

Liberty University

**Evaluating Discipleship Program Effectiveness of Liberian Churches in Worcester,
Massachusetts**

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the Faculty of the Rawlings School of Divinity
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Doctor of Ministry

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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EVALUATING DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS OF LIBERIAN CHURCHES
IN WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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Liberty University Doctoral School Divinity, 2019

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Abstract

This project is evaluating discipleship program effectiveness of Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. The goal of this thesis is to develop a strategy and effective program for the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts as a tool to train and educate the Liberian churches for effective and adequate discipleship programs.

This project will survey Liberian Christians residing in Worcester, Massachusetts who are members of churches that are dominantly Liberians. This research will help others to understand their religious background, social lifestyles and commitment to discipleship. Implementation of the 12-step training proposed in this project will enable the Liberian churches to be successful in the United States of America and globally.

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This has been an incredible journey for me and my family, and those who cheered me up in desire for education. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation firstly to God and the Lord Jesus Christ for His compassionate grace and salvation through the cross of Calvary. My journey would not have been successful without His love and provisions. The beginning of this project has not been easy, but the grace of God has done this wonderful work.

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I would like to express my gratitude to my wonderful parents for their countless love and support for me to be the person I am today. My parents took a very courageous decision by leaving our home and village to go to the city of Monrovia, Liberia for education to fulfill my dream through their dream of having an academically educated child. It took courage and brave actions to let go your young child from your sight to send him away for a better future.

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Dedication

To accomplish all of this hard work, it takes sacrifice and long suffering, therefore I will primarily dedicate this work to the Lord Jesus Christ, mainly for giving life, salvation, and peace of mind. I thank the Lord for his grace, wisdom, and enabling power that helped me to do this work.

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The great leadership ability of my father was the vehicle that always inspired me to press on toward academic success. Everyone in the Gbi-Dorue district knew my father's able leadership and his caring spirit. He was a provider, loving protector, and cared for everyone. My mother was the most gifted and virtuous woman ever. She taught all of children to be truthful, respectful, sincere, and to love others. She believed in hard work for success, and most of all she loved the Lord.

My parents guided me how to live right and do the right things, mostly they taught me not to give up while pursuing my goals. My parents taught me how to make good choices in finding a wife that will bless my life. Their teaching guided me to find my beautiful and dedicated wife, Colleen G. Gibson. Colleen has been with me the rest of the way in my search for higher education. To our beautiful and loving children Rachel, Jessie, and Aviya: you have been my joy on this journey.

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Contents

Tables	xi
Illustrations.....	xii
 Chapter 1: Introduction	 1
Formation Strategy for Discipleship	2
Transformation Strategy for Discipleship in the Local Church	3
Application Strategy for Discipleship in the Liberian Churches	4
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Research Purpose	6
Need for the Study	6
Statement of Limitations	6
Biblical and Theological Basis	7
Statement of Methodology.....	9
Research Methodology	9
Review of Literature	12
Current Literature	12
Scripture	16
Definition of Terms	21
Summary	23
 Chapter 2: New Testament Foundation for Discipleship.....	 25
Introduction.....	25
The New Testament Foundation of Discipleship.....	25
Definition of Discipleship.....	29
Understanding God's Mission	33
The Purpose of Discipleship	34
Jesus, the Disciple Maker	35
The People One Meets to Disciple.....	38
The Right Age Group for Discipleship.....	39
The Cultural Challenge in Discipleship.....	40
Breaking the Culture Gap	42
Discipleship in the Gospels.....	44
Jesus' Disciples: The Call of the Twelve	45
The Call of Matthew	46
The Call of Peter	47
The Disciples with John the Baptist.....	49
The Commitment to the Cost of Discipleship.....	51

Making Disciples of All Nations	53
Disciple-Makers Must Have a Relationship with Jesus.....	54
The Disciple-Maker Must Be an Intercessor	54
Summary	56
Chapter 3: Liberian Churches in Worcester.....	58
The Purpose and Procedures of the Survey	58
Data Collection	58
Participants.....	58
Liberian Churches in Worcester	59
Historical Background of Churches in Worcester	60
SWOT Analysis of Liberian Churches	64
Research Method	65
Demographics of Participants	65
Participant's Gender.....	65
Participant's Age.....	66
Participant's Education Level	66
Years Lived in Worcester	68
Years in Current Local Church in Worcester	69
Service or Worship Attendance	70
Challenges to Church Attendance.....	71
Personal Bible Study	72
Previous Places Lived	73
Spiritual Growth Indicator	74
Previous Leadership Roles.....	75
Leading a Bible Study.....	76
Presence of a Discipleship Program for New Converts.....	77
Participant Satisfaction with the Church's Discipleship Program.....	78
Interest in Leading a Small Group	79
Main Goal for the Church	80
Research Overview	81
Summary	82
 Chapter 4: Evaluating Discipleship Program Effectiveness of Liberian Churches in Worcester.....	 83
Introduction.....	83
Current Climate for Discipleship	84
Discipling Immigrants and Non-Immigrants	88
Action Plan for Discipleship.....	90
12 Step Lesson Plan on Discipleship for the Liberian Churches in Worcester	90
Module #1: The Change of Environment (Orientation)	91
Module #2: Climate or Weather in Worcester, Massachusetts.....	94
Module #3: Understanding and Emerging the New Culture	95
Module #4: Self-Identity	97
Module #5: The Approach to Ministry (Caring).....	101
Module #6: Break Down Barriers.....	102

Module #7: Discipling the Adults	104
Module #8: Discipling Youth & Children	105
Module #9: The Style of Music and Worship.....	106
Module #10: The Support for Discipleship Ministry (Financial Resource)	109
Module #11: Prayer: The Force that Drives Discipleship	112
Module #12: Accomplishing the Goals and Mission of the Disciple-Maker	117
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations	120
Introduction.....	120
Project Review	120
Recommendations.....	121
Conclusion	122
Thesis Restatement	123
Bibliography	124
Appendix A	128
Appendix B	131
Appendix C	135
Appendix D	136
Appendix E	138

Tables

1.1 Table 1: Historical Background of the Seven Liberian Churches in Worcester	60
1.2 Table 2: SWOT Analysis of Liberian Churches	64

Illustrations

Figures

Figure 1: Participant's Gender	65
Figure 2: Participant's Age	66
Figure 3: Participant's Education Level	67
Figure 4: Years Lived in Worcester	68
Figure 5: Years in Current Church.....	70
Figure 6: Service or Worship Attendance.....	71
Figure 7: Challenges to Church Attendance	72
Figure 8: Personal Bible Study	73
Figure 9: Previous Places Lived	74
Figure 10: Spiritual Growth Indicator.....	75
Figure 11: Previous Leadership Roles	76
Figure 12: Leading a Bible Study	77
Figure 13: Presence of a Discipleship Program for New Converts	78
Figure 14: Participant Satisfaction with Church's Discipleship Program	79
Figure 15: Interest in Leading a Small Group	80
Figure 16: Main Goal for the Church	81

Chapter 1

Introduction

The definition of discipleship is to evaluate and train another so that they may live for Christ with greater effectiveness. The researcher will use the Bible, as well as scholarly books, journal articles, and other research materials in order to apply them within the framework of the local church.

This project evaluates the effectiveness of a discipleship program among Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. There are three components of this thesis project that will give an insight or enlighten the full description of the effectiveness of a discipleship program in Liberian churches in Worcester.

The commitment and growth of membership within the Liberian churches in Worcester is unstable and declining. Many of the Liberian citizens have different religious orientations. It is a compound, complex situation in that most of the people are from different ethnic backgrounds. Some of them had lived in refugee camps and had endured many difficult challenges.

This evaluation is needed because the Liberian churches have lost the biblical impact and influence among their members, youth, and college students in Worcester. They are not measuring up to the standard of the New Testament model in Acts 2:42-47, where the believers devoted themselves to the Apostles' doctrine, they fellowshiped, they broke bread, and they prayed continually because of their effective discipleship effort.

The following three key areas that must be evaluated and improved for effective discipleship programming:

1. Formation of the discipleship program.

2. Application of the discipleship initiative
3. Transformation of the discipleship program.

Formation Strategy for Discipleship

Formation strategy is the process. A process is not, “an event that the team works through and finishes. Instead, it is ongoing.”¹ Therefore, the discipleship team should be skillful in sizing, arranging, or with a reasonable organizational skills.

In any business, be it religious or secular, the formation is the earliest step with which one must begin. The discipleship program forms the members to be reliable in any church, or organization that have the form of discipleship program which then determine the actual reliability of it. Discipleship formation requires development and structure because that is the life of the local church.

The development and structure have come from a biblical source, Genesis 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the water.”²

The formless empty and dark earth was adequately structured by the Spirit of God. The first thing that God did was to speak his Word. It is the Word of God (Jesus Christ) by which all things were created. John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that was made.”³

¹ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategies Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 28.

² Genesis 1:1-2, New International Version (NIV). Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this thesis project will be from the New International Version of the Bible.

³ John 1:1-3, NIV.

This formation process started with God's creation of the world that was ultimately God's plan of salvation or redemption of humanity. In Genesis 1:26, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."⁴ Genesis 2:7, "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."⁵ Now in John 1:4, "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind."⁶ The coordinated formation planning of God's human race is evident and consistent because of his principle of formation grace, so that when humanity fell short of his glory, God's grace found mankind when they were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).

Transformation Strategy for Discipleship in the Local Church

The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian Church in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old has gone, the new is here!"⁷ From the Bible's point of view, transformation means a change from bad to good, or renewal from a life that conforms to the ways of the world to one that pleases God. Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is –his good, pleasing and perfect will."⁸

"The way to change your mind; is the concept of mind-management. The way to transform, improve, and upgrade your life is through renewal of the mind. The reason is that

⁴ Genesis 1:26, NIV.

⁵ Genesis 2:7, NIV.

⁶ John 1:4, NIV.

⁷ II Corinthians 5:17, NIV.

⁸ Romans 12:2, NIV.

because the mind is an intangible, spiritual entity and only God's Word can shed the best light on it" (Hebrews 4:1-2).⁹

For one to reach the world with the discipleship program, it must be something that the person sincerely allows to be conceived in his or her heart, meaning that they should have passion for it. "The human spirit is inescapable and could take whichever character and form of experiences and the choices that live from our heart. From our spirit, will and heart we see the world and interpret reality. We make choices into action. We try to change our world for Christ."¹⁰ It is the heart that finds or feels the effects of these planned actions.

Application Strategy for Discipleship in the Liberian Churches

The term "application" contains the practical aspect of the work of a discipleship program. Every true believer in Christ Jesus must do as Jesus did when he started his ministry of discipleship on earth. According to Mark 1:16-18, "And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'"¹¹ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

We are called to share the word of God with lost souls. This requires action, studying the word of God, praying, and loving the sinners by spending much time with them, caring patiently and relationship-building with them. When Jesus called his disciples, he was not sitting in one spot, but he went out in various areas or communities drawing people of different backgrounds to

⁹ Chris Oyahilome, *The Power of Your Mind* (Houston, TX: LoveWorld, 2016), 19.

¹⁰ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2002), 33.

¹¹ Mark 1:16-18, NIV.

become his disciples (John 1: 41-45). The importance of *responsibility* and *accountability* must be emphasized in the local church to create an effective discipleship program. This project will propose a recommendation to determine the factors that under-score the effectiveness of discipleship programs within the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Statement of the Problem

Though many churches implement programs and use resources that draw in crowds, they are losing the growth percentage because of the lack of an adequate discipleship program. Many senior pastors are in trouble today in their churches because of the ineffectiveness of discipleship program in their churches.

Lack of discipleship strategy causes church membership maintenance to invariably decrease. As a result, the church administration suffers drastically in many respects and some churches close their doors. This thesis will, amongst other things, present the practical strategy for a quality discipleship program within the local church that could benefit the local church.

This project explores the biblical discipleship principles of the Great Commission strategy and to resolve the decline in membership of the churches. The discipleship strategy model that the project suggests would offer the dynamic power for healthy church growth. To accomplish its purpose, there will be a focus on the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts for direct management of effective discipleship program development and building strategy for the growth of these churches in specific.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between various discipleship practices in the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts, and to develop an effective discipleship program that will impact those practices for the spiritual maturity of the disciples.

Need for the Study

To provide practical data to the leadership of the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts that will guide its discipleship programs by addressing areas of deficiency and recommending needed changes.

Statement of Limitation

Discipleship should be the mission of any local church as stated in the Great Commission; therefore, it is necessary for the local church to maintain its membership if it is to fulfill its critical role of receiving and developing disciples efficiently. As with any project, limitations exist in the area of collecting exhaustive information or creating a strategic approach to every local church. However, this project will be specifically focusing on Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts that are in the process of dying or are dead for lack of an effective discipleship program. Collecting data and information to create a new strategy approach should be the goal of any church whether in Worcester, Massachusetts or elsewhere.

This project places its emphasis on evaluating discipleship program effectiveness in the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. This would benefit Liberian churches on all levels while this project evaluates several aspects of the Liberian church's discipleship program. It is not intended to evaluate denominational groups of churches.

Biblical and Theological Basis

The biblical and theological basis for this thesis project will be addressing the three components of discipleship, which are: formation, transformation, and application. To begin with, it is essential to look at the meaning of discipleship. Which only means, “student or learner or follower.”¹²

Discipleship means learning from and following someone like a teacher in this context (Jesus). Discipleship is converting, strengthening, and being ready to go out into the world to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is a calling for believers to follow and obey. It is a lifelong journey of transforming people into the likeness of Christ.

To fully understand the definition of discipleship one must have in his or her mind the aspect of mission in the cultural context. The key is to understand that mission and the discipleship program are intertwined.

In Matthew 28:16-20, making disciples of all nations was and is the missionary mandate of Jesus. Inclusively, reaching all nations is the central role of the discipleship ministry. The command to make disciples is the role of every faithful follower of Jesus Christ. According to Bradfield, “the word ‘go,’ is a command to do something which requires action.”¹³ “Therefore; go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).”¹⁴

To fulfill the Biblical command to go, the researcher will enlighten the audience that there should be a strategic planning mechanism: Without proper strategic planning and sound

¹² Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2006), 27.

¹³ Ibid, 27-28.

¹⁴ Matthew 28:19, NIV.

leadership, the discipleship program will be ineffective. According to Malphurs, “The key to strategic planning is competent leadership. It may develop the finest strategic plan in the history of the church.”¹⁵ Malphurs also defined strategic planning as, “the fourfold process that points the leader in the right direction.”¹⁶ He also states, “as a pastor works through regularly with a team of leaders to envision or re-envision, and regenerate his church by developing a biblical mission, a compelling vision, discovering its core values and crafting a strategy that implements a unique, authentic church model.”¹⁷

Every faithful Christian pastor that strives for a right and a good church, must, therefore strive to have an active or valid discipleship program in the local church. The church must identify or consider these three fundamental principles for the strategic planning:

1. Formation
2. Transformation
3. Application

These three principle keys mentioned above are fundamental to the effectiveness of the discipleship program in any church. Based on the apostle Paul’s letters, one can see the importance of formation, transformation, and application for any discipleship program in the church as found in II Timothy 3:16, I Timothy 3:1-12, and Ephesians 4:17-29.

Also, it can truthfully be seen that when Jesus called his twelve disciples, knowing the background of most of them, he formed and transformed them before teaching them application measures. Matthew 4:19, “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for

¹⁵ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategies Planning*, 17.

¹⁶ Ibid, 26.

¹⁷ Ibid, 28.

people.”¹⁸ So it was with most of the disciples, persons like Matthew the tax collector. Both Peter and Matthew even became authors of New Testament books.

Statement of Methodology

This thesis project seeks to evaluate discipleship program effectiveness in the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts through a survey. To achieve this purpose, the researcher will use a biblical and theoretical framework to analyze the results of this survey. This survey will come with recommendations for effective discipleship program building strategies for the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Research Methodology

This project will evaluate the discipleship program in the Liberian churches through an interviewing process to establish a concrete framework by developing and implementing an effective Biblical discipleship program which is modeled after the New Testament church method of discipleship in the book Acts. The Apostles’ methods of discipleship will help the Liberian churches to draw new members into practical and participative discipleship programs in their churches by the using the following methods: small groups, mentorships, selfless service and natural relationship building.

This thesis project consists of a survey of about 100 individuals from seven Liberian churches, which includes the pastors, adults, youth, and college students in order to analyze the various demographics of the population that will be surveyed in the various discipleship processes in Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. This study survey will give pastors

¹⁸ Matthew 4:19, NIV.

and other interested groups in Liberian churches an excellent biblical tool to understand what constitutes an effective discipleship program to implement in the Liberian churches.

The discipleship program is at the heart of Christianity. Before the Lord Jesus Christ began his earthly ministry, he started by building a team of disciples who he trained and later put in charge of the Kingdom work on earth before he ascended into heaven to prepare a place for all believers to be with him forever (John 14:1-6).

Jesus Christ established the church by calling twelve disciples that were trained as the foundation of his ministry. One of Jesus' missions was the training of his disciples to preach the Good News to the world. The names of the disciples are: "Peter, John, James, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James" (Acts 1:12-14).¹⁹

In John 14:1-6, Jesus encountered John the Baptist and his disciples, and from there onward, two of John's disciples followed Jesus according to the following scriptural references: Matthew 18:18-20, Luke 5:14-16 and 6:40, Luke 14:27, John 13:34-35, Acts 21:42, and Eph. 4:11-17.

John 1:37 states, "When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?' They said, 'Rabbi (which means "Teacher"), where are you staying?' 'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.'"²⁰ Jesus called Philip and Nathaniel, according to John 1:43-50. Jesus also walked to the sea of Galilee

¹⁹ Acts 1:12-14, NIV.

²⁰ John 1:37, NIV.

where he called Peter and his brother Andrew to “Come and follow me, I will make you the fishers of men” (Matthew 4:21).¹⁹

The discipleship program can be related to strategic planning. Many organizations, for instance local and global businesses, religious and non-religious organizations, and profit and non-profit businesses have benefited from the power of strategic planning. Discipleship helps to mobilize a practical plan of action for any ministry.

In Matthew 10:2-8 Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to minister to the needs of the people of the household of Israel. Then in Acts 1:8-9, Jesus instructed the disciples to go into all the world to make disciples. This includes the people of Liberia, from the West Coast of Africa. Liberians are the citizens of the Republic of Liberia, from West Africa. Some of them migrated to the United States of America for various reasons many years back; most of them came in the country as refugees and sought asylum between 1989 and 2005 because of the civil war that took the lives of so many Liberians. The migration continued again between 2014 and 2016, due to the Ebola epidemic that took the lives 10,000 plus Liberians—children, youth, and adult women and men. Some of them had experienced great trauma; they are in the churches and they need an effective discipleship program that will enrich their lives.

Strategic planning can be defined as the “envisioning process that a team leader uses with a team on a regular basis to think externally in order to re-design a specific program to accomplish a great result. The Great Commission results in the ministry context.”²²

²¹ Matthew 4:19, NIV.

²² Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 26.

Also, “strategic planning is a process, used by the leadership team to think and act to produce a specific ministry model. Biblically, discipleship seeks to follow Christ’s Great Commission, as mentioned before, taking into account the church’s unique ministry context.”²³

Strategic planning seeks to address many concepts that require alignments such as church’s values, mission, and vision.²⁴ If the church fails to make proper alignment in discipleship, membership suffers in diminishing returns. Discipleship, on the other hand, is about understanding the values, mission, and the vision in order to have effective discipleship.

Review of Literature

Current Literature

M. Scott Boren, in his book *Missional Small Groups*, identifies discipleship as rhythms in a narrative form. The concept is to know the pattern of work, and to use it to identify the truth about small groups as an art of inspiring others in a team to contribute their best toward discipleship. Discipleship is not a science but an art, and it is about others and is oriented toward an explicit goal of leading people to God.

Boren challenges the audience with the aims of reaching humankind through the small group mission, and to use this discipleship method to transform communities with the Gospel of Christ. Small groups’ missional discipleship will create the power through a consistent practice so disciples might achieve the goal that is established before them. The goal and the objective of Boren in this book is to cause the disciples of Jesus to understand the mission of the Gospel in

²³ Ibid, 26.

