absence of transformation in avoiding sexual immorality, (5) The absence of setting themselves apart from unhealthy relationships, (6) The absence of confidence in God, (7) The absence of sharing Jesus Christ with others, (8) The absence of wisdom for Christian living, (9) The absence of utilizing the Bible as the authoritative source in decision-making, (10) The absence of sufficient attendance at Bible study and Sunday Church School, and (11) The absence of transformation in fruit bearing as related to remaining Christ. Should be remembered, these absences were accredited earlier to the possibility of an unwillingness to participate in a structured biblical model of discipleship. In the following section, a recapitulation of some particulars of this study will be offered.

A Recapitulation of Some Particulars of the MasterLife Program's Study

Moreover, the intervention utilized in this study involved the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program. With that said, the purpose of this program according to its author, Dr.

²⁷² 2 Pet. 2:7-8.

Avery T. Willis Jr., was to help true followers of Christ develop an individual, lifetime, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ whereby He renovates their character and alters their values and includes them in His mission. Accordingly, Christians who participate in this discipleship process model learn how to deepen their relationships with Christ through a six month discipleship process that consists of the following four six-week studies: (1) MasterLife 1: *The Disciple's Cross*, (2) MasterLife 2: *The Disciple's Personality*, (3) MasterLife 3: *The Disciple's Victory*, and (4) MasterLife 4: *The Disciple's Mission*. With these in mind, each course builds on the other and is a precondition for the one that follows. In the same way, the weekly group sessions helped the participants reflect on the impressions and experiences in MasterLife, while helping them apply the biblical concepts to their individual lives.²⁷³

A Recapitulation of a Discipleship Model Utilized to Show Correlations in this Study

Additionally, one of the models of the discipleship utilized by this present writer to address some correlations to the MasterLife model was *The Celtic Way Discipleship Model*.²⁷⁴ Key point, the MasterLife model seeks to make disciples and not just converts by integrating evangelism in its process of making disciples of Christ similar to the Celtic Way model. To explain, in week five of study, participants spent a week learning the fifth spiritual discipline taught in Masterlife termed *Witness to the World*. For instance, participants were asked to make a new friend who was not a Christian, learn all they could about this new friend, and to be prepared to update the MasterLife group on their experience.²⁷⁵ Consequently, the Celtic's model

²⁷³ Willis, *MasterLife Leader Guide*, 5.

²⁷⁴ Bevins, "4 Lessons."

²⁷⁵ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 91.

was analogous in that its members were asked to engage in friendships to by identifying with non-Christians in their communities.²⁷⁶

Another key point, involving the Celtic model was its practice of voluntary periods of solitude in isolated natural settings such as a grove of trees near streams of water.²⁷⁷ Likewise, as the Celtic model encouraged individual time with Jesus Christ, the MasterLife model encouraged individual quiet time with Christ. As Chapter Three discloses, MasterLife participants were taught the reasons for having an individual quiet time with Christ and how to carry it out. This process is known as *Spend Time with the Master*.²⁷⁸ In the ensuing section, a recapitulation of one of this study's findings will be offered which shall disclose some positive findings regarding the *MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the Disciple of Christ*.

A Recapitulation of Some Findings of MasterLife's Influence on the Disciple of Christ

It is proposed on the one hand, that spiritual transformation will progress if the disciple of Christ participates in "*the means of grace*." The means of grace include the disciple's participation in baptisms, communion, Bible reading, preaching, confession of sin, and conversation with God. It is proposed on the other hand, that participation in "prudential means" which are largely group experiences like the class meeting originated by John Wesley, would virtually guarantee progressive spiritual transformation.²⁷⁹ The latter of these two proved to be true in this case according to the structure of MasterLife and the findings of this study. A

²⁷⁶ Bevins, "4 Lessons."

²⁷⁷ Bevins, "4 Lessons."

²⁷⁸ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 10.

²⁷⁹ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Wilmore, KY: Evangel Publishing House, 2016), 132.

participant of this study who shared in this six-week group experience, underwent a progressive spiritual transformation in his behavior as noted in the following table:

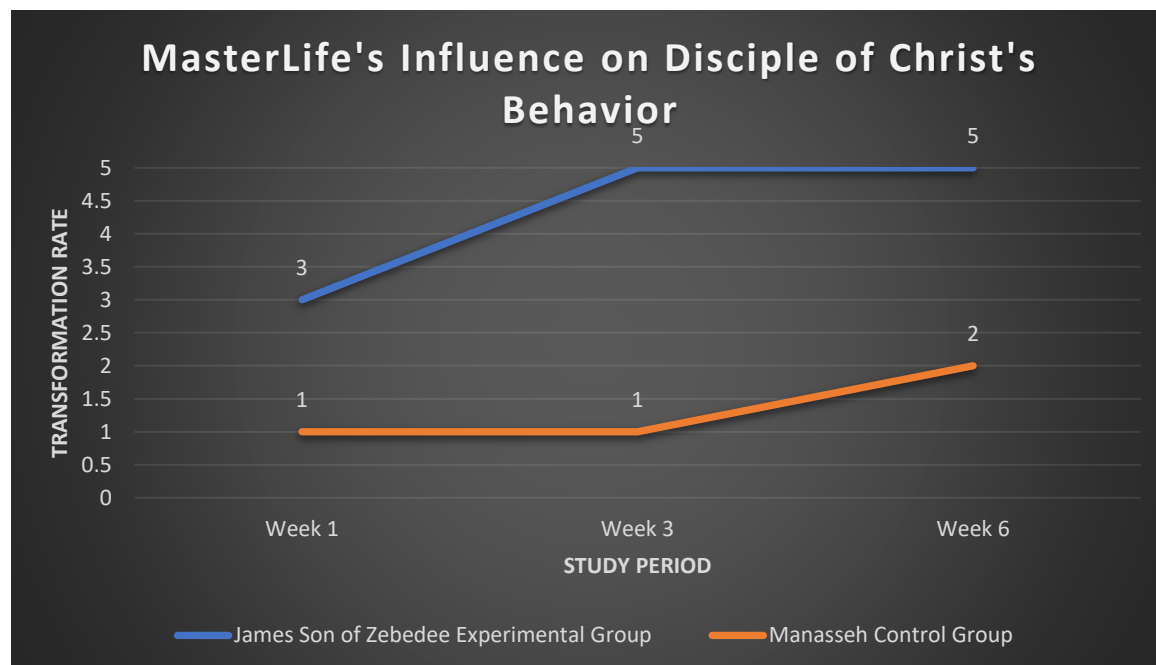


Table 1.4. Changes in James and Manasseh's use of time for God's purposes

As can be seen in Table 1.4. which was extracted from Chapter Four of this thesis project, James' participation in the MasterLife program's group experience reflects extensive progressive spiritual transformation in his Christian behavior in comparison to that of Manasseh who did not participate in the MasterLife group experience. To repeat, both James and Manasseh were asked to respond to the following survey statement: I have given volunteer time at my church to teach, lead, serve on a committee, or help with a program or event.²⁸⁰ With this statement in mind, motivating and inspiring people to serve has always been a challenge in this writer's local church. For instance, if the Pastor needs twenty members to help clean the church for a special event, then he has to asked for fifty in order to have twenty show up. With that, a

²⁸⁰ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

brief examination of the table above shows James began at a transformation rate of (3) *sometimes correct* and Manasseh began at transformation rate of (1) *never correct* to this statement. As both progressed from Week 1 to Week 3, both were again asked to respond once more to the very same statement on their second of three survey instruments. Another glance at Table 1.4., shows extensive transformation for James who progressed from a (3) *sometimes correct* to a (5) *almost always correct* regarding the preceding statement, whereas Manasseh showed no transformation at Week 3 of the study period.

As both completed Week 6 of the study period, both were asked to respond to the same statement on the third and final survey. Again, another glance at Table 1.4 shows James' transformation to the highest rate was sustained in comparison to Manasseh's transformation rate, which improved slightly to a (2) *rarely correct*. The higher transformation rate of James is believed to be accredited to the effects of the MasterLife program on each group member. In fact, this program encourages each participant to serve others throughout the six-week study period by way of the spiritual discipline termed *Minister to others*.²⁸¹ Without doubt, James' behavior appears to have been transformed by the MasterLife discipleship group experience. In order to confirm internal validity and increase the credibility connected with this research, a member checking was completed.²⁸² For instance, the data selected for use in this study was presented to Peter, Philip, James, and Andrew, of the experimental group, and Israel, Ephraim, Gad, John, and Manasseh, of the control group who were then asked if this present writer's findings were plausible?²⁸³ All responded to this inquiry in the affirmative. In fact, James

²⁸¹ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

²⁸² Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 220-21.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 221.

emphatically shared this was an absolute representation of his transformation into Christlikeness produced by MasterLife's influence. This writer will now offer a conclusive solution to the absence of Christlike transformation in his local church.

So, What?