²⁴ Ibid. 26

every community. The small group ministry is to touch others by transforming their lives. The Habitat for Humanity is an excellent example of this.

Charles A. Davis, in *Making Disciples Across Cultures*, gives an insightful experience of his relationship with the Lord. According to Davis, he grew up in Pakistan with a missionary parent, and at the age of eleven, gave his life to Christ. “Against this background, I became a Christian at the age of eleven, praying with my mother. I remember the relief I had and the sense that I had joined something big.”²⁵

Davis also explained the challenges he experienced in his Christian life such as depression. However, he embodies the themes and the principles of the book, which is disciple-making. He discussed ten different responsibilities of disciple-making.

In his book, *Leading, Teaching and Making Disciples*, Michael R. Mitchell approaches the cultural concept, which makes the entire book very productive because he addressed the topics or subjects, not from the technological point of view, but rather from Jesus’ philosophical point of view that embraces all culture and language. Mitchell presented the entire book from a practical point of view since he divided the book into three parts. Mitchell discussed the disorder of technology, without disqualifying the use of technology. Mitchell integrated discipleship and leadership by using the term disciple-followers.²⁶

Bill Donahue’s book, *The Irresistible Community*, is about changing the lives of people in a community and it is about helping to change the way people think. In the acknowledgment of the book, Donahue points out three words, which were practiced by Jesus in the community.

²⁵ Charles Davis, “*Making Disciples Across Cultures*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, Press, 2015), 16.

²⁶ Michael R. Mitchell, *Leading, Teaching and Making Disciples* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2010).

These are power, grace, and truth. These three words are part and parcel in any community. In the introduction, he gave the reason whether one should accept or decline an invitation. “In other words, he assures it is not the event; it is the people.”²⁷

Donahue divides the book into three parts. Part I, he entitles “Join the Fellowship of the Table.” He used the table metaphor to identify the different kinds of issues communities encountered.²⁸ In Part II, he discussed how one could “Practice the Ministry of the Towel.” The towel is a metaphor that describes service and humility.²⁹ In Part III, he addressed the “Life in the Circles of Truth.” He speaks directly to those who are still struggling to know the truth and how to live in the truth.³⁰ Jesus called the church to make disciples of all nations, which means to change the lives of many so that they will conform to the will of God and live in the likeness of Christ.

Dave Browning, in his book *Deliberate Simplicity*, develops important themes, concepts, and principles that are concise and concrete in a very profound approach that is envisioned to integrate the mission of the church into the community that may have an enormous impact on the people both spiritually and physically.

The book is designed to motivate and urge ordinary believers and leaders to realize the urgent need for evangelism as the church continues to operate in humility and develop a better servant attitude with a biblical strategy to change the way people think. It emphasizes the fact that less is more and more is better than one can ever imagine for any given community. This

²⁷ Bill Donahue, *The Irresistible Community: An Invitation to Life Together* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 17.

²⁸ Ibid, 27-100.

²⁹ Ibid, 101-173.

³⁰ Ibid, 174-250.

drives home the idea that every healthy church requires a gradual planting process, every soul is essential to the Lord, and there must be a willingness on the part of the healthy church to embrace every life with whom they come into contact.

Protocol and diplomacy always require the creation of teamwork that reflects Christ and are like-minded to become like Jesus. They are an open field that is filled among all the factors of minimalism, intentionality, reality, multiplicity, velocity, and scalability that are meant to produce good results in the life of the church.

These unifying tools are intentionality and reality that become the important critical factor for an inclusive community and a thriving, healthy church's accomplishment. This deliberate simplicity has the communion component, community aspect, and evangelism approach regardless of the church.

Dever and Platt, in their book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, discuss: “The Expositional Preaching, Biblical Theology, The Gospel, A Biblical Understanding of Conversion, A Biblical Understanding of Evangelism, a Biblical Understanding of Church Membership, Biblical Church Discipline, A Concern for Discipleship, and Growth and Biblical Church Leadership.”³¹ Of the nine marks, “A Biblical Understanding of Conversion” will be the foundation of a healthy church and, “A Concern for Discipleship and Growth” will be pedaling the wheel to the rest for progress toward a healthy church.

Dever and Platt state, “we are in desperate need of God’s grace, and God owes his grace to no one. That is the very nature of grace; it is not something owed, what God owes us is justice

³¹ Mark Dever and David Platt, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 8.

for our sin.”³² This means that grace is the unmerited favor God awarded to us, even to those who do not deserve it, but he still gives it to us. A healthy church must understand the power and art of grace.

Dever is very insightful in those nine marks of a healthy church. He points out that expositional preaching is the responsibility of the pastor to communicate the gospel of Christ to his or her audience. This is one of the important aspects of a healthy church. The fact is, all pastors must be able to interpret the word of God in a profound manner.

Scripture

The Great Commission speaks the mind of God through Christ to all his disciples. It is God’s desire that all must be saved. Therefore, Jesus was asking all disciples to engage in the disciple-making effort to bring the human race back to him. God is always calling disciples to reach the world with the gospel of Christ. Jesus told his disciples to be witnesses to the world after they received the Holy Spirit. It is imperative that all disciples go out into the world and make other disciples, by following the footsteps of the apostles.

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”³³ Therefore, Christ’s legacy is to be his witness, and to make disciples, which is the Christian task before the Kingdom to come.

Mark 6:7-12

³² Ibid, 105.

³³ Acts 1:8, NIV.

“Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. His instructions were as follows: Take nothing for the journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”³⁴

Matthew 28:18-20

“Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”³⁵

Discipling others is to send individuals or group of followers of Christ, who will deliver Christ’s message that will teach others to transform their lives. They in return will produce other disciples that reflect Christ that look like themselves. This means that disciples are living a transformed life whose testimonies and lives reflect Christ in their communities. The Apostle Paul said to his followers, “follow me as I follow Christ.”

Philippians 4:9

³⁴ Mark 6:7-12, NIV.

³⁵ Matthew 28:18-20, NIV.

To be more specific, in Philippians 4:9 it states, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. Moreover, the God of peace will be with you.”³⁶ A disciple’s life should be an example for others to copy and follow.

Roman 10:9-10

Discipleship starts with a person having a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior. Roman 10:9-10 states, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”³⁷

Acts 16:31

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved.”³⁸

John 4:1-42

In John 4:1-42, the woman at the well first recognized Jesus’ Messiahship, then she believed that he was the Messiah and took the Good News to the town and many believed. She joined God’s mission to bring many individuals to eternal life.

Acts 2:42

In Acts 2:42, the believers devoted themselves to the work of the church. They were willing to learn, pray, share, etc. The healthy church can mostly be comprehended in Acts 2:42 in the early church. The believers devoted themselves to the teaching of the word of God, to

³⁶ Philippians 4:9, NIV.

³⁷ Roman 10:9-10, NIV.

³⁸ Acts 16:31, NIV.

fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread together. These were the signs of living in one accord among the believers. It helped them to meet God's opportunities of sharing God's word as they performed many signs and miracles. But, also, it enabled them to grow spiritually.

Acts 10:1-14 and Matthew 28:18-19

The true meaning of healthy church can result when there is a true conviction from the convincing heart that causes that person to be converted truthfully. It is the church that has Christlikeness, just like that of the early church which followed Christ by obeying him. This obedience is based on the knowledge of who Christ is in his power and authority. Obedience is based on submission, belief, and conviction. It is the church that Jesus places into our hands.

Matthew 28:18-19

“Go and make disciples of the world.”³⁹ The healthy church is the presence of Jesus among his people called out from the world to carry his mission out to the world.

Notwithstanding, the Bible defines the church using the analogy of farming by describing the church with a snapshot of a farmer, not by defining his farm work, but rather by emphasizing what farm work requires through a description of how the work on the farm is done. Another scenario is when an older brother is teaching his younger brother how to ride a bicycle; by saying, “Put your foot on the pedal, look forward, and go.” The Bible treats the church as “the body, the folk, the family, the field of wheat, or a temple.”

Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-14

³⁹ Matthew 28:18-19, NIV.

Missional discipleship is obedience to the will and the word of God. To be in Christ is to depend on the power of Christ Jesus. In Acts 1:4-8 and 2:1-14, Jesus told the disciples to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would empower them. Indeed, they waited and received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Luke 6:40

One of the most powerful arts of missional discipleship is how one executes the Great Commission, going out to make disciples for Christ by going back to God's biblical design for the Church. Its mission is to transform the lost souls into a radiance of Christ to those around them in order to have people experience God's love. It has to do with embracing the biblical foundation of discipleship, which is disciples allowing themselves to reflect Christ. Additionally, the strength of discipleship is the willingness to learn the word of God. "Jesus said that when a disciple is fully taught, he desires to be like his teacher" Luke 6:40.⁴⁰ Finally, spiritual growth is the strength of the missional discipleship.

Matthew 28:18-20; II Cor. 5:17

The role of discipleship in church ministry is to follow the biblical model of God's original plan desires to win the lost souls of humanity. The role of discipleship in the local church is to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus. Moreover, it is to produce Christ-like believers in the church ministry in order to transform lives into the life of Christ Jesus. II Corinthians 5:17 states, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old

⁴⁰ Luke 6:40, NIV.

has gone, the new is here.”⁴¹ The role of discipleship in church ministry is to transform the lives of the unsaved and to disciple the saved ones as well. Additionally, discipleship’s role is to multiply disciples that will resemble Christ in order to bear more fruit for the kingdom.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions will be used:

“Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts,” is any church in Worcester, Massachusetts where most of the members are Liberians, with a senior pastor or General Overseer of Liberian descent. They are of African descent from West Africa or immigrants, some of whom are refugees.

“Church:” The word church comes from a Greek word “Ekklesia” which is defined as an assembly or called out ones. Called out from the world and called out for a purpose. That means an assembly of professional believers among whom the unique presence of Jesus Christ dwells. This does not refer to a building but rather to people who are the body of the believers in Christ Jesus. John 8:12 shows that the church is under the discipline of the word of God and Acts 6:4 teaches that the Church is organized to carry out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Attendee:” An attendee is the member or non-member who regularly attends church in the Liberian churches in Worcester Massachusetts.

“Bible class:” A Bible class is any class at the church such as one conducted on Sunday, a new member’s class, children’s church, or a youth study group whose goal is to communicate Biblical knowledge and adherence to the Word of God.

⁴¹ II Corinthians 5:17, NIV.

“Bible study:” A Bible study is any formal on-going Bible discussion or Bible instruction conducted by the pastor or designee to include Wednesday or Friday nights, adult and teens, or adult women and men. Bible studies in Worcester have the goal of gaining biblical knowledge to transform individual lives.

“Disciples:” The word disciple means “student” or “learner.” It means learning from and following a teacher, namely Jesus. It is converting, bringing, strengthening and sending out into the world in order to win the lost souls to Christ. It is the way of life for the believers. It is the relationship with Christ Jesus in order to transform others who will be like Christ.

“Discipleship:” “Discipleship means fully participating with God in what God is doing in the world. God cares about saving individual souls for eternity. Discipleship occurs when a transformed person radiates Christ to those around him or her. It happens when people experience God’s love deeply so that they can do nothing other than affect those around them.”⁴²

“Evaluate:” To carefully consider something, to see how useful or valuable it is. To judged or calculate the quality, importance, amount or value of something.

“Effectiveness:” successful in producing a desired or intended result.

“Missional:” Missional means participating with God in what He is doing in the world. God cares about saving individual souls for eternity.

“Transformation:” From the Bible’s point of view, it means to change from bad to good; or a renewal from a life that conforms to the ways of the world to one that pleases God.

⁴² Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship, You Can’t Have One Without the Other* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 49.

“The Irresistible Community” is about changing the lives of people in a community and it is about helping to change the way people think.

“Human formation:” Human formation is concerned with self-awareness, self-discipline, attitudes, and physical well-being. It addresses relationships, friendship and respect, and collaboration with all persons. It cultivates decision-making characterized by one’s own leadership ability. It leads to maturity, good leadership, and as Christian, a true love for Christ’s Kingdom work on earth. It took the entire Godhead to form the universe.

“Spiritual Formation:” Spiritual formation of the disciples is aimed at developing the individual disciple, helping he or she to have a deep relationship with Christ through prayer and the reading of the Word of God. It also fosters for the disciple a desire to have a true love for the Church. It is a thorough or dramatic conversion, or change, of an individual.

“Teaching:” Transformation, or disciple-making, is a teaching process that can be used to transform the life of the one that has been disciplined. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:16-20 to teach the new converts all things.

“Application:” The act of putting information to a special use or purpose; the quality of being usable for a particular purpose or in a special way.

“Evangelism” is an English word that comes from the Greek word “Eusggelion,” which means, Gospel or Good News. It is the announcement, proclamation, or preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Summary

Making disciples of all the nations is the soul desire of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:17 and Joel 2:28, God promises to pour out his spirit on the flesh in the last day. He continues to remind mankind of his promise and power that the spirit will give.

Acts 1:8 states, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit upon comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”⁴³ God fulfilled the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-3. The discipleship goal is to bring mankind back to the original biblical design of God’s plan intended. Discipleship is the key to the growth of any ministry both spiritual and physical.

God’s primary purpose was for Jesus to leave his glory and to come into the world to change lives. Many scriptural passages support that mission and purpose of Christ’s discipleship plan. However, it is essential for this project to quote the Scripture mentioned in this paper in order to be relevant.

There is a co-reactive balance between traditional churches or religious styles of ministering and making disciples for the Kingdom of God. The same equilibrium is found chemically and in mathematics. One can make the argument that the Bible has many answers to address the many questions of mankind. Likewise, the purpose of the project is to address the ancient as well as the current questions about discipleship for discipleship to be effective. As the project progresses, many of the old questions will be addressed accordingly. This requires learning and the teaching of others in the process.

⁴³ Acts 1:8, NIV.

Chapter 2

New Testament Foundations for Discipleship

Introduction

Chapter two provides the definition of evaluation, discipleship, and effectiveness using the biblical theoretical basis to broaden the reader's understanding of the subject matter and of the people of Liberia that have migrated in Worcester, Massachusetts. This chapter is intended to define the word "discipleship" in more detail, a word that is not found anywhere in the Holy Bible, but it is frequently used by Christians everywhere in the world.

This chapter intends to enlighten the reader's mind on how the New Testament deals with the issue of discipleship and how the churches of this day can deal with it as well. It will attempt to answer the questions as to whether there have been any changes or improvements since the beginnings of Christian discipleship activities back in the time of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The definition of disciples, the church, and its purposes will be revealed in this chapter. This chapter will elaborate on the human relationship and connection between God and mankind.

The New Testament Foundation of Discipleship

It is believed that the New Testament church is the foundation of discipleship. The formation of the New Testament church started from the moment Jesus began to call his disciples. In the gospel books of Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 9:9-13, and John 1:43-48, he invited the disciples to come and follow him. God's design for the church is to work out the promises of Jesus, which are: salvation in John 3:16; safety in John 10:27; the coming of the Holy Spirit in John 17; and the return of Jesus in John 14:1-3. From that moment until the coming of the Holy Spirit, this was all demonstrated in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

The beginning times of developing Christian disciples can be considered to be in Acts 2:42 where the believers and the Apostles spent time in the word of God together. But one can still go back to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came and empowered the Apostles to carry out the Great Commission that endorsed their ministry of discipleship for the new church or the new converts. Acts 2:42-46 become very significant, as they grew the new believers through the method of a discipleship ministry.

The word “disciple” means “student” or “learner.” It means learning from and following the teacher Jesus. It is converting, bringing, strengthening and sending out into the world to win lost souls to Christ. It is the way of life of the believers. It is the relationship with Christ Jesus to transform others who will be like Christ.

People look at the church as a building where people go and worship the Lord. The word church comes from a Greek word “ekklesia” which is defined as an assembly or called out ones. Called out from the world and called out for a purpose. “Church” means an assembly of professional believers among whom the unique presence of Jesus Christ dwells. This does not refer to a building but rather to the people who are the body of the believers in Christ Jesus (John 8:12). The church is under the discipline of the word of God (Acts 6:4). The Church is organized to carry out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthews 28:19-20).

A New Testament church is a body of believers, baptized upon their profession of faith in Jesus Christ, who have joined together voluntarily in the Holy Spirit for the purpose of promoting Christ’s redemptive purposes for humanity. From this definition it can be seen that the function of the church is to promote the redemptive purpose of Christ to all man. The Church is the agency through which to carry out God’s great plan for a lost world. The missionary purpose of the church rests firmly on the foundation of the missionary nature of

God. It is meant to communicate the Good News of salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit so that people have a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to help them to become responsible members of the body of Christ.

In Romans 16:5, the Apostle Paul said to greet the church that is in their house. The church is the body of Christ, which is made up of all believers in Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost to the return of Jesus Christ.

The foundation of the church is Jesus Christ. This is how he explained the revelation of the confession of Peter to his disciples in Caesarea Philippi when he asked them who people said that the Son of Man was in Matthew 16:13-19. He told Peter that he is the Authority, and with his authority he told Peter that he would be part of this plan. Jesus stated in Matthew 28:19a, “All authority is given to me in heaven and earth.”⁴⁴

The first thing that united the believers was the message of love: The believers came together as one family, who shared each other’s hurts as their own. They shared whatever possessions they had in common.

They were not distant, but rather were loving and supporting each other by showing unconditional love exactly as God had shown to mankind, according to Romans 5:8, or as seen in the Good Samaritan story. The Samaritan went close to the dying man by the wayside and took him to an inn keeper who accepted the responsibility to continue helping the dying man, how much he would spend, no one knew. It is believed that is a perfect example of selfless discipleship.

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:19, NIV.

The discipleship in the church is comprised of a group of people that were ready to send the message of God out to the world. They were the fulfillment of God's mission. The church does not have a mission, but the mission has a church. The church came out of God's mission that is bringing mankind back to the biblical foundation. The Biblical foundation is that mankind is finding their way back to the kingdom of God.

A discipleship program is focusing on the new and old converts, as it was in the New Testament church. They were not focusing on themselves, but rather on how to deliver God's message and to save sinners without breaking the spirit of an individual who is struggling in his or her personal life. They were helping one another; praying for each other. They were fighting the kingdom of darkness together. They were united and not divided among themselves; they were not giving the devil any room to destroy them.

They gathered to focus on the body of Jesus, sharing the Holy Communion along with the believers and waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower them. They were praying for one another. It was about learning how to interpret the Bible, which is the word of God.

The discipleship in the New Testament church was about answering these questions: What is your purpose and mission in life? Why do you come to church? Is it to help pray for others when you hear their misfortune or to spread the rumor of what you don't see? When you come to church, what is it that you are looking for? What do you want to accomplish? After fellowshiping with each other, believers spent time in word of God.

They were equipped with the word of God. They came together to learn from their leaders. They were eager enough to learn the word of God, and to share with others. They grasped the full understanding of God's word, and they were focused on God's Kingdom works that would strengthen the discipleship ministry in the New Testament church (Acts 2:42-47).

Discipleship is not just coming to church and then just living life in the same old ways. One learns to confess, repent of sins, to forgive others and work hard to build a good relationship between you and God. The word of God will change the life first. The new believer will begin to love to help people every day and to do the right thing. He or she will help people in their situations. Some believers are not reading the word of God, therefore they are not changing, instead they continue to do those things that they think is the right thing to do (John 8:31-37).

A church should be a place where people will walk in and feel love, feel forgiven, and experience kindness from others. If one is a true believer in Christ Jesus, he or she should demonstrate the love of God toward others. That is the effective way to disciple others.

Love is an action; it is not what one feels, or says, but what one does. Love is God's provision for man's rebellious acts. Love originates from God, because God is love. Love comes with an action like been able to forgive someone and work with them no matter what (Rom. 5:8, John 8:31-37). It is not like a preacher in a church asking his congregational members saying, "Let's see the hands of those that are not guilty of any sin at all." Once a person raises his or her hand, the preacher goes on to say that he or she is a loving person since he or she is no longer guilty of any sin.

Definition of Discipleship

The definition of discipleship is focused on four phrases that will simplify the meaning of the word discipleship:

1. Walk with God. This means to do his will completely. In other words, it is to live by his commands in total obedience. Just as the men of both the Old and New Testaments were examples in the book of Genesis where the story of Noah was told of how he walked with God.

“This is the account of Noah and his family, Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.”⁴⁵ Also, “Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”⁴⁶

2. Live in the community. The disciples lived among the people and had good characters and reputations. According to Genesis 6:5-8, God regretted that he had made mankind, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” The people created by God were doing wickedness in the earth and Noah was living among the wicked people faithfully serving God. With the mention of the word “community,” people will often look at believers as living among them. Matthew 5: 14-16 states, “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.”⁴⁷ Disciples must let their lights shine for others see. Christian community is a sharing community, simply sharing a common life in Christ. It moves disciples beyond selfishness and isolation and passes them into fellowship with others (Acts 2:42-47).

3. Disciples are made mainly by multiplying the number of believers by following these steps below: In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

a. Baptizing is about the formation that takes three personalities of the Godhead to form in each individual the manifestation that they have become a true and faithful disciple of Christ Jesus. Formation is an arrangement of a body, or group persons or things in some prescribed manner or for a particular purpose. There are two serious kinds of formations but three will be addressed for the purpose of this study.

⁴⁵ Genesis 6:9, NIV.

⁴⁶ Genesis 5:24, NIV.

⁴⁷ Matthew 5: 14-16, NIV.

b. Human formation: Human formation is concerned with self-awareness, self-discipline, attitudes, and physical wellbeing. It addresses relationships, friendship and respect, and collaboration with all persons. It cultivates decision-making characterized by one's own leadership ability. It leads to maturity, good leadership and as Christian a true love for Christ's Kingdom work on earth. It took the entire Godhead to form the universe, as stated in Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters."⁴⁸ In Genesis 1:3-26, he (God) spoke his word and everything came into being. According to John 1:1-4, the Word that was in the beginning with God created all things. In the disciple formation process, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are willing and ready to be there with believers (Matthew 28:19).

1. Spiritual Formation: Spiritual formation of the disciples is aimed at developing the individual disciple, helping them to have a deep relationship with Christ through prayer and the reading of the Word of God. It also fosters within the disciple to develop a true love for the church.
2. Teaching: Transformative disciple-making is a teaching process that can be used to transform the life of the one that has been discipled. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:16-20 to teach the new converts all things. Transformation is a thorough or dramatic conversion or change of an individual.

⁴⁸ Genesis 1:1-2, NIV.

According to Dallas Willard in his book *Renovation of the Heart*, transforming the mind is the spiritual formation of the thought life, and also the feelings.

Transformation affects the will (heart or spirit) and one's character.

Transformation also affects the body, our social dimension, and the soul.

"The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon."⁴⁹

4. To be an example of Jesus Christ. The word "disciple" means "student" or "learner." It means learning from and following a teacher (Jesus). It is converting, bringing, strengthening and sending disciples out into the world to win lost souls to Christ. It is the way of life for the believers. It is the relationship with Christ Jesus to transform others who will be like Christ. To understand the definition of discipleship in the missional culture, there must be the full understanding of word missional. Missional means participating with God in what God is doing in the world. God cares about saving individual souls for eternity. According to Cole, "Missional churches engage the world as partners with God in his redemptive mission that targets all of human experience, not just church life."⁵⁰ In this respect, an effective discipleship program in any local church must take the advantage to develop missional communities, missional leaders, and missional worship. Because according to Bredfeldt, "A missional church is a church that is shaped by participating in God's mission, which is to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it, and to restore what God has always intended for the world."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 4

⁵⁰ Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 52.

⁵¹ Bredfeldt, *Great Leader*, 107.

Understanding God's Mission

To deeply understand the word missional, which calls back to the design of making disciples that will reflect Jesus; God is directing Christians to spread the love of Jesus. It is participating with God in what God is doing to save the world.

God is fulfilling his original design. God intended original design when he created man in his own image in order to have fellowship with God. God wants to bring mankind to his glory again. Roman 3:23 states, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."⁵² Man lost his relationship with God when he fell.

The definition of missional rests in that God is a missionary God, taking man back to the design of making disciples. Disciples that will reflect Jesus, who will go from one location to another location with a purpose and plan to be accomplished, or to achieve a goal and objective that the sender has for the one sent. Isaiah 6:8: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, here am I send me."⁵³ Missions is sending and proceeds from the plan and purpose of God's original design. Christ calls all of His followers to be co-missionaries and collaborators with him. This includes co-working, co-suffering, co-working, co-suffering and co-witnessing with God and the Holy Spirit.

Disciples are co-workers with God. I Cor. 3:9 states, "For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."⁵⁴ Born-again believers are to partner with God to bring the entire human race back to its original design. Therefore, the gospels need a human voice, as in John 1:23, "John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, I am the voice of one

⁵² Romans 3:23, NIV.

⁵³ Isaiah 6:8, NIV.

⁵⁴ I Corinthians 3:9, NIV.

calling in the wilderness, make straight the way for the Lord.”⁵⁵ John was the voice for God, who spoke to the Jews in order to prepare for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a co-worker with God who implemented God’s mission plan; as evidence of this, when John baptized Jesus, God spoke from heaven that this was his beloved Son in whom he was well-pleased. This was the confirmation of true missional partnership between John and God, just as it is with all people who love the Lord.

Mission is co-suffering with Christ. Colossians 1:24-25 asserts that Jesus told his disciples to expect suffering and oppositions. Mission is co-witnessing with the Holy Spirit. John 14:15-16 and John 15:26-27 show that the Holy Spirit witnesses internally, while the people of God witness externally. In Acts 5:32 it proclaims, “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”⁵⁶

The Purpose of Discipleship

Discipleship is about duplication or multiplication of disciples. Reproducing disciples that will reflect Christ. “Discipleship occurs when a transformed person radiates Christ to those around him or her. It happens when people experience God’s love deeply that they can do nothing other than affect those around them.”⁵⁷ As mentioned in the definition, disciples are the followers, or the reflection of Christ. Discipleship isn’t a program or an event, it is not for a limited time, it is not just for beginners, and it is not just one of the things the church does, it calls for the full-time commitment.

⁵⁵ John 1:23, NIV.

⁵⁶ Acts 5:32, NIV.

⁵⁷ Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 47.

It starts with a person having a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior. Roman 10:9-10, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”⁵⁸

Acts 16:31 states, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”⁵⁹ In John 4:1-42, the woman at the well first recognized Jesus’ Messiahship, then she believed he was the Messiah and took the good news to the town and many believed. She joined God’s mission to bring many individuals to a new eternity.

The role discipleship plays in the church or ministry is to follow the principles of the biblical design of God’s original plan to win the lost souls of mankind. The role of discipleship in the church is to fulfill the Great Commission of Lord Jesus. Moreover, it is to produce Christ-like believers in the church ministry.

Discipleship transforms lives into the life of Christ Jesus “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here.”⁶⁰ The role of discipleship in church ministry is to transform the lives of the unsaved and to disciple the saved ones as well. Producing more disciples that resemble Christ is bearing more fruit for the kingdom of God.

Jesus, the Disciple-Maker

Making disciples was in the plan of Jesus’ mission on earth. His plan was to bring mankind back to God and to eternal life. He needed the disciples to continue his mission on earth, after he left the world. Having that in his plan, he took to the highway and along the

⁵⁸ Romans 10:9-10, NIV.

⁵⁹ Acts 16:31, NIV.

⁶⁰ II Corinthians 5:17, NIV.

beaches to call his disciples. Jesus called Philip and Nathanael in John 1:43-50. John 1:43 states, “The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, ‘Follow me.’”⁶¹ Philip accepted the invitation to follow Jesus, but he also found Nathanael, and brought him to Jesus.

Jesus welcomed Nathanael with open arms by recognizing him as a true Israelite in whom there was no deceit. This is an incredible statement of someone being received into a ministry, “an Israelites in whom there is no deceit.” What would hold Nathanael back from following Jesus after that statement? A disciple-maker must try to see the positive and good in each disciple.

Jesus called Peter and his brother Andrew, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John as he walked by the sea of Galilee to make them his disciples in Matthew 4:18-22. In verse 19, it says: “Come follow me, Jesus said, ‘And I will send you out to fish for people.’”⁶² As Jesus called his disciples, he saw something significant in each of them, he knew their strength, their weakness, their abilities, and what they were capable of doing.

He taught them commitment to him and his mission on earth, because the work of being a disciple is a lifelong responsibility. “Discipleship is commitment to Christ. Because Christ exists, he must be followed. Discipleship is bound to the mediator, and whatever discipleship is rightly spoken of there’s the mediator, Jesus Christ the Son of God is intended. Discipleship without Jesus Christ is choosing one’s own path.”⁶³

⁶¹ John 1:43, NIV.

⁶² Matthew 4:19, NIV.

⁶³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Works, Volume 4 (Verlag, Germany: Christian Kaiser, 2003), 59.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus proclaims, “Therefore go and make disciples of all the 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.”⁶⁴ A disciple-maker must listen to and follow the commands of Jesus Christ. He gives a command to the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations followed by the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Disciples should be developed and equipped by these disciples by baptizing; making sure that they are clean for the kingdom work and by teaching them to obey everything he taught them; they need some formal biblical education or knowledge about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus did not tell the apostles to go to a particular group of people but rather to all nations, which creates a great opportunity for them to figure out how to reach any group of people and make them their audience. The difference between John 1:11 and Matthew 28:19, is that Jesus came to his own people, who rejected him. Whereas he sends his disciples to all the nations, which includes peoples of all races, cultures, ethnicities, the poor, the rich, the small, the great, the religious and the non-religious, the atheist, Jews and Gentiles.

According to Malphurs, in his book *Strategic Disciple Making*, the two kinds of audiences that Jesus reached to make disciples were first, the crowd, and second, his disciples.⁶⁵ The disciple-maker must always observe who is in the crowd who is seeking to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Those looking for a real change of life, and those truthfully following Jesus. The crowd was comprised of all kinds of people: the sick, the healthy, the poor

⁶⁴ Matthew 28:19-20, NIV.

⁶⁵ Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*.

and the wealthy, foreigners and citizens. One thing that stands out about a crowd is that in most cases crowds do not have a leader. Everyone in the crowd are there for their own agenda and people, notwithstanding there is always someone in the crowd that wants to have a relationship with Jesus. That relationship can lead the person to becoming the disciple of Jesus. In Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his house. He was the victim of the crowd because of his height, yet he still worked his way around the crowd to see Jesus. Also, on another occasion, the woman with the issue of blood according to Mark 5:25-34, went through the crowd to touch the garment of Jesus purposely to get healed. Jesus made sure that everyone saw the woman and told her to “go in peace and be free from your suffering.”⁶⁶

Disciple-makers make disciples: Jesus literally walked beside the Sea of Galilee to find Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. He said to them, “Come, follow me,” so that he might train and teach them how to make disciples of many people.

The People One Meets to Disciple

In making disciples for the Lord Jesus and for the kingdom of God, one will have the opportunity to meet all kinds of people from all different lifestyles. Just like the Lord Jesus when he called his disciples unto himself. He found Peter the fisherman, Matthew the tax collector, and he found Phillip, the one who called Nathaniel. He also found Julius Iscariot who betrayed him later. Jesus found the woman at the well who had had five husbands in John 4:1. He found the prostitute woman who put the oil on his feet in Luke 19:1-10. He found Zacchaeus, the tax collector, he stayed at his house and he transformed his life and transformed his money or riches

⁶⁶ Mark 5:34, NIV.

in Luke 19:1-20. Finally, he met with Nicodemus the ruler of the Jews in the night hour and explained to him the plan of God in John 3:1-21.

Therefore, as one desires to fulfill the Great Commission, he or she one will meet a liar, drunkard, murderer, thief, the adulterous, the fornicator, the black man or the white man, and all kinds of people from different countries. The rich, the poor, the children, the youth, the short, the tall, the great or the small, the women, the men, the mothers and the fathers.

According to Dr. Zarwulugbo Liberty, in his book, *Growing Missionaries Biblically: A Fresh Look at Missions in an African Context*, suggests that “the man you meet on the mission field, has a language, village, town, city, country and his culture.”⁶⁷ He was simply suggesting that as you go out to make disciples, the characters and culture of the person you meet must be taken into consideration.

Many Christians, instead of going out into the world to preach the Good News of the gospel, try to change the people they meet. They try to change their languages, their names, their dress code, even try to modify their living conditions. They are trying to shift them physically by destroying their culture totally. The change that is required in making disciples is their spiritual transformation, not mainly the person’s culture. In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”⁶⁸ He did not condemn the profession of Peter but rather gave it a new meaning. Peter would continue to do what he used to do but in a different way.

The Right Age Group for Discipleship

⁶⁷ Zarwulugbo Liberty, *Growing Missionaries Biblically: A Fresh Look at Missions in an African Context* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2012), 103.

⁶⁸ Matthew 4:19, NIV.

Is there any right age group(s) for discipleship? Does the Bible consider every life as important and unique to God? John 3:16 asserts, “For God so love the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish.”⁶⁹ This includes every living soul and all ages. Roman 5:8 proclaims, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”⁷⁰ The word “us” implies every age group; therefore, an individual of any age group can be the disciple who will become a follower of Christ Jesus. There is no right age or wrong age for discipleship. In Acts 12:13-16, when the Apostle Peter miraculously escaped from the prison and came to be where the believers were praying, as he knocked on the door, the servant girl Rhoda went to the door to see who was knocking at the door.

The Cultural Challenge in Discipleship

Overcoming the stronghold of culture in discipleship is a phenomenon in the work of making disciples. Culture has a pulling power that influences a group of people or community in making decisions that will affect an entire generation. It can often times lead many followers against or toward Christ, which either way can increase the faith of a group of people or it can decrease their faith. Culture can also influence the political, social, economic, and educational will of certain groups of people, but it can also depend upon the environment and strength of the culture. Successful discipleship can be achieved by drawing an individual to Christ from the

⁶⁹ John 3:16, NIV.

⁷⁰ Romans 5:8, NIV.

pulling power of his or her cultural influence, but not from the culture itself. An important factor when analyzing discipleship is trying to understand the types of people who have been culturally or traditionally bound.

Discipleship should embrace every culture and tradition from the philosophical point of view. In that respect, the use of technology will play a valuable role. That is why Michael R. Mitchell, in his book *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples*, discussed the side effects of technology. However, he never disqualified the use of technology. He integrated discipleship and leadership by using the term disciple-followers. If technology must be considered in the discipleship ministry, then that raises the interesting point of the importance of effective discipleship. That means effective discipleship programs are needed in the discipleship ministry to help carry on the Great Commission in order to be successful. Mitchell's book is very important to this project because it clarifies the doubt of what makes an effective discipleship program.⁷¹ Malphurs states, "Practically everywhere Jesus went throughout his public ministry he draws large crowds" Matthew 8:1 and his second audience Jesus' disciples, Matthew 5:1-2,11:1."⁷²

Jesus' messages to his audience were very captivating, he knew the code of his audience, and he addressed issues that speak to their need in the time and environment where they lived. If

⁷¹ Michael R. Mitchell, *Leading, Teaching and Making Disciples*.

⁷² Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, 48-49.

they were farmers, he would talk about issues that were related to farming. If they were in need of water, he would incorporate water in his conversation. He spoke the language of his audience at all times. Jesus was the Great Communicator.

Breaking the Culture Gap

There are cultures in every society that have created gaps between countries or continents over which every individual or every disciple-maker should be able to build a unique relationship by studying to understand that culture in order to break the culture gap in order to be able to win its people to Christ Jesus. This is needed because culture has a pulling power that creates a collision among the community of people that must be overcome.

Jesus was born into a family, community, town, city and a country that has its own unique culture, which was the Jewish culture. Their culture was rooted in Judaism; Judaism guides its adherents in both practice and belief, so that it has been called not only a religion, but, an orthopraxy.

They were surrounded by other people and countries of different cultures. In Esther 3:8, when Haman was making his case to King Xerxes to eliminate the Jews, “Then Haman said to King Xerxes, ‘There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people.’” Ethnically, the Jewish people are descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which are the Israelites, that are comprised of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jewish people are identified as belonging to an individual race, which separates them both biologically and genetically from the rest of humanity.

According to a Jewish scholar Harry Ostrer, from his book *Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People*, “Jews made the choice in every generation to maintain their distinctiveness through endogamous marriage patterns, thereby safeguarding and transmitting Jewish customs and culture from ancient times to the present.”⁷³

The Jewish religion or faith is based on the Abrahamic covenant; this covenant is a binding promise that was made by God to Abraham when he accepted the call of God (Gen. 12:1-3). They believe in one God, period. Deuteronomy 6:4 states, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”⁷⁴ It was in this culture that Jesus was born as the savior of the world whose mission was to bring the whole human race back to God. He had to break down the culture barrier in order reach everyone. John 4:1 says that Jesus broke down the cultural and traditional walls between the Jews and the Samaritan. His meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well resulted in the Samaritans believing in the Messiah. His disciples, who were all Jews, slept in the Samaritan village with Jesus for two days. They ate the food and drank the water from the Samaritans while they were in their villages.

After Jesus Christ resurrected and ascended to heaven, God himself sent an angel to a Roman soldier by the name of Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment, to call the Apostle Peter, the Jew to come to his house. At the same time, God was preparing the Apostle Peter to let go of the cultural wall that was between the Gentiles and Jews so that he could disciple a Gentile family (Acts 10:1-34). For the church to have an effective discipleship program, these cultural and traditional walls must be broken down.

⁷³ Harry Ostrer, *Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People* (NY: Oxford University Press USA, 2012), 12.

⁷⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4, NIV.

Discipleship in the Gospels

To disciple is to find a person and help to create in them the right way to live for God, to serve him in humility. Developing a person on the same page as the mentor, so that he or she will learn and commit to God's teaching as they follow the mentor to accomplish the set goal. From the biblical point of view in the Old Testament, the Pharisees had their disciples or followers and in the New Testament Jesus had his disciples.

The term "disciple of Jesus Christ" can be defined in the following ways from various scholar's points of view: "A disciple is a person who cares for the lost. He regularly invites his friends, neighbors, and unsaved family members to church so they can hear about Jesus;" Or, "A disciple is a person who has come to understand what righteousness is and is being sanctified so that he lives differently in the world. He abstains from sin and loves the word of God." Moreover, "A mature disciple is a witness for Christ, in every way, as he or she worships God with his or her resources and energy."⁷⁵

Being a disciple of Jesus is the call to follow him in order to improve one's relationship and spiritual growth with the Lord. "Jesus knew the disciples he called had little spiritual knowledge when he called them."⁷⁶

"A disciple is a person who has decided following Jesus Christ takes precedent over everything else. Or to express it another way, a disciple looks and acts like the one he or she follows. A disciple intentionally chooses Christ and his will over their own."⁷⁷ Christ set an

⁷⁵ Jim Putman, B. Harrington, and R. Coleman, *Disciple Shift: Five Steps that Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 43.

⁷⁶ Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 49.

⁷⁷ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Disciples: Heaven's Representatives on Earth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2017), 21.

example by allowing the will of his Father to prevail over his own will. Mark 14:36 states, “‘Abba, Father,’ Jesus said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’”⁷⁸ Also, in John 12:27-28, Jesus said, “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour! No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father glorify; your name.”⁷⁹ In these two references Jesus was pressed against time and also heading toward a material (cup). He was willing and ready to go through the suffering. He asked the Father to take away the cup and to stop the clock or cancel the hour of appointment. But he allowed the will of the Father to release the cup and keep the hour on the clock for the appointed hour to come to pass.

Jesus’ Disciples: The Call of the Twelve

Jesus called the twelve disciples and disciplined them. They are known as the Apostles. Each disciple has their own individual characteristics. They have their own personality just as a sibling that is born into a family. Some of them were career men. Also, some of them were related, but they had one thing in common, it was their commitment to travel with Jesus wherever he went. They all were not spiritually in chime, and yet they gave up their secular jobs, which were their sources of daily income, that allowed them to earn their daily bread for their family. Jesus took them away from secular or professional careers, without telling them how much he was going to pay them on the new job called “disciple.” As Jesus called his disciples, he

⁷⁸ Mark 14:36, NIV.

⁷⁹ John 12:27-28, NIV.

gave them their job description, but there was nowhere in Scripture saying how much he offered to pay each of them.