A decisive solution to the absence of Christlike transformation in this writer's local church can be solved through each member's sincere participation in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program. This study has provided findings that demonstrate *Christians who participate in the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program transform into Christlikeness faster than those Christians who do not participate in this program*. Of course, while this study provides findings that have shown progressive transformation to Christlikeness in its participants, this writer completely endorses any Christian discipleship process that produces similar or even better results.²⁸⁴ Undoubtedly, this discipleship model has been effective in Christlike transformation of attitudes, behaviors, and relationships in only six weeks. The implication drawn from the findings in this study is that MasterLife can help minimize the absence of Christlike transformation in similar ministry settings with similar absences of Christlike transformation. In other words, this writer is suggesting there is some external validity or generalizability which current and future secondary researchers and DMIN students would have to decide, whether these findings are transferrable to other ministry settings.²⁸⁵ Continuing on, it is clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is the highest Agent of Transformation for all time. To explain, Jesus changes people, churches, leaders, rulers, and countries.²⁸⁶ To this point, the

²⁸⁴ Keith Drury, *Holiness: For Ordinary People* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009), 51.

²⁸⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 215.

²⁸⁶ Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re: VISION: The Key To Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 46.

MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program is certainly a process Jesus Christ used to transform individuals like Matthew, Thaddaeus, James, Philip, Andrew, and yes, even Simon Peter into His likeness.

As has been noted, MasterLife has a clear purpose and that purpose is Christian discipleship.²⁸⁷ To explain, the MasterLife process helps participants transform more into Christlikeness in their thoughts, and behaviors.²⁸⁸ How can this writer's local church benefit from the MasterLife program? Moreover, if the spiritual leadership at Simon Temple desire to ignite a manifestation of more forgiving attitudes within its membership, a genuine participation in MasterLife can be the solution. Without doubt, most spiritual leaders including this present writer would love to see more members respond with a forgiving attitude when others wrong them.²⁸⁹ Not only that, if Simon Temple's spiritual leadership desire to have more of its membership serve in winning more souls for Christ, helping meet the needs of others, serving in the various ministries, utilizing their spiritual gifts, improving church health, and increasing ministry effectiveness, a sincere participation in MasterLife can be a solution.

There is no doubt, that one of the major challenges at this writer's local church is motivating its membership to servitude. With this in mind, within the first three weeks of this study, the MasterLife program inspired its participants to serve in ministries such as the Good Samaritan Outreach Ministry, the Food Bank Outreach Ministry, and Clothing Closet Outreach Ministry. Assuredly, most Christian spiritual leaders would be very pleased to know that

²⁸⁷ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 139-42.

²⁸⁹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 106.

MasterLife helped to produce servitude quickly in its participants. Pursuing its effects further, this study is certainly relevant when it comes to sexual immorality. For instance, MasterLife minimized possibility for sexual immorality to occur which has been an ongoing challenge in the membership at this writer's local church. To point out, Philip in Table 1.5., in only six weeks transformed from never correct to almost always correct when responding to the statement of avoiding conditions that might lead to being tempted by sexual immorality.²⁹⁰

In the last analysis, the Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the Disciple of Christ has shown this program actually minimizes the absence of Christlike transformation. This is certainly a discipleship program which this writer recommends measures be taken for mass participation at Simon Temple, and in all contemporary and future local churches. The findings in this study have shown MasterLife builds reliable men and women who will continue to carry the gospel to the next generation.²⁹¹ On that note, this is the first of any academic or independent research conducted on the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program according to a representative at LifeWay Christian Bookstore. With that, this writer suggests this thesis project can be further developed by extending the study period from six weeks to twelve weeks, allowing participants more time to grasp and apply the six major biblical disciplines and concepts offered, and to measure sustainability of transformation. This writer believes an additional six weeks would allow participants more time to build on the material they have learned in MasterLife Book 1: *The Disciple's Cross* by participating in MasterLife Book 2: *The Disciple's Personality*.²⁹² Lastly, this writer recommends the book entitled *MasterLife*

²⁹⁰ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 139-42.

²⁹¹ 2 Tim. 2:2.

²⁹² Willis, *Leader's Guide*, 71.

Leader Guide: A Biblical Process for Growing Disciples by Avery T. Willis Jr., for further information on this subject.