The Call of Matthew

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark mention the call of the first disciple—Matthew.

Matthew 9:9: “As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow Me,’ he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.”⁸⁰

In Jesus’ day there were tax collectors like Matthew. These tax collectors were hated and despised because they were usually fellow Jews who worked for Rome. In biblical times, the tax collector was considered by the Jews to be a traitor and very probably a thief. Matthew was such a man, a tax collector by trade. Jesus was on his missionary journey making disciples, and since there is no favoritism with Jesus, whether a sinner or not he was willing to work with that person. Nor was Jesus going around condemning people because of their lifestyles or the types of jobs they were doing.

Therefore, Jesus used these two powerful, unbelievable words, “Follow me.” Matthew did not take any time to analyze these two words, neither did he tell Jesus, “I have to send my letter of resignation to my employer.” Matthew was not afraid of losing his job from the Roman government, nor did he have to consult his family. He didn’t ask Jesus where they were going. On the other hand, Matthew was honored to receive Jesus at his tax collecting booth. Jesus, the Rabbi was someone that everyone was talking about and with whom they wanted to have a

⁸⁰ Matthew 9:9, NIV.

connection. Jesus was changing the life and career of Matthew and he was willing and ready to follow Jesus.

Compare this with Jesus' completely different approach with the religious leaders of his day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He was looking for the good that is within the person and liberating that person of whatever holds him captive by using the power of love to free them. Whereas these religious leaders were using the law as force, effective discipleship requires love and concern about the individual that is met, not by looking at their sins or their ways of life but rather by embracing them just as they are. It is like sowing a positive seed into that individual.

The Call of Peter

The Apostle Peter was a Jewish citizen from the town of Bethsaida. He had a family and his brother's name was Andrew. As for his career, he was a fisherman. His work place was by the ocean. John 1:44 states, "Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida."⁸¹ Matthew 4:18-20 says, "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him."⁸²

The fisherman Peter was at the seaside with his brother; Jesus met him and called he and his brother to follow him. Disciples are called to follow their Teacher or Master. The disciples of Joshua in Joshua 9:8 stated, "'We are your servants,' they said to Joshua. But Joshua asked, 'who are you and where do you come from?'"⁸³ In a general sense, a disciple according to the

⁸¹ John 1:44, NIV.

⁸² Matthew 4:18-20, NIV.

⁸³ Joshua 9:8, NIV.

Scripture, is a committed servant or follower of their master. They are different from the fans of a leader. Fans want to take care of their own necessities in life while they cheer one on, which is contrary to discipleship.

Fans are different from disciples in that they have excuses, whenever they are called to follow. Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave an insight on the attitudes of fan, “Then they went on to another village. As they were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.’ To another he said, ‘follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘let the dead bury their own dead. Others have different excuses’”⁸⁴ Peter was one of the disciples that Jesus spent so much time with discipling.

In a sense, Peter was in and Peter was out. When Peter received his call to follow Jesus, he was in and fully committed. But in the garden where they arrested Jesus, Peter was out by using the sword to cut the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus had to take break from his journey toward the cross to rebuke his disciple Peter and put the man’s ear back. Peter was restored and was in again. Then Peter denied Jesus completely. He was out again, and a moment later when the rooster or cock crowed, he remembered the words of Jesus saying that he would deny him three times, and he repented. The Scripture says that when Jesus resurrected from the grave, he sent a message by the woman to his disciples, and he intentionally said to tell Peter also. This Scripture reference tells us that Peter was once again restored. Finally, Peter told his

⁸⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 60.

fellow disciples the afternoon Jesus rose from the grave, that he was going fishing and the disciples followed him. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him and to feed his sheep.

A disciple is made when someone becomes the child of God through Jesus Christ. And discipleship is growth by a spiritual process for believers in Christ. Peter was a child of God through Christ Jesus. But he was still failing on serious occasions. Jesus applied an effective discipleship method in the case of Peter. Jesus trained, rebuked, encouraged, and reinforced the apostle Peter so he could get back to work.

The Disciples with John the Baptist

The prophet, John the Baptist, was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was the one in the wilderness. According to John 1:6-8, John was sent by God to testify about Jesus that he is the Light of God to the world. Regarding the disciples of John the Baptist, look now at the story of the man himself before elaboration on his disciples. Before the birth of John the Baptist there was prophecy concerning him. The prophet Isaiah spoke about him being the voice. Scripture shows that Jesus and John the Baptist had many things in common. They were cousins, they began their ministries around the same age and they both spoke the truth to their audiences. While one is the Word, Jesus, the other is the voice. The sound of one voices the word that the other authors. Isaiah 40:3 states, “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”⁸⁵ Also Malachi 3:1 states “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are

⁸⁵ Isaiah 40:3, NIV

seeking will come to his temple, the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty.”⁸⁶

In the prophecy, it said that John the Baptist was that voice that was calling the people to repent and prepare themselves for the coming the Lord, that messenger who delivered the message of the master fearlessly. The difference between John the Baptist and the angel Gabriel is that as messengers John the Baptist lived among the people while the angel Gabriel only delivered his message and returned to heaven.

John the Baptist was born to human parents six months before the birth of Jesus Christ. His father Zechariah was a priest who served in Jerusalem’s temple. His mother Elizabeth was the cousin of Mary the mother of Jesus, and they were the daughters of Aaron.

“John the Baptist was born for a purpose; that purpose was to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies, to prepare for the arrival of the long awaited Messiah; to minister in the spirit and power of the revered prophet Elijah and to return God’s people back to him. Through his life he fulfilled that purpose, offering utter and unquestioning obedience to God’s will.”⁸⁷

Therefore, John the Baptist had the legal right to operate longer in the earth. His parents belonged to the priestly division, they were not able to conceive for a long time, while he was doing his duty as a priest, by burning incense in the presence of God, the angel Gabriel brought him this message of good news (Luke 1:5-20). “But the angel said to him: Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you are to call him John.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Malachi 3:1, NIV.

⁸⁷ Wyatt North, *The Life and Prayers of Saint John the Baptist* (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 11.

⁸⁸ Luke 1:13, NIV.

As the forerunner of Jesus, he spent most of his time in the Judea area, between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. His food was a strict diet of locusts and wild honey, and his clothing was camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist. He started his ministry at the age 30, in about 26 A.D., which lasted for three years, then he was imprisoned by Herod Antipas for speaking against his unlawful marriage and was beheaded in about the spring of 29 A.D. before the Passover (Mark 1:6-8, Matt 3:4).

In the Gospel of John, the first disciples were the disciples of John the Baptist, it was two of his disciples that followed Jesus, when John had said to behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, can be identified as one of John the Baptist's disciples.

“The next day John was there with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God.’ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, ‘What do you want?’ They said, ‘Rabbi which means Teacher, where are staying?’ ‘Come,’ he replied, ‘and you will see.’ So, they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.”⁸⁹

The Commitment to the Cost of Discipleship

Every person or individual, or church that has the plan to engage in the discipleship ministry, must first be aware that it requires commitment and it comes with a cost. As an

⁸⁹ John 1:35-40, NIV.

example, all of Jesus' disciples paid the price to follow and were committed to him. For instance, Peter was a fisher of fish and Matthew was a tax collector before they left their careers to become the followers of Jesus.

The selflessness of John the Baptist can be seen in this passage when he said to behold the Lamb and at the same time, he allowed his disciples to follow Jesus. He did not hold them back from following Jesus. That was the testimony of the true servant of God. His mission had already come to an end, notwithstanding he could have told his disciples that his mission was over, and to find something else to do. Instead, he introduced his disciples to the Lamb of God.

Andrew was a committed disciple of John the Baptist, yet willingly followed Jesus and became one of Jesus' disciples. Andrew did not go with Jesus to the mount of transfiguration, neither was he called to join the three disciples (Peter, James, and John) who Jesus personally took with him to the garden to pray. But he never denied Jesus, nor did he doubt him at any time. Being a disciple of John, then later Jesus, for Andrew there was no hidden agenda, unlike Judas Iscariot, who followed Jesus with his own personal agenda.

According to Evans, "Jesus didn't offer these men a special deal. What he was offering them was himself and that was all they needed. He didn't guarantee a roof over their heads. He didn't guarantee them a promotion at work, or even popularity in society. Most of his earthly disciples died for their faith."⁹⁰ They were not doing it because they would be rich, but they were doing it to set the foundation and the goals by which they would fulfill God's Great Commission.

⁹⁰Tony Evans, *Kingdom Disciples*, 77.

John the Baptist was one of the greatest prophets whose mission advanced the work of the kingdom of God. Matthew 11:12 asserts, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it.”⁹¹

Making Disciples of All Nations

There are many nations around the world where the gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached, not that the gospel has not yet been preached to some of these nations but there are new generations of people that have been born into these nations that must be reached with the gospel of Christ, in order to make them the disciples of Christ.

The disciple-makers have a great task before them, no matter where he or she was born. No matter their race, no matter their cultural background, no matter their geographical location, nor their language, social, or economic status. Disciple-makers have been charged with the responsibility to take over the entire earth, wherever human beings breathe their God-given breath. In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus charged the disciples to go into all the world to make disciples of all nations. This is a reminder of what God said to mankind when he first created Adam and Eve. Genesis 1:28 states “God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”⁹² In Genesis 1:28, God the Father commanded mankind to increase in number, to fill the earth; and in Matthew 28:19, Jesus the Son of God commanded the disciples to make disciples of all nations and to increase the number of saved people.

⁹¹ Matthew 11:12, NIV.

⁹² Genesis 1:28, NIV.

Disciple-Makers Must Have a Relationship with Jesus

Disciple-makers need interaction or a personal relationship with Jesus and some kind of training to equip them for the good work. The disciples of Jesus spent three years with him while he was in the world. They travelled with him everywhere he went, almost all of them graduated from his training except one -- Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Master.

The great apostle Paul had an encounter with Jesus on the road of Damascus, which forever changed his life. “As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”⁹³ In Acts 9:5-19, Saul had a conversation with the Lord. He was instructed what to do, then Ananias placed his hands upon Saul and prayed for him and received the Holy Spirit.

There must be a personal encounter with God. One of the ways to have an encounter with God is to study his word. “Now Ezra had determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel.”⁹⁴ According to Darryl Wilson, “Ezra did more than prepare to teach. He prepared himself to know the law and to practice it, which makes every teacher more believable. When life and word agree, trust is developed.”⁹⁵ This means that all disciple-makers must be ready to prepare themselves in the word of God. Preparation is one of the keys to making disciples of all nations.

The Disciple-Maker Must Be an Intercessor

Jesus used prayer as one of the keys to the success of his earthly ministry. After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, he went into the wilderness for 40 days and

⁹³ Acts 9:3-4, NIV.

⁹⁴ Ezra 7:10, NIV.

⁹⁵ Darryl Wilson, *Disciple-Making Encounters* (Abbotsford, WI: Life Sentence Publishing, 2014), 56.

nights fasting and praying before he began his earthly ministry. It was after this that he began to find his disciples. Because of his prayer life, one of his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”⁹⁶ Then he taught them how to pray, exhorting the Father’s name, asking for their daily bread, and the forgiveness of sins.

In addition to that, he encouraged his disciples to pray even at the last moment of his life on earth at the garden of Gethsemane as he was praying before his arrest. Matthew 26:40-41 states, “Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?’ he asked Peter. ‘Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’”⁹⁷ As Christians, there will be challenges as plans are made to make disciples of all the nations, but prayer and supplication will make Christians capable to make more disciples. Because prayer is the main way by which one communicates with God so to tell him one’s plan and purpose for making disciples.

Before Jesus taught his disciples the Lord’s prayer, he taught the Samaritan at the well how to pray, where to pray, and to whom one must pray because prayer is the powerful tool that pulls down strongholds.

During the reign of King Ahab, one of the kings of Israel who caused the nation to abandon the Lord’s commands and to turn their backs on the God of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in order to follow Baal. This action brought a great drought on the entire land. This led to the challenge between the prophets of Baal and Elijah on Mount Carmel. This

⁹⁶ Luke 11:1, NIV.

⁹⁷ Matthew 26:40-41, NIV.

challenge or competition was centered on prayer.

I Kings 18:22-24 says, “Then Elijah said to them, ‘I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, the god who answers by fire - he is God.’ Then all the people said, ‘what you say is good.’”⁹⁸ The people were looking for the true God, and they were misled by their kings but the prophet of God, Elijah’s prayer revealed the greatness of God in that he hears and answers prayer.

I Kings 18:36-37, goes on to say “At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: ‘Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.’”⁹⁹

Prayer should be done at the command of God, and one of its intended purposes in the discipleship ministry is to turn the people’s hearts to God for salvation or rededication. “Our act, when we pray, must not any more than all our other acts, be separated from the continuous act of God himself, in which alone all finite causes operate.”¹⁰⁰

Summary

Chapter two’s intended purpose was to take the reader back to the foundation of the New

⁹⁸ I Kings 18:22-24, NIV.

⁹⁹ I Kings 18:36-37, NIV.

¹⁰⁰ C S. Lewis, *How to Pray: Reflections and Essays*, (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2018), 12.

Testament method of discipleship. Helping the reader to understand the meaning of discipleship, how it worked back then and how it works in this age. The first part of the chapter was the definition and the purpose of discipleship, which facilitates this chapter to give a clear picture of discipleship by talking about Jesus, the disciple-maker, and the proper way of making disciples, by learning from the master.

When addressing the people one meets, this chapter sought to enlighten the minds of the reader that there are cultural and age differences in all the nations where Christians are commanded by Jesus to go and make disciples. In all of this, Christians still need to depend upon the Holy Spirit as it was done in the New Testament, like on the day of Pentecost, on which day the Holy Spirit came officially on all flesh (Acts 2:1-20). The Holy Spirit is the power behind the movement of discipleship. The Holy Spirit can't be stopped by any power on earth.

Chapter 3

Liberian Churches in Worcester

The Purpose and Procedures of the Survey

The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the effectiveness of the discipleship program in the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. It sought to ascertain the thoughts, opinions, and understanding of the discipleship programs for the newcomers in the city of Worcester. This survey was conducted within the seven Liberian churches in Worcester by visiting each of the churches and having the members, ministers and the senior pastor answer the questionnaire.

Data Collection

The data collection was done in person and by meeting the participants at their place of worship. Permission of the head pastors was acquired in order to allow the church members to participate in the exercise, while a few of the respondents participated from their homes.

Participants

The participants involved in the survey were in the age range from 18-65, but those in the age range from age 31-55 had higher percentages of responses. This group participated in discipleship programs more than other demographic groups. Many of the members of these local churches saw the survey as a reminder of their responsibility to make discipleship programs a priority at all costs.

Liberian Churches in Worcester

Introduction

This chapter seeks to evaluate and analyze a prospective discipleship program in the Liberian local churches in Worcester, Massachusetts by comparison to other discipleship programs already in practice. In this chapter, the results of the interview and the survey concerning the evaluation of the prospective discipleship program's effectiveness in the local church will be compared with the existing discipleship programs if there exist in the church being studied and if they wished to be analyzed.

There are many churches in Worcester, Massachusetts, the majority of which are Liberian-run churches. To name seven: 1. Christ Jubilee International Ministries, 2. Life in The Word Ministries, 3. Christ Center of Praise, 4. Great Outreach Ministries, 5. Christ Vision Ministries, 6. Life-Based Ministries, 7. Christ Worship Center. These churches are headed by Liberian-born pastors. Two of the pastors are females and the rest of the five pastors are males.

Data were collected after church services from participants who are members of these churches by using the researcher-developed discipleship survey questionnaires. The relevant findings and statistical data are summarized and presented in this chapter, beginning with a description of the study participants.

A total of 320 surveys from the seven Liberian churches were completed and collected over a five and half (5 ½) week period. The average population of each of these churches is between 100 to 500 adults, youth and children. The surveys exceeded the necessary number of respondents.

Historical Background of Liberian Churches in Worcester

The Churches	The Pastors	Address	Year Started in Worcester
Christ Jubilee International Ministries (CJIM)	Pastor Edith Stevquoah	5 Elmwood Street Worcester, MA 01602	2000 A.D. Started work in Worcester, Massachusetts
Life in The Word Ministries (LITW)	Pastor Emmanuel Zangar	229 Grafton Street Worcester, MA 01604	2002 A.D Started work in Worcester, Massachusetts
Greater Outreach Ministries (GOM)	Pastor Zaza Kollie	221 Chandler Street Worcester, MA 01609	2011 A.D Started work in Worcester, Massachusetts
Christ Center of Praise (CCOP)	Pastor Claudius Cooper	94 Endicott Street Worcester, MA 01610	2007 A.D. Started work in Worcester, Massachusetts
Christ Worship Center (CWC)	Pastor John Abban Durstine	16 Greenwood Street Worcester, MA 01607	2012 A.D. Started in Worcester, Massachusetts
Word-Based Church	Pastor Phanta Kamara Potokys	25 Francis Street Worcester, MA	2010 A.D Started work in Worcester, Massachusetts
Christ Vision Ministries	Pastor Moses M. Makor	88 Webster Street Worcester, MA 01607	2016 A.D Started work in Worcester, Massachusetts

Table 1: Historical Background of the Seven Liberian Churches in Worcester

Historical Background of Liberian Churches in Worcester

In the 1990s as Liberians fled their native country and went into exile in various countries seeking refuge, some of them came to Worcester, Massachusetts, as refugees and asylees, but there was no particular church in the city of Worcester that would provide a Liberian style of worship, as they visited many other churches that were similar in name as in Liberia. There was a big culture difference, which distanced them from many worship centers, and they were

compelled to create an avenue that would allow them to conduct worship services that resembled their culture.

In the year 2000, God answered their prayers. The International Christian Fellowship Ministries, (ICFM) founded in Lowell, Massachusetts, where Rev. Jeremiah Menyongai, served as the senior pastor, sent two of his leaders to start a branch of the church in Worcester, Massachusetts. The church started May 21, 2000 with Pastor Gboto as head pastor and Pastor Edith Stevquoah as assistant pastor. After being established six months, Pastor Gboto and his family moved out of state, leaving Pastor Edithe Stevoquoah in charge as senior Pastor.

After a couple of years, the name of the church, International Christian Fellowship Ministries, was changed to Christ Jubilee International Ministries (CJIM). The ministry struggled in the Worcester area in search of a facility for their worship services. Consider that these immigrants, most of whom were refugees and political asylees, were also struggling to find their way in the community. They not only did not have enough income to fully sustain themselves, but all the while they were sending support to their relatives and friends back and in other refugee camps.

Not too long after, another group of Liberian Christians started a house fellowship in the home of one of the Liberian sisters. This fellowship was led by Pastor Emmanuel Zangar, who was sent to Worcester by the leadership of Trumpet of Faith Ministry, headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island. Without delay, they rented the auditorium of the Boys and Girls Clubs for worship services. A couple of years later they bought a building on Grafton Street, Worcester as their new location of worship. The name of Trumpet Faith International Ministry had been changed to Life in the Word Ministry, with Pastor Emmanuel Zangar still serving as Senior Pastor.

A couple of years later, Pastor Claudius Cooper, the founder of Christ Center of Praise (CCOP), whose headquarters is stationed in Providence, Rhode Island, came to Worcester in 2013 and established a branch of the church. They held services on Tuesdays and Sundays.

As the work expanded and more Liberians were moving into the city of Worcester, Pastor Zaza Kollie, migrated from Liberia with his family in the year 2012 and arrived in the state of Rhode Island. He then immediately moved to Worcester and began a home fellowship. As the fellowship began to grow gradually, in a short time he launched the Greater Outreach International Ministries. Pastor Zaza Kollie and his ministry meet weekly on Chandler Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.

In 2014, a female pastor, Pastor Phanta Kamara Potokys, started the Word-Based Church, located on 25 Francis Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, where they sought to meet the spiritual needs of young people as well old men and women.

To reach the growing Liberian population in Worcester, Pastor John Abban Durstine, the assistant pastor to Pastor Edith Stevquoah of Christ Jubilee International Ministry and some of the members, moved to the eastern side of the city of Worcester to start a new ministry called Christ Worship Center. In 2012, the church began meeting the needs of other Liberians.

A year later, another group of men and women came out of Trumpet of Faith International Ministry, now called Life in the Word Ministry, headed by Rev. Robert Massey. They moved into 88 Webster Square in Worcester, and with the new ministry name of Christ Vision Ministry (CVM). Rev. Massaey became the first senior pastor for about one year and transferred leadership to pastor James Kandaka who was Rev. Massey's assistant. The following year the church elected Minister Moses M. Makor as its new Pastor. He was ordained, and later on installed into office as the church's senior pastor.

The Liberian churches in Worcester always come together whenever there are crises in the community. They reach out to their members to give them the support needed. During the 2014 Ebola epidemic crises in Liberia, West Africa, the pastors and their congregants came together, and held a week of fasting and prayer for the entire region of West Africa, and also raised funds to send to West Africa.

In the year 2015, the researcher persuaded the pastors of the various churches to establish a fellowship of pastors. Currently there is an organization of Liberian pastors that has been established and it is called the Pastoral Network of Worcester (PNW).

The mission of the (PNW) is to network for greater discipleship in furtherance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The vision is to engage in world-wide discipleship that meets both the spiritual and physical needs of its members and those in the communities where they serve.

SWOT Analysis of Liberian Churches

Internal Strengths	External Strengths
Strengths	
Diverse Population	Positive verbal publicity
New Comers easily identify with people from their country and even friend from their ethnic group.	Non- church members come along with their country, man or woman for the sense of belong.
Weaknesses	
Lack of follow-up with first time visitors. Not sensitive to time.	Lack of warm welcome and sensitive to first time visitor in the church.
Lack of committed to mission and vision of the ministry.	Poor management of long-term discipleship program.
Opportunities	
Newcomers between ages of 20-32 become members of the church.	Family and friends are willing to drive newcomers to the church services.
Effective youth program that is designed to train them as future leaders of the church using a discipleship method.	The leadership of the church is willing and ready to listen to the members and help them to solve or meet their needs and wants.
Threats	
Negative influence from someone from the diverse community.	Wild parties or good times among them and their countrymen and women, leading to neglecting the gospel.

Table 2: SWOT Analysis of Liberian Churches

Research Method

Demographics of Participants

Demographic information acquired from the survey included data such as gender, age, educational level, number of years in Worcester, church attendance, church attendance challenges, personal involvement in Bible studies, burden for the Liberian community in Worcester, and interest in discipleship.

Participant's Gender

Gender: In these churches there are more female than adult male and youth participants by two to one (see Figure 1). This ratio of female is 57% to male 43% which is representative of the overall ratio in the churches. Observing the demographic of the Liberian population in Worcester, the Worcester women outnumber the men.

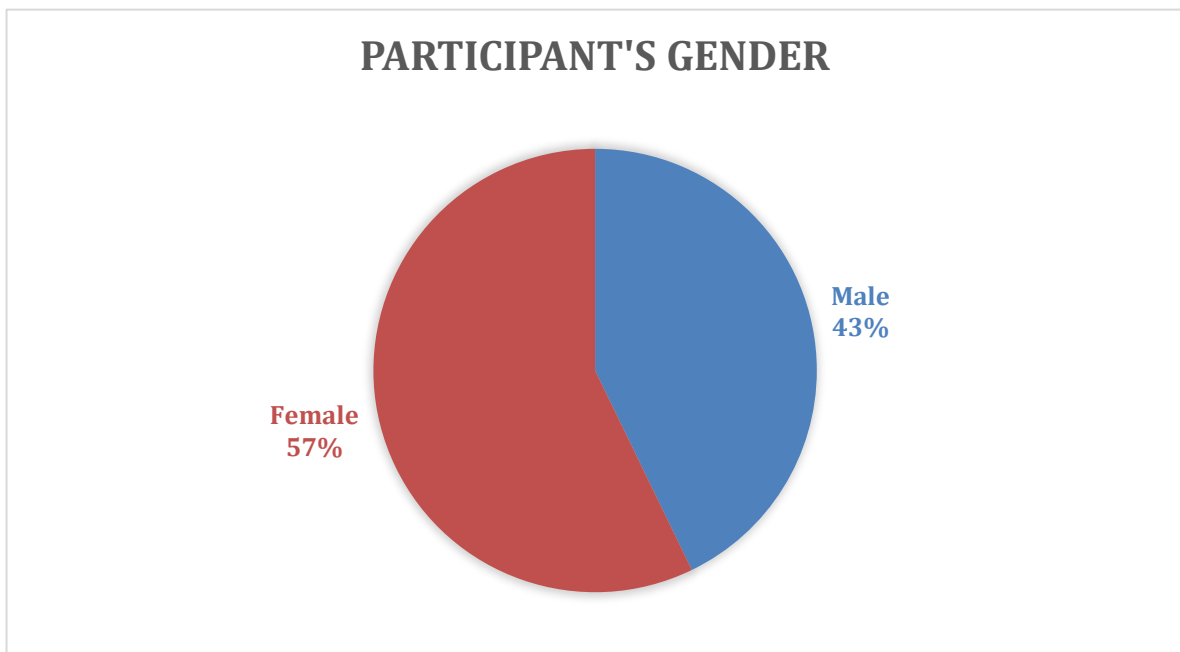


Figure 1: Participant's Gender

Participant's Age

Age Range: In almost every society or community there is a wide range in ages, and so it is with the Liberian community churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. Of the majority of the 320 participants, 6%, of the respondents fell within the gap between youths and teens with 22% of them under 30 years of age, 37% were age 36 or below, and 25% were 46 years and above (See Figure 2).

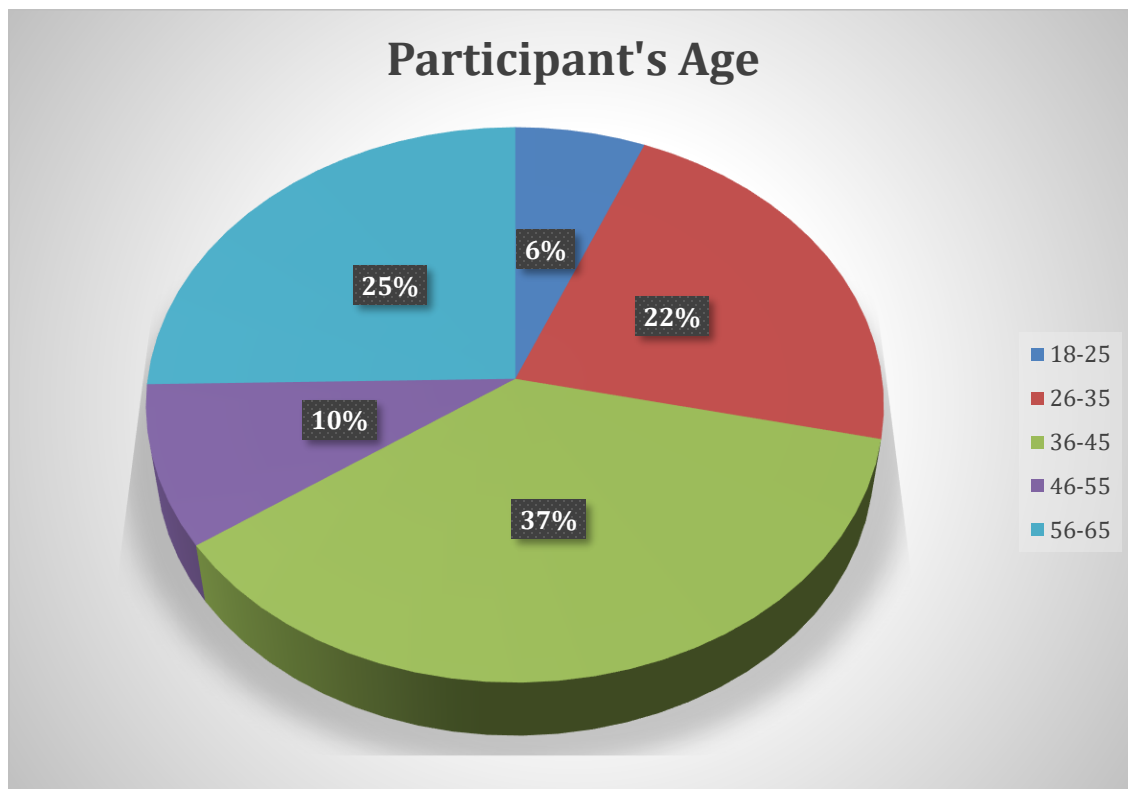


Figure 2: Participant's Age

Participant's Education Level

In the survey process there was no distinction in the level of education, nor was there any preference, regardless of their social or economic level. The participants' education level was

obtained through the survey instrument. 60% of the participants hold a BA, 1% did not give a definite answer, 31% hold high school diplomas, and 8% have master's degrees.

This survey shows that there are a certain number of respondents who don't have a formal education, which is one of the reasons the discipleship ministry must alert the church of the needs of the newcomers in the community.

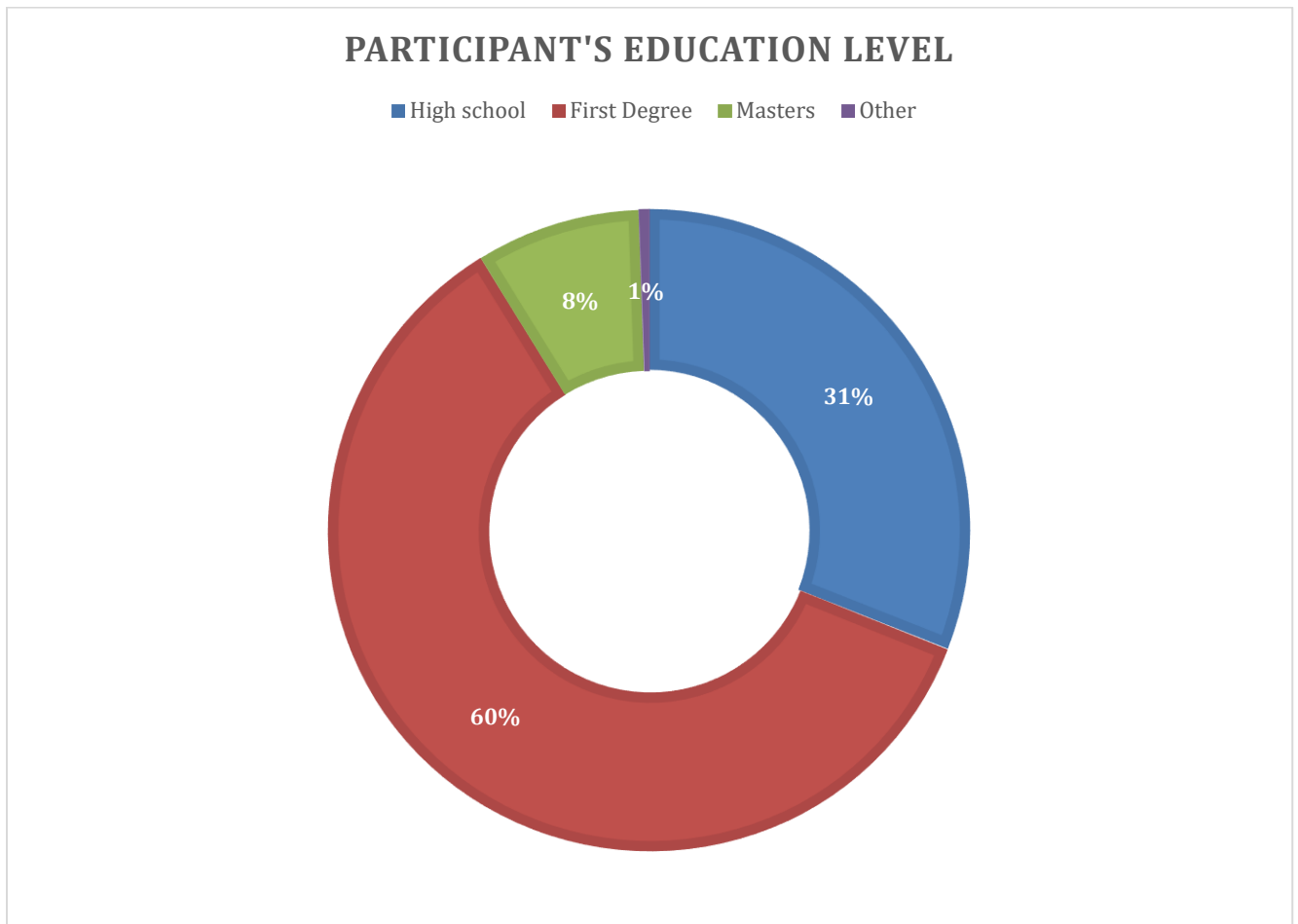


Figure 3: Participant's Education Level

Years Lived in Worcester

Only 1% of the people have lived in Worcester for about 11 years or more and are attending church. In this survey, 72% of the participants have spent 5-10 years in Worcester. In fact, 15% of the respondents were residents for 3-5 years, as for the rest of the 12% of respondents, they have been in the city for less than 2 years.

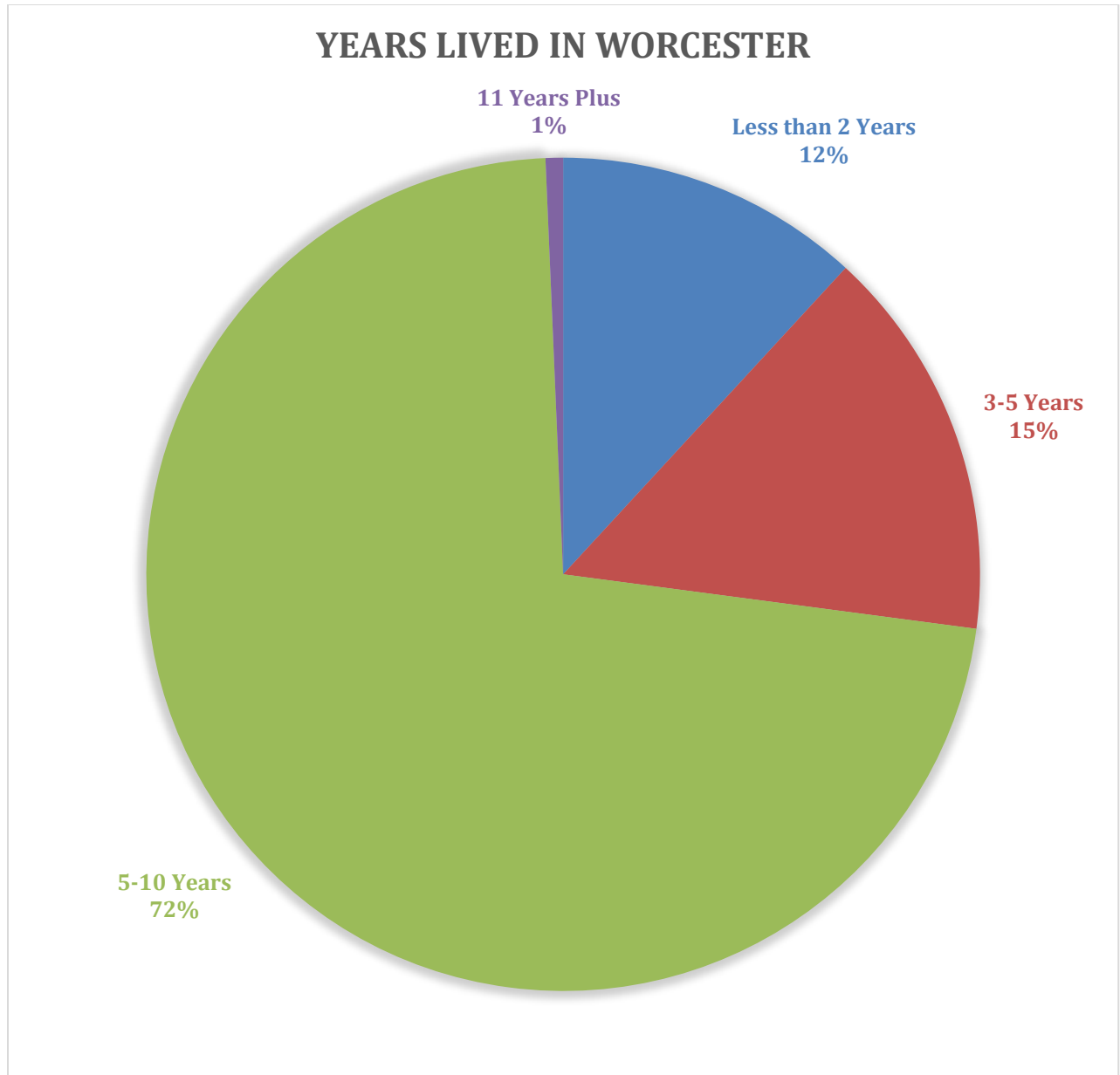


Figure 4: Years Lived in Worcester

Years in Current Local Church in Worcester

Members of current local Liberian churches in Worcester. It is incredible to see the length of time the members of local Liberian churches are committed and very supportive to their churches in Worcester. The respondents to this survey show that 83% of the participants have been with their churches for over 5 years and above, 9% have been with their churches for less than 2-3 years, and 8% of the respondents assert that they have been with their current churches for less 1 year. The reason for the differences in the length of time is that some are newcomers in the community and some of those had lived there longer than the others but had changed fellowships due to reasons best known to themselves.

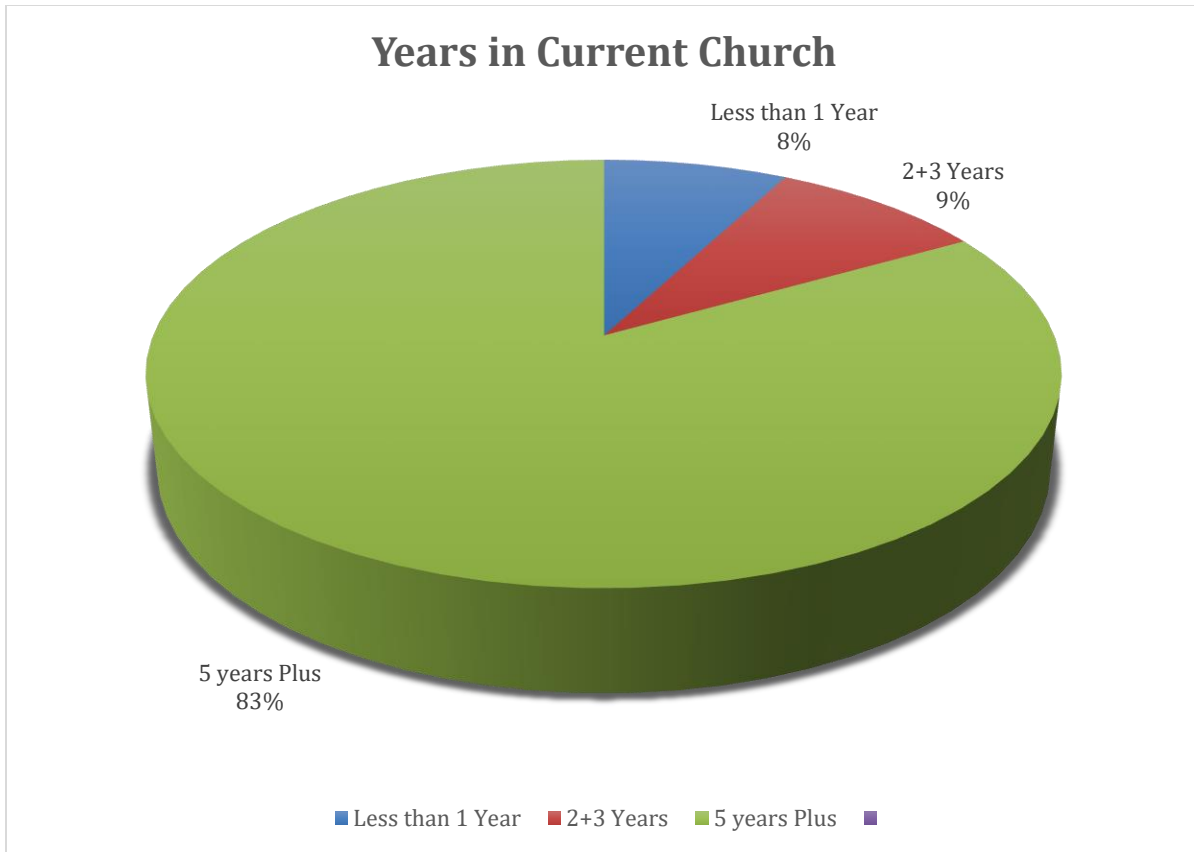


Figure 5: Years in Current Local Church in Worcester

Service or Worship Attendance

Above all, religious or worship services are a way of life among the people within the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. They take time to express their gratitude to the Lord, and share a time of praises, testimonies and dancing. The respondents to this survey demonstrated that 94% participants attend more than once a week in religious or worship services, while 6% respondents attend religious or worship services once a week. Excluding the wedding and funeral services, which could be considered special occasions. Some of these local churches have two or three services a week plus revival and religious holidays.