Appendix A

The Survey Questionnaire of Christian Discipleship Practices

How correct is each of the following statements of you? Choose from these responses:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 = never correct | 4 = often correct |
| 2 = rarely correct | 5 = almost always correct |
| 3 = sometimes correct | |

I. Attitudes

1. I try to live by the Bible's moral and ethical teachings. 1 2 3 4 5
2. My faith forms how I think and act each day. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Since God has forgiven me, I respond with a forgiving attitude when others wrong me. 1 2 3 4 5
4. When I understand that I have disobeyed a specific teaching of the Bible, I correct the wrongdoing. 1 2 3 4 5
5. When I become aware that I have offended someone, I go to him or her to confess and correct my wrongdoing. 1 2 3 4 5

II. Behavior

6. Reading and studying the Bible has made important changes in the way I live my life. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I have given volunteer time at my church to teach, lead, serve on a committee, or help with a program or event. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I am knowingly aware that God placed me on earth to contribute to the fulfillment of His plans and purposes. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I am somewhat hesitant to let other people know that I am a Christian. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I avoid conditions in which I might be tempted by sexual immorality. 1 2 3 4 5

III. Relationships

11. I am convinced that God the Holy Spirit is active in my life. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I see myself as loved and cherished by God. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I dodge close relationships with other people who hinder the expression of my Christian values and principles. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I express genuine praise and gratitude to God even in the middle of troublesome situations. 1 2 3 4 5
15. My life is filled with stress and worry. 1 2 3 4 5

IV. Ministry

16. It is important for all Christians to serve other people. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I know how to explain the gospel plainly to another person without relying on an evangelistic tract. 1 2 3 4 5

- 18. A Christian should frequently find ways to tell others about Jesus. 1 2 3 4 5
- 19. Being a Christian is a private matter and does not need to be discussed with other people. 1 2 3 4 5
- 20. I pray for the salvation of friends and associates who are not professing Christians. 1 2 3 4 5

V. Doctrine

- 21. The Bible is the authoritative source of wisdom for Christian living. 1 2 3 4 5
- 22. After death, a non-Christian goes to a place called hell. 1 2 3 4 5
- 23. Each person born into the world inherited a sinful nature as a consequence of Adam's fall and is thereby separated from God and is in need of a Savior. 1 2 3 4 5
- 24. Christ designated local churches as His means and environment for nurturing Christians in the faith. 1 2 3 4 5
- 25. Jesus Christ, during His incarnate life on earth, was fully God and fully man. 1 2 3 4 5²⁹³

²⁹³ Avery T. Willis, Avery Jr., *The Disciple's Cross: MasterLife* (Nashville, TN: Leadership and Adult Publishing, 1996), 139-42.

Appendix B

Terms and Definitions

Attitudes. A disciple of Christ lives according to biblical ethics such as repents after violating scripture, is accountable to others.²⁹⁴

Behavior. A disciple of Christ employs time and talent for God's purposes, acts appropriately toward the opposite sex, and adapts attitudes and actions to conform to biblical standards.²⁹⁵

Christian discipleship. Developing a personal lifelong submissive relationship with Jesus Christ, in which He transforms your character into Christlikeness, and changes your values into Kingdom values and involves you His mission in the home, the church, and the world.²⁹⁶

Disciple. A committed follower of Jesus Christ.²⁹⁷

Doctrine. A disciple of Christ believes that heaven is the final abode of believers and that hell is the final abode of all who rejected Jesus Christ as Savior.²⁹⁸

Intercession. Prayer for others.²⁹⁹

MasterLife. A developmental, small-group discipleship process that will help you develop a lifelong, compliant relationship with Christ.³⁰⁰

Ministry. A disciple of Christ seeks and takes advantage of opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others.³⁰¹

Model. A graphic description of a system that serves as another option for advanced discipleship research.³⁰²

Relationships. A disciple of Christ trusts God in times of misfortune, as well as in times of prosperity, maintains a forgiving spirit when wronged, confesses or asks forgiveness when guilty of an offense.³⁰³

²⁹⁴ Willis, *MasterLife Leader Guide*, 70.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 5.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 13.

²⁹⁸ Willis, *MasterLife Leader Guide*, 70.

²⁹⁹ Willis, *The Disciple's Cross*, 70.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 5.

³⁰¹ Willis, *MasterLife Leader Guide*, 70.

³⁰² Rod Dempsey, "Evaluating Different Church Models," accessed March 1, 2018, <https://www.learn.liberty.edu/>.

³⁰³ Willis, *MasterLife Leader Guide*, 70.

Spiritual leadership. Moving God's children unto His agenda.³⁰⁴

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 27, 2018

Leon Bernard Newton

IRB Exemption 3161.032718: An Evaluation of the MasterLife Christian Discipleship Program's Influence on the Disciple of Christ.

Dear Leon Bernard Newton,

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 no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(1,2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

- (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- (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 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,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
 Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
 The Graduate School

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