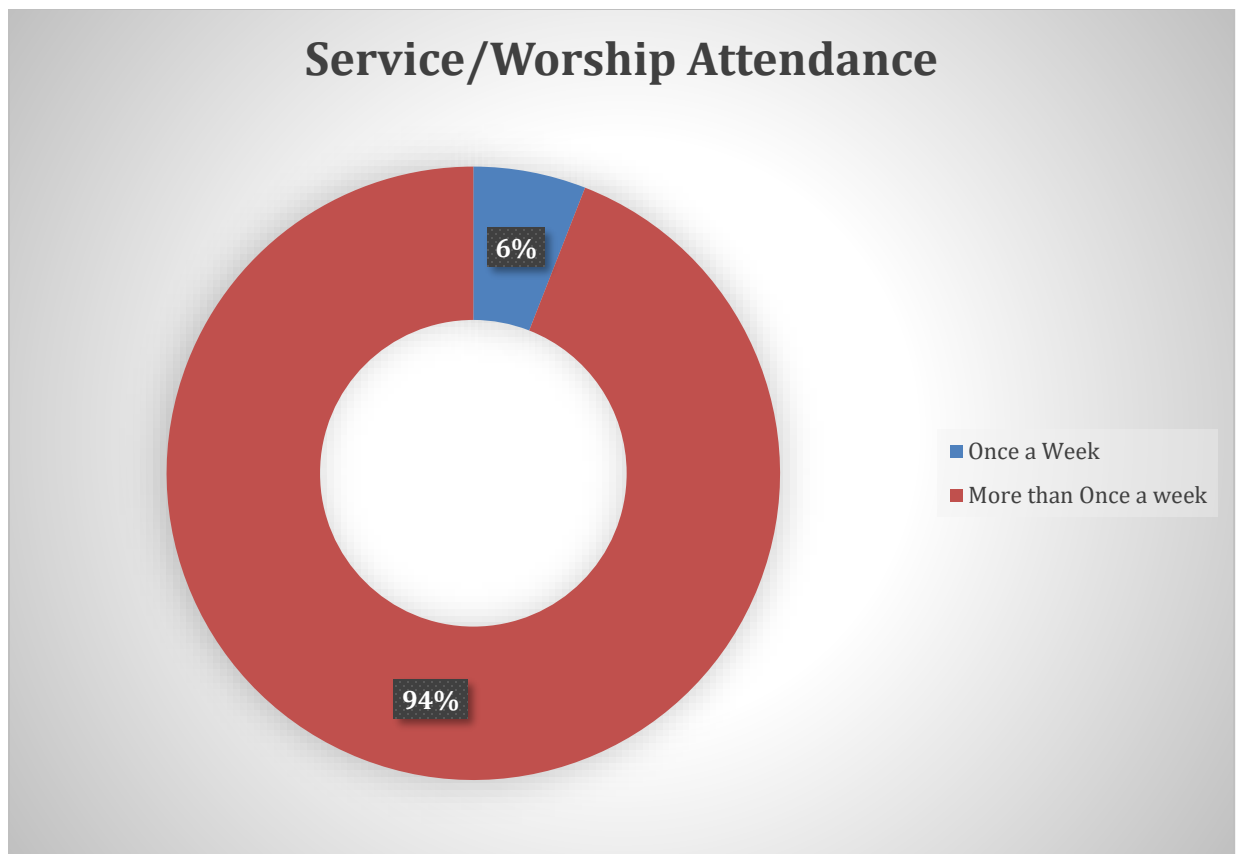


Figure 6: Service or Worship Attendance

Challenges to Church Attendance

As an immigrant arriving newly in the city of Worcester to begin their new life in a place that is completely different from where were living, many have various challenges that they must overcome. The number one challenge is the work schedule, 52% of the respondents see it as conflicting with their time of worship. The majority grew up in a country where working on Sunday was forbidden. 37% of the respondents have difficulty in attending due to a lack of transportation to regular services. Meanwhile, 11% of the people identify their challenge as fatigue, having to work between jobs to support their immediate family and extended family. The

researcher is referring to the Liberian immigrants population in Worcester.

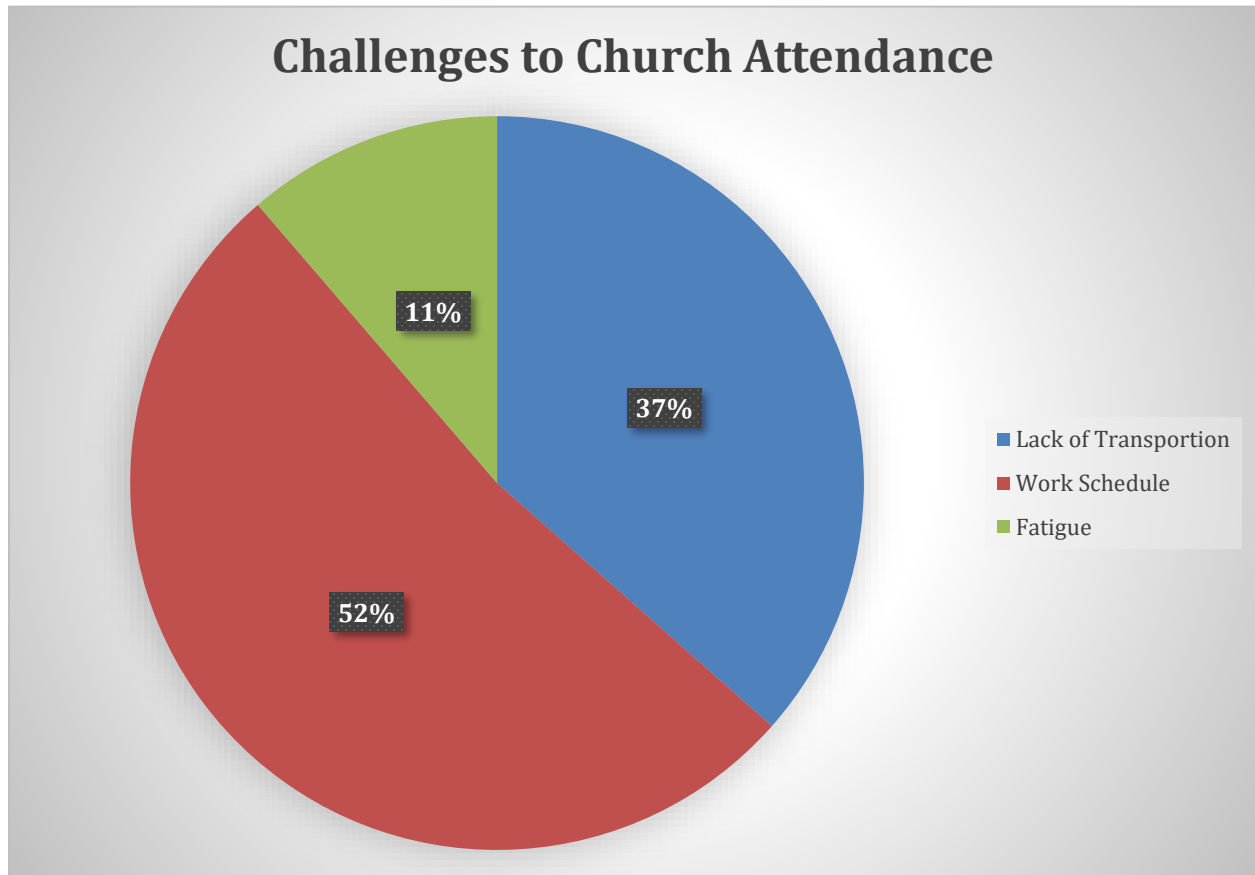


Figure 7: Challenges to Church Attendance

Personal Bible Study

A majority of the respondents in this survey demonstrated that 54% of the respondents engage in personal Bible study one to three times a week for their personal spiritual growth. 23% of the participants study the word of God personally once every week, but 17% of the participants engage in personal Bible study for seven or more times a week, and the remaining 6% engage in bible study between four to six times weekly. This survey shows that the believers in these local churches are hungry and thirsty for the word of the God. It is where discipleship programs are the most needed.

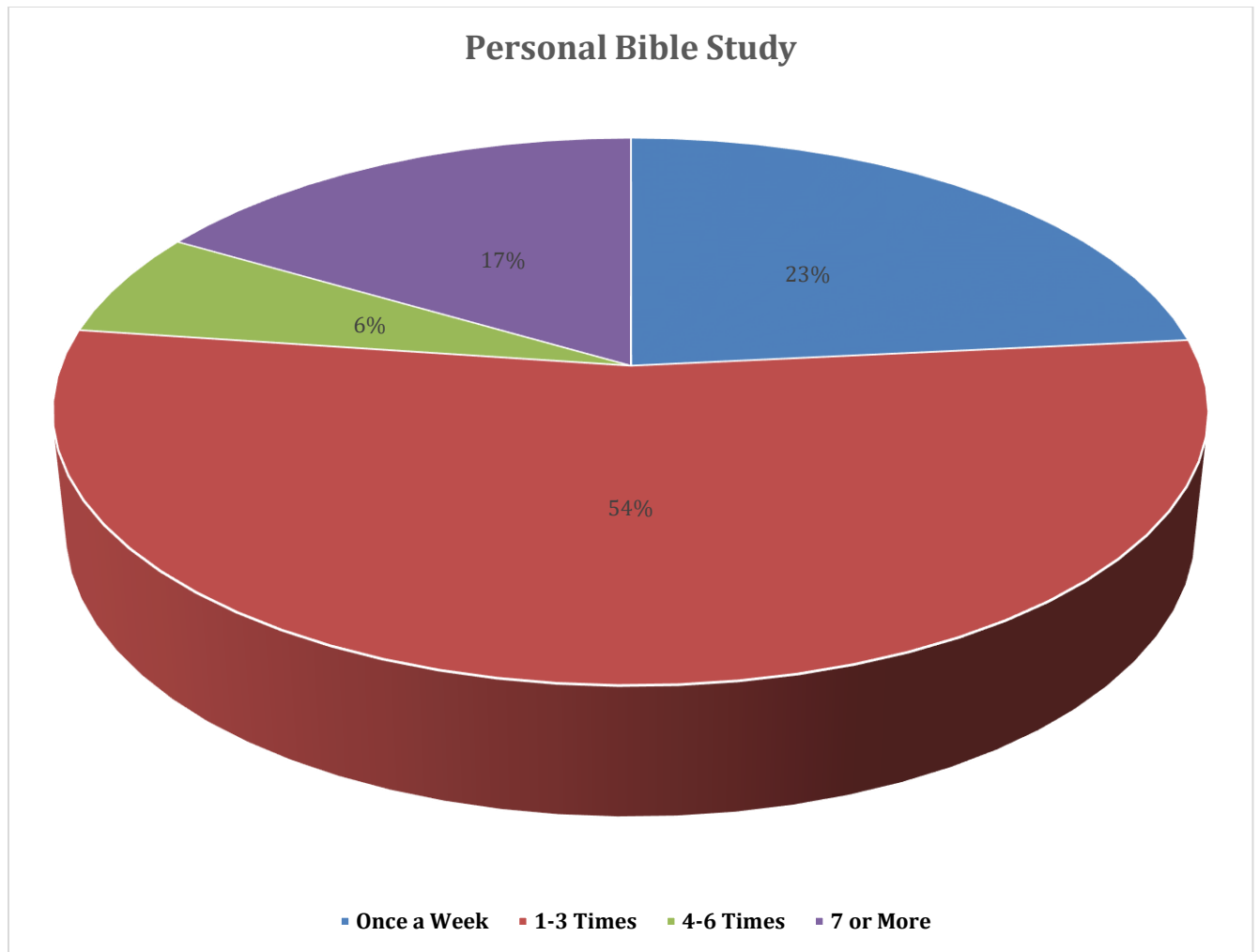


Figure 8: Personal Bible Study

Previous Places Lived

As was expected, most of the respondents are from a country where it is believed that they should not be venturing out of their comfort zone. Thus, 65% of respondents have only lived in Liberia, while 13% of them have lived in refugee camps in neighboring countries such as Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. They have had very difficult life experiences with their children. 3% of the rest of the participants lived in French speaking country where the French culture is predominant. 19% of the respondents however, did not tell

the countries from which they had lived, but one fact that remains is that they are originally from Liberia.

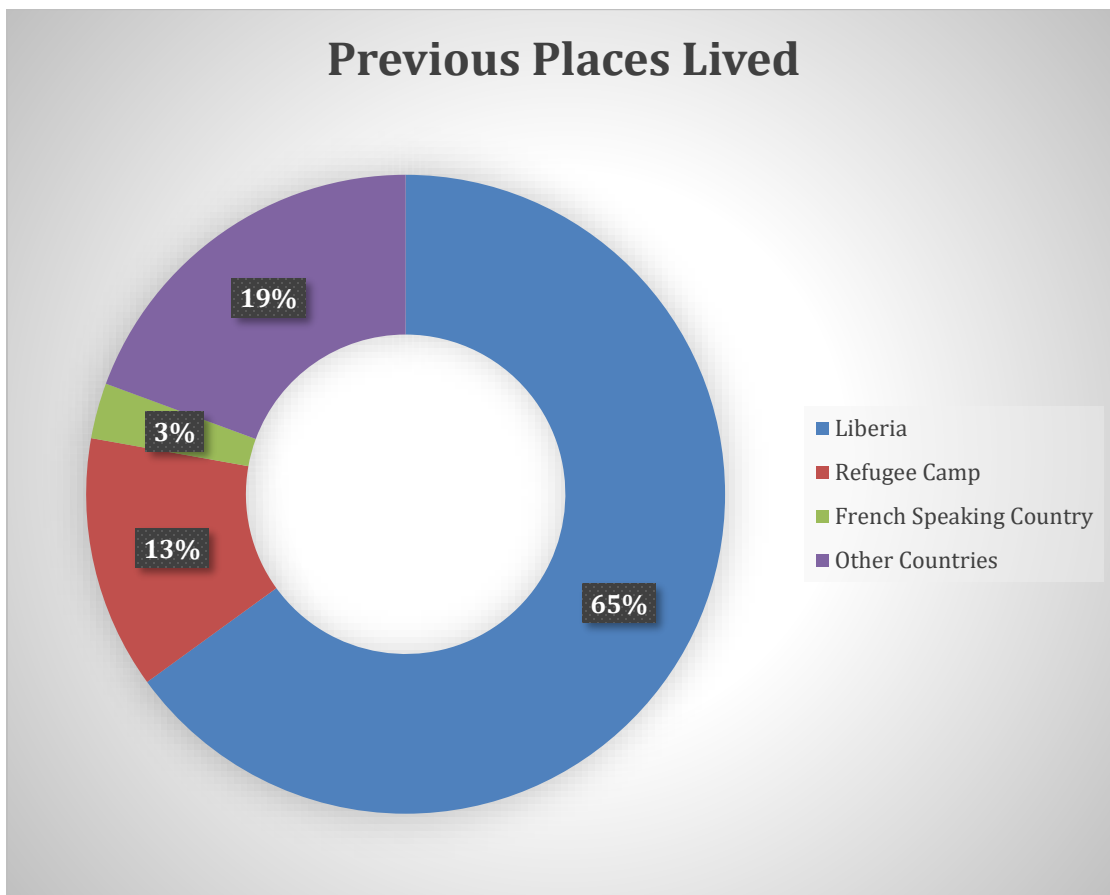


Figure 9: Previous Places Lived

Spiritual Growth Indicator

This survey question examined the spiritual growth of the members of the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. This exposed how greatly discipleship programs need to be practiced so that it reinforces the growth of the local churches. 94% of the respondents indicated that they are growing spiritually since their relocation and involvement with the local Liberian churches in Worcester. 3% of the participants showed no grow and another 3% were not sure of their spiritual growth.

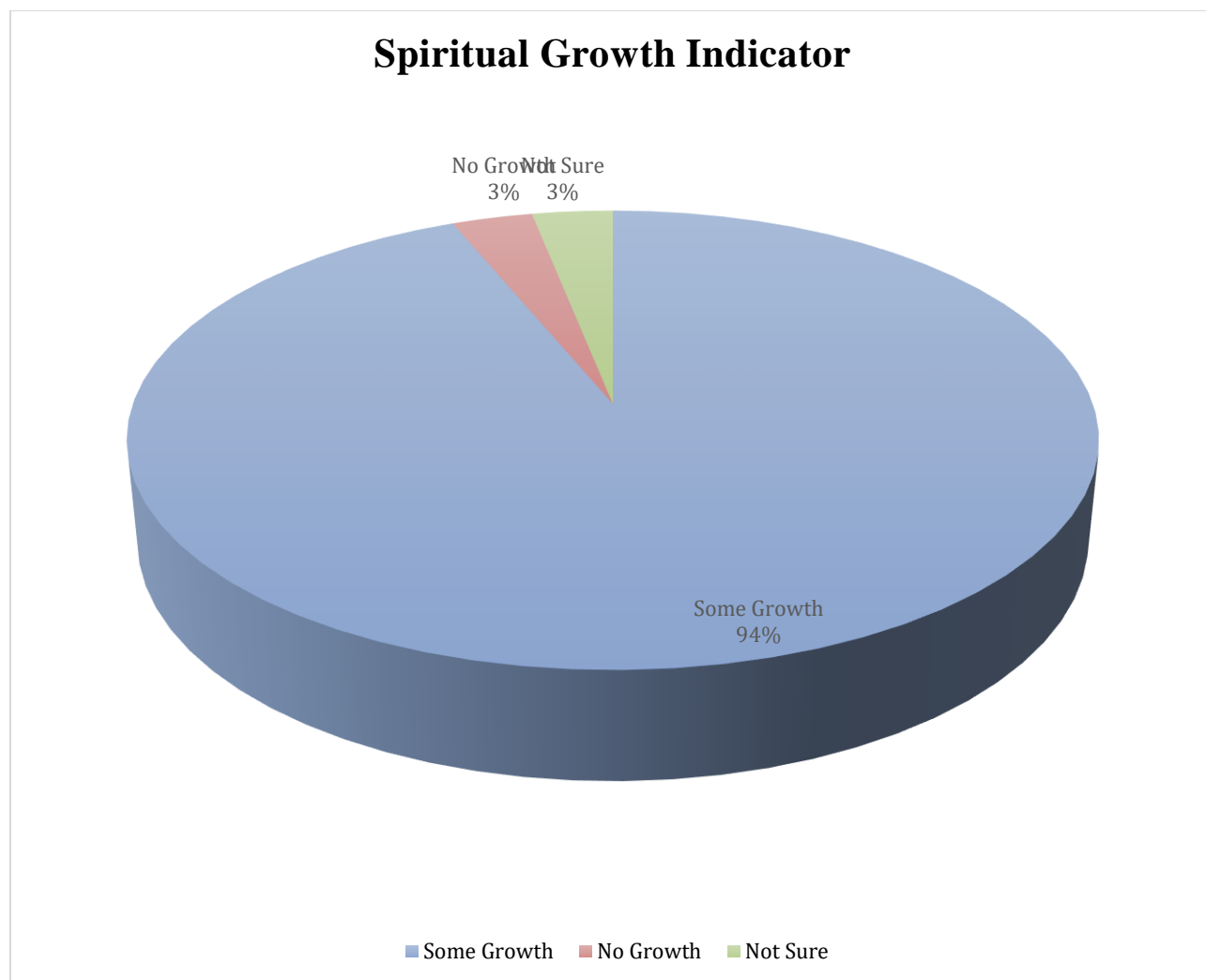


Figure 10: Spiritual Growth Indicator

Previous Leadership Roles

The leadership roles everyone played in their local churches and refugee camps had great influence in his or her walk with God. The research question used to examine this question was carefully pondered by the researcher, in order to understand the work their leaders have done in the past, as well as to understand his or her maturity development in the discipleship program.

16% of the participants have served as elders in their previous churches. 20% served as Sunday school teachers, 6% played the role of lay evangelist, and in music, 22% of the respondents have

participated in the choir or a chorus group, while the rest of the 30% in the survey scope shared no specific leadership experience.

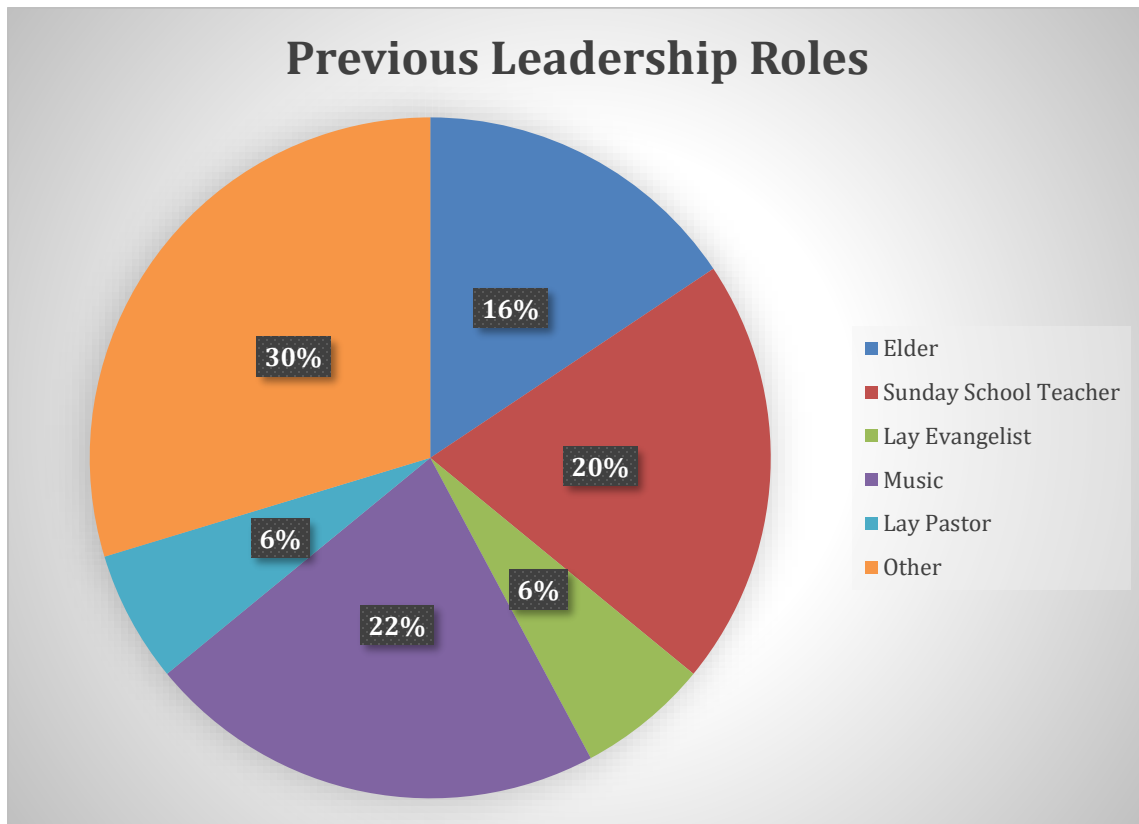


Figure 11: Previous Leadership Roles

Leading a Bible Study

This research question examined the participant's Biblical education. In any discipleship ministry the word of God is the central key for new converts. Many of the respondents, 73% of them, led Bible education either in refugee camps, or in the home, or in Worcester, Massachusetts in their current local churches. 27% had never led any Bible education before coming to Worcester, Massachusetts.

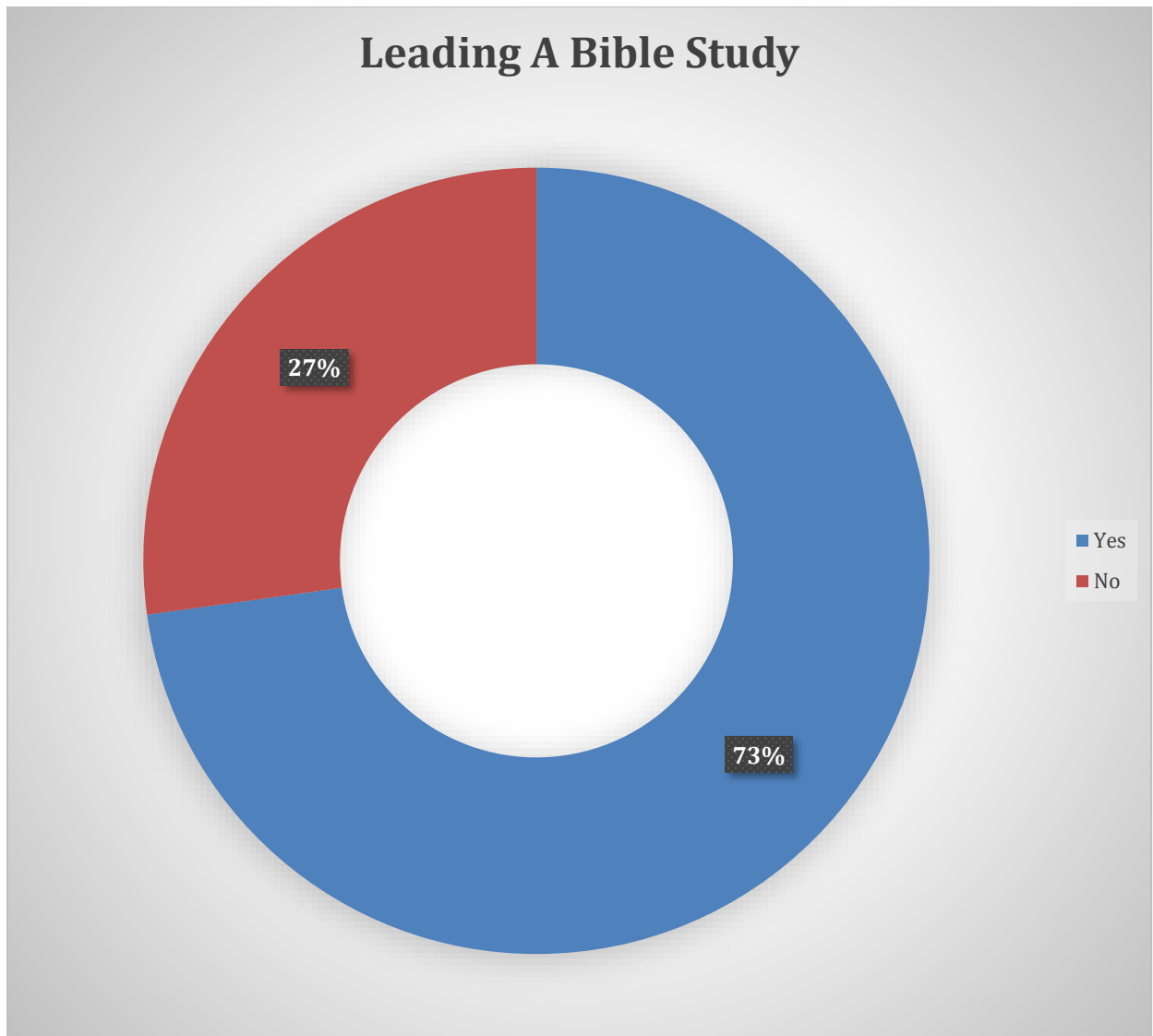


Figure 12: Leading a Bible Study

Presence of a Discipleship Program for New Converts

The researcher used the survey data information to analyze whether each of the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts offer a discipleship program. The answers were very intriguing because of the answers the respondents gave for this survey question. The ratio between yes and no was very close but were very far apart from the response of “not sure.” 22% of the participants responded yes, and while 21% said that their church does not have a

discipleship program, a large percentage of 57% were not sure if they even have a discipleship program within the Liberian local churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. This makes the project of great value since these answers open the door for more research, which could mean that this project could be used to help implement a discipleship program in the various local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts to solidify discipleship in this city.

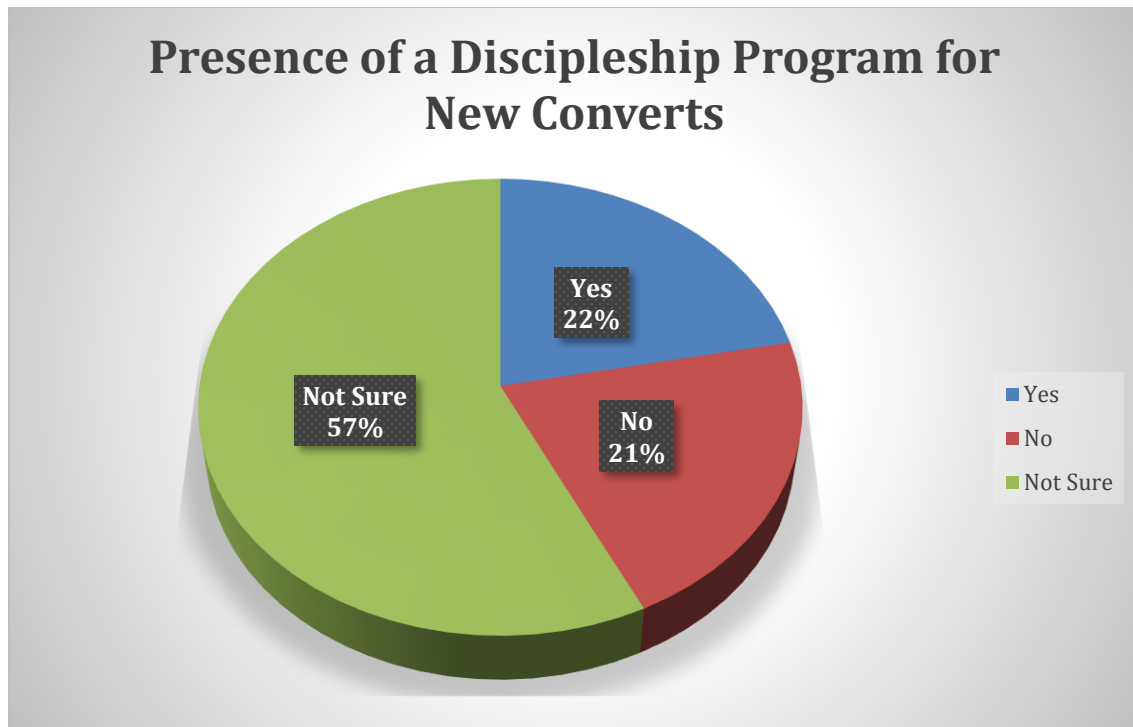


Figure 13: Presence of a Discipleship Program for New Converts

Participant Satisfaction with the Church's Discipleship Program

Figure 15 demonstrates the survey question's essential point of whether the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts have prepared the participants of the programs to deeply emphasize the effect of discipleship ministry. This question determines the direction each church is going in its discipleship program. 59% of the participants said they are satisfied with the church discipleship that they currently have in place. On the other hand, 25% suggest they could

do better with the discipleship program if there was one in their respective church. 16% are not satisfied with the program that is considered a discipleship program in their church.

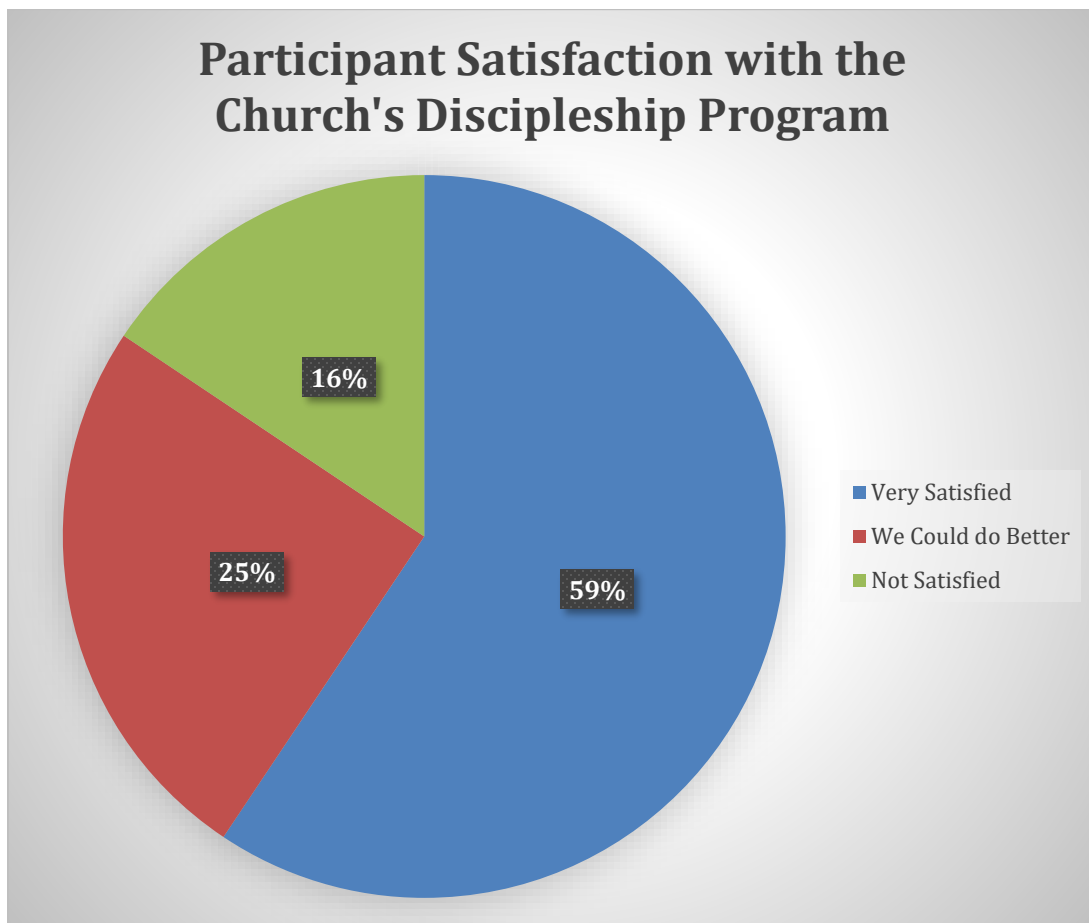


Figure 14: Participant Satisfaction with the Church's Discipleship Program

Interest in Leading a Small Group

This question asked whether an individual is interested in leading a small group of believers in order to help grow others into spiritual maturity. This would be to encourage and to lead them to become committed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this respect, the survey question suggests that for effective discipleship for spiritual growth, there must be someone who is earnestly ready to lead a small group for the purpose of discipleship. The participants that

embraced such a suggestion were 94% and 6% of the respondents answered truthfully in the negative. There are two things that is separate these groups of respondents: first, readiness, and second, truthfulness.

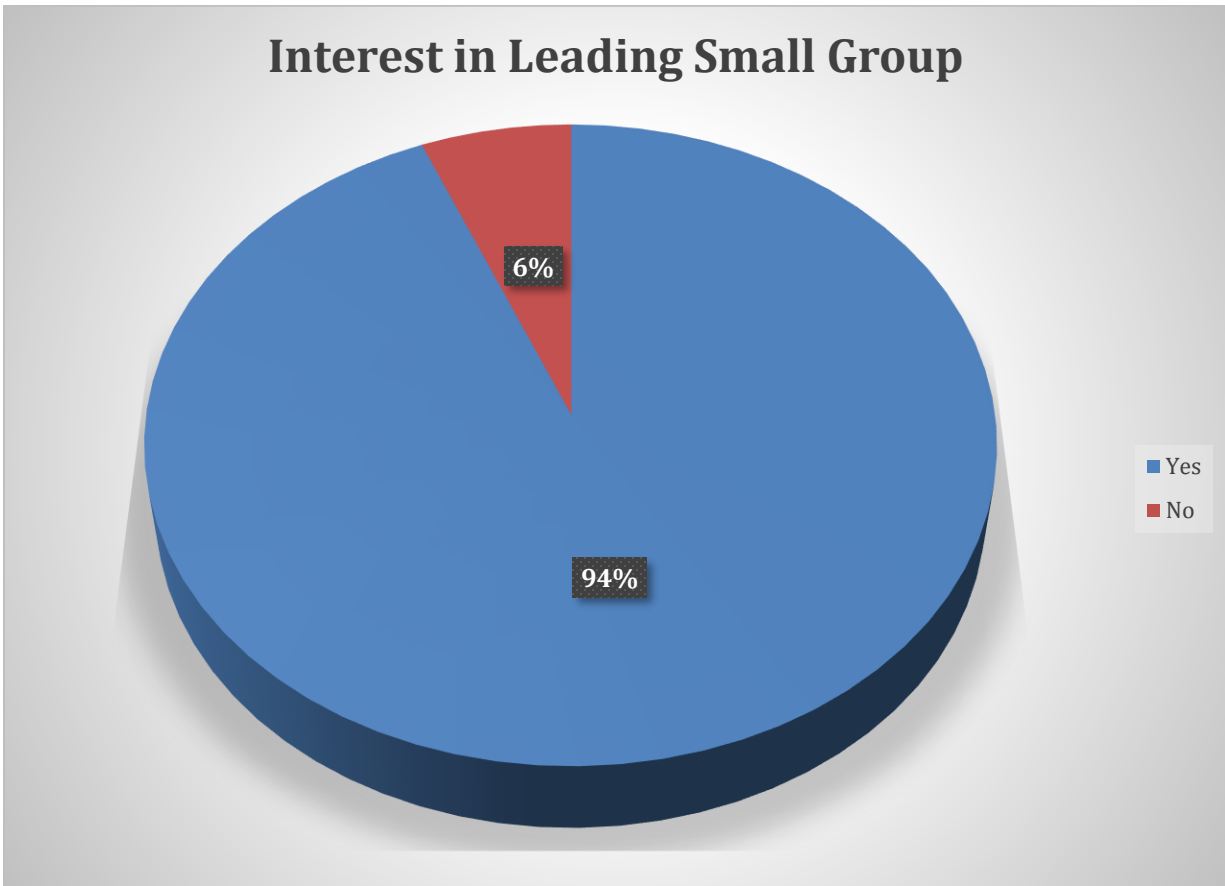


Figure 15: Interest in Leading a Small Group

Main Goal for the Church

Making every effort not to confuse evangelism with the discipleship ministry, these survey questions were carefully constructed for participants to think independently, which affected the results of the entire project. With this clarity of thought, 70% of the respondents said that an effective discipleship program is the goal for their church and 30% of the participants did not think that effective discipleship is the goal for their church.

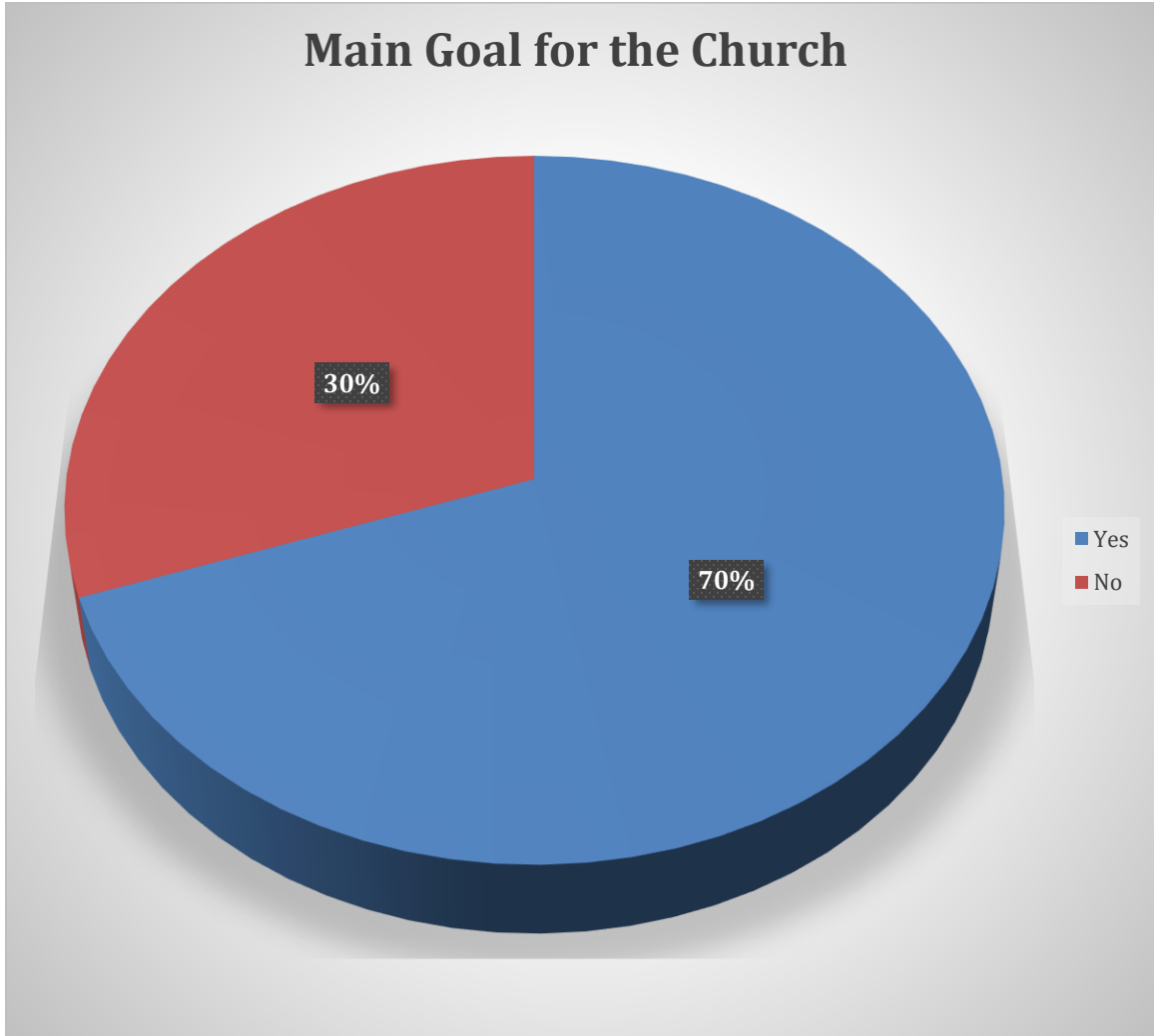


Figure 16: Main Goal for the Church

Research Overview

This is on the learning aspect of the project by going from church to church meeting members and their pastors to gather information. The information from the participants of the survey gives the researcher a very clear and concise understanding of while the churches in their discipleship program. This is characterized by the general attitude of each congregation toward discipleship.

Taking into consideration that more of these immigrants who are refugees, and asylees who have made it from various refugee camps and built certain bond within in their group. Furthermore, they are different ethnic or tribal groups that were once in conflict with each other. 73 % of the people lived in the same community closed to each other while very few lived in the suburb of Worcester city. Everyone is striving each day to live a better life their children practically go to the same school they visit each other churches frequently.

What is make discipleship to be attractive in the Liberian churches, is that African in general are congregational type of people and most of them have been living in these refugees camps where they were settle to a particular part of the community or town in the country where they exiled have had an impact on their movement from one organization to another in general. Through the survey the researcher discovered the participants challenges they face with limited resources to do ministry in a foreign country where everything is different as compare to their country of origin.

Summary

This survey creates an opportunity for understanding the challenges and the opportunities that each of the Liberian churches experience in the city of Worcester. Each of these churches have their own unique way of approaching the discipleship program that, when implemented, will equip and strengthen the churches to do more to bring many to the Lord and will equip them to better service in their areas of their calling.

Chapter 4

Evaluating Discipleship Program Effectiveness of Liberian Churches in Worcester

Introduction

Is there a biblical strategy for an effective discipleship program that will contribute to the growth of the Liberian churches present in Worcester? A clear graph to demonstrate the difference between populations, cultural diversity, churches: inter-denominational and denominational, and academic versus non-academic education will be revealed.

The purpose of chapter four is to use the 12 models that were designed for an effective discipleship program as training material. This material will educate or teach the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts (and the rest of the diaspora), to build effective discipleship programs in their churches. It is an earnest prayer that others who read this material will take the opportunity to build on this study and to help churches to implement an effective discipleship program that will enable them to evaluate discipleship program effectiveness in the Liberian churches in Worcester and the diaspora.

In chapter four, the researcher has designed these models with valuable and educational principles that will help to make discipleship flexible and effective. These models are: 1. The change of environment. 2. Climate or the weather. 3. Understanding and emergence of the new culture 4. Self-identification. 5. The approach to ministry caring. 6. The breakdown of the barriers of languages, denominational beliefs, social and economic divisions, and tribal and ethnic. 7. Discipling the adult. 8. Discipling youth and children. 9. The style of worship. 10. The

support for discipleship ministry (Financial resources). 11. Prayer, the force that drives discipleship. 12. Accomplishing the goals and mission of the disciple-maker. These are to be used as an orientation or environmental awareness for the newcomer or new residents of Worcester or any part of the United States of America. These models will be used to educate the Liberian churches in order to help them to adjust accordingly in their new community.

Current Climate for Discipleship

On several occasions, many people have misinterpreted the concept of these words: evangelism, revivals, and discipleship. Discipleship means an individual or group of people fully participating with God in what God is doing in the world. God cares about saving individual souls for eternity. Discipleship occurs when a transformed person radiates Christ to those around him or her. It happens when people experience God's love deeply so that they can do nothing other than affect those around them.

Revival is initiated by a prompting of the Holy Spirit, creating awareness of something missing or wrong in the believer's life that can only be righted by God. An example is the churches in the book of Revelation 2:1-29; 3:1-22, when the Lord Jesus Christ sent a warning message to each of those churches to correct those things that were wrong in the churches. With this in mind, revival refers to a spiritual reawakening from a state of dormancy or stagnation in the life of the believer. It is meant to motivate believers to show love and appreciation of God's holiness, to create more passion for God's word in the believer's life.

Evangelism is from an English word that comes from the Greek word Eusggelion, which means "gospel" or "good news." It is the announcement, proclamation, or preaching of the

gospel about Jesus Christ. It involves going out to reach the unsaved and helping them to find the path toward their spiritual destination.

Please keep in mind that the researcher is not speaking of evangelism, revivals and church programs or activities, but rather the researcher is focusing on the word discipleship. which means the time spent to care for any born-again Christian that needs to grow in the word of God and in their walk with Jesus. It is in that context, the current climate for discipleship in the churches, the researcher is addressing.

The question should be asked as to whether churches in the Liberian setting led by Liberian pastors caring and spending enough time with their new converts and old members, in wanting them to grow spiritually and to be knowledgeable in the word of God?

These are the suggested steps to leaders for effective discipleship of new converts. A leader must start with what is called general specific, which must begin with the leader listening to the spirit of God as he speaks to him or her. The leader must listen and obey what the Scripture says about the Great Commission. The leader must be ready to help those lost souls that just gave their lives to Christ. One of the best scriptures showing this is in Acts 2:42, when the leaders sought to strengthen the new believers in the early church.

One incredible way the pastors can train their members is to the use the five habits of highly missional people by Michael Frost.¹⁰¹ These are: discipleship, nurturing, and accountability. Frost lists five sets of habits: 1. Bless 2. Eat 3. Listen 4. Learn 5. Sent.

1. *Bless* relates to the means by which one shows generosity to those to whom they minister.

¹⁰¹ Michael Frost, *Surprise the World: Five Habits of Highly Missional People* (Colorado Springs: Tyndale, 2016).

2. *Eat* relates to how one must display hospitality to the new convert, helping them to know that they have family that welcomes them at any time.
3. *Listen* relates to how one allows the Holy Spirit to lead him or her to disciple the person.
4. *Learn* means that the person will learn to be a Christ-like person or leader. He or she should try to spend at least one period of the week learning Christ's way of discipling.
5. *Sent* means to begin missionary visitation to see how the individual is doing not only spiritually, but physically as well.

In Acts 2:42, the people devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching. The apostles were willing and ready to teach, so the people came, fellowshiped, shared their meals, prayed together, and of course they went from house to house.

Finally, leaders should implement these four steps: Orientation, Observe, Decide, Act (Genesis 39:1-6a; 1:26-28; and Matthew 25:14-30).

Orientation: This is designed to provide a new member with the information he or she needs to function comfortably and effectively in the organization. It is a planned introduction of new member to their peers and the men's or women's department.

Orientation should be given to the new member in the church in order for them to know or understand the purposes of God's church. The goal is to educate each individual, so that they will know what is required of them as a part of the body of Christ's church. Everyone should know that he or she has a role to play or a task to perform in the church as the individual joins an auxiliary within the church.

Expectation: This brings motivation and the courage for one to pursue the goals of the church. Never conclude that everyone should automatically know what they are supposed to do in the ministry. That is a false assumption. Keep in mind that everyone has a different concept of

an organization or a church. E

Communicating expectations will help some of the members to understand why they are in the church and what they should be doing.

Observe: This means to watch and sometimes to listen to someone or something carefully. It is the responsibility of the leadership of the church to observe everyone to know what they can do. Observe each person in order to see if they have a passion in a particular activity. Observe what their ability is and what are they capable of doing. Observe them to know each individual as to whether they have a special gift in a particular area that they can bring to the ministry. Observe as to whether each person in the new membership class is there just to be occupying a space or actually engaged.

Decide: This is to choose something, especially after thinking carefully about several possibilities. It is to make up one's mind as to what shall be done and the way to do it. Once one has decided to become a member of church, he or she should realize that every decision comes with a responsibility or price to pay. The decision to become a member of the church must not be based on an emotion, or excitement. This includes withstanding peer pressure, or pressure from someone in the church or even a spouse.

One's decisions should affect every aspect of his or her walk with Christ which means that they have agreed to be a role model that many young believers in the church will follow. A decision is not as much for the person to be seen as it is for the church. The member is there to help by making mindful contributions that will impact the lives of the people within the church and the entire community.

Act: Action is the process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim. It is to do something for a particular purpose. One should act upon the decision to become a member of the

church because a decision without actions is pointless. When there is no action in a decision, the decision was reckless. Once one makes the decision to be a part of the church, he or she needs to take action. One must accept the fact that there is a process that everyone must go through in order to get something done for the ministry. This includes taking an action to achieve a purpose at a specific time in the church.

Discipling Immigrants and Non-Immigrants

There are many immigrants arriving from various parts of the world into the United States of America each day, week, month and year. They come from different religions, cultures, ethnicities, social classes, economic and academic backgrounds. They have come in search of a better life. Many of them have different beliefs such as: Christianity, Islam, Buddhist, atheist, and other non-believers. The churches need to understand that there are so many different people arriving on the shores of America that it is changing each community every day because of this diversity.

Some of the immigrants choose to change their status by becoming naturalized citizens and the children born in America to them automatically become American citizens. However, most embody the culture or the beliefs of their parents. According Payne, who wrote a very insightful book on immigrants, migration, and missions, pointed out two major reasons why he wrote the text: First, “It is my desire to educate the western church on the scope of global migrations that are taking place as the peoples of the world move to the west in search of a better way of life.” Second, “To challenge the western church to reach the least reached peoples living in their neighborhoods and partner with them to return to their peoples as missionaries. An

enormous Great Commission opportunity exists that seems to be going unnoticed by the church.”¹⁰²

Payne, raised an importance point in his book, challenging the western church to reach the least peoples living in their neighborhoods and partnering with them to return to their peoples as missionaries. But here is the huge difficulty; westerners have some homework that they need to do before they can have an effective Christian or godly relationship in order to have an effective impact on those immigrants. They have to get rid of the superiority, the colonial spirit, and superpower mindset toward the immigrants that are in their neighborhoods.

Consider the disciples of Jesus who argued among themselves about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:1-3 states, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? He called a little child to him and placed the child among them. And he said; Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁰³

The Western church must decide whether they want to play the role of servant or little child as described by Jesus in Matthew 18:1-3, so they can partner with the saved or born again immigrants who believe in Jesus Christ and have their calling from God, so they might reach the unreached immigrants.

If the West and the immigrants who are living in their neighborhoods were working together as a team to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, then the statement of Jesus in John 17:20-21 will come through, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray

¹⁰² Jervis David Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 18-19.

¹⁰³ Matthew 18:1-3, NIV.

also for those who will believe in me through their message. That is all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so, that the world may believe that you have sent me.”¹⁰⁴ Oneness was the prayer of Jesus for the disciples and those of us that believed later.

Jesus gave a new command, to love one another as he has loved us in John 13:35: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”¹⁰⁵ For instance, an immigrant pastor invites a Western pastor to preach at his church, but in return the Western pastor invites the immigrant pastor to be a part of his activities in his church, but not as guest preacher. That could lead to a breakdown in their relationship. If that is the case, how will the believers from both sides disciple the people in their community?

Action Plan for Discipleship

12-Step Lesson Plan on Discipleship for the Liberian Churches in Worcester

The researcher has designed 12 modules as an action plan that will be used to enlighten or give insight on the topic of evaluating discipleship program effectiveness of Liberian churches in Worcester. These actions are the variables that will enhance the context of discipleship effectiveness among immigrants in churches in the West. Each module simplified the expectations that Liberian churches should be communicating.

¹⁰⁴ John 17:20-21, NIV.

¹⁰⁵ John 13:35, NIV.

Module #1: The Change of Environment

There are many reasons one must consider the environment for an effective discipleship program because it entails almost every aspect of human existence. Researchers have made many contributions toward the study of environment.

“The word environment is derived from the French word ‘Environ’ meaning encircle. Environment is a very broad concept and involves everything that affects an organism during its lifetime. Therefore, environment can be defined as one’s surroundings.”¹⁰⁶

The surroundings or condition in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates. Jesus introduced his disciples to other environments or places that they never thought of going in their lives. For instance, in *John 4:3-5*, NIN Jesus, “So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.”

“It includes everything environments consist of soil, water, and air while the biotic environment includes all other organisms with which the organism comes into regular contact.”¹⁰⁷

Leaving Judea to Galilee, Jesus intentionally decided to go through Samaria and stopped at the well called Sychar. Jesus was traveling with his disciples who were all Jewish men who would never go to Samaria at all knowing full well that Jews and Samaritans do not associate.

¹⁰⁶ B. S. Chauhan, *Environmental Studies: (As Per U.G.C. Syllabus)* (New Delhi: University Science Press, 2008), 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 2

John 4:9 says, “The Samaritan woman came to draw water, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.’”¹⁰⁸

In the Samaritan village where Jesus and his disciples stopped, they were looking for two things that are found in an environment, food and water. His disciples had gone to town to buy food while he waited at the well. It was at the well that he met the Samaritan woman who came to draw water. Water being one of the common factors in human environment, Jesus asked the woman for a drink of water. The request for the water led Jesus and the woman into a conversation that broke down the cultural and religious walls between Jews and Samaritans and at last it ended with Jesus and his disciples spending two days in Samaria.

There was a change of environment for Jesus and disciples, as they spent the two days in Samaria, there was likely a culture shock for the Jewish men, while it was a joyful moment for the Samaritans. Their world was forever changed because the Messiah, the Savior of the world was in their town.

The best way for the newcomer to cope in the city of Worcester, is to learn about the people who make up the population of Worcester. Worcester is very diversified, therefore everyone who comes to Worcester some way or somehow fits into the community. Since Worcester is a small community, people are willing to work together in community development.

The newcomer should be willing to volunteer services in the community. As an individual continues to render volunteer service it becomes a vehicle that will drive the individual upward to success. When it comes to the art of nature, everyone in the Worcester is

¹⁰⁸ John 4:9, NIV.

ready to respond to the seasons. In wintertime one must dress warm because of the snow.

Everyone follows the routine of the seasons.

The Environment of Worcester, Massachusetts

Worcester is a unique community in Massachusetts that has opened her door to so many immigrants, migrants and people from diverse backgrounds. For one to better understand the environment of Worcester, the researcher has to study the city government. “The City of Worcester is a diverse governmental body consisting of numerous departments, divisions and sections all working together to serve the residents of Worcester. The main goal of each department, division and section is simple: To provide the best services possible each day in order to provide a comfortable environment in which to live, visit, and work.”¹⁰⁹ This is a very fortunate approach one must know in order to understand the environment of the city of Worcester. However, the environment of Worcester is comprised of so many resources and activities to both the advantage and disadvantage of immigrants and migrants.

“Worcester has various homes, religions, and different kind of Christian denominations, streets, and public transportation, public schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, hotels, police department, courthouse, and the city hall, shopping centers, banks, car dealerships, restaurants, parks, barber shops and beauty salons.”¹¹⁰ Immigrants coming to Worcester wanting to start a

¹⁰⁹ Barton Kamp, *Worcester, Images of America* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 1998), 9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 9, 25, 77, 91.

church or ministry, need to have an idea of the community, in that the environment is not the same as their country of origin.

Getting involved in the community starts with being a volunteer and attending community meetings. It will help the newcomers to know how diverse the people are.

Module # 2: Climate or Weather in Worcester, Massachusetts

The climate or weather in Worcester, Massachusetts is completely different from the various countries of origin of Liberian church members. The city of Worcester is hillier, and it is a rapidly growing city. There are four major seasons in America that affect the city of Worcester, the seasons are: Spring from March 1st to May 31st, summer from June 1st to August 31st, fall from September 1st to November 30th, and winter from December 1st to February 28th.

The summer and fall are most likely similar to the weather in Liberia, whereas the spring and winter are completely different. The winter is when the snow falls and covers the ground, bringing in very cold temperatures. One has to change their wardrobe from other warmer climates.

The climate in the United States can influence discipleship program effectiveness of Liberian churches in Worcester. It is very important to compare both climate and weather conditions between Worcester and Liberia because the immigrants from Liberia are used to the tropical climate in their native land of Liberia. Liberia has two major seasons, dry and rainy.

As previously mentioned, the climate of Liberia is tropical; hot and humid all year round, with a rainy season from May to October with a rain accumulation of an average of 170 inches. The dry season runs from October to January each year. Due to African monsoons, there is a

short dry season that runs from December to February, which is mainly in the north portion of the country. In the southern zone the rains have a relative break from mid-July to late August. People from such climate backgrounds have to become accustomed to the climate of their new environment. These differences in climates could have an affect on the discipleship program's success.

Module # 3: Understanding and Emerging in the New Culture

Culture encompasses the characteristics and knowledge set of a particular group of people including language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts. It also includes the kind of clothing the group wears, the way they conduct their marriages, and how they greet visitors.

The word culture comes from the Latin word “colo.” The Latin verb “colere” means to “cultivate” or “instruct,” to “till, cultivate, honor,” and “cultura,” means “cultivation, or training.”¹¹¹ One needs to understand the power of culture. It has a pulling power that directs the way in which certain communities conduct their daily affairs. It strategically becomes the guiding principle or doctrine upon which the people manifest their actual existence.

Culture is the full range of learning human behavior patterns, “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”¹¹² Since Tylor's observation, the concept of culture has become a central focus of anthropology.

The Origin of Culture

¹¹¹ Harvie Conn. *Culture in the Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Ed. A. Scott (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 252.

¹¹² Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. 1. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2016), 1.

“The origin of cultures investigates how information is acquired, processed and transmitted by the human mind and based on this knowledge formulates an original theory of cultural evolution to understand phenomena such as altruism, psychology, morality, theology, and religion.”¹¹³

Referring to theological or biblical views, one can relate to human culture from the biblical account starting with Adam who was the first human being to be on the face of the earth. Before the fall of Adam in Genesis 3, he lived in a culture designed by God which was centered around the relationship between Adam, his Creator, and the creatures (Gen. 2:15-23). There was communication between God and Adam; information and direction were given to Adam about how to live in his earthly culture, in his newly created or formed body, and in his community, the garden of Eden.

The development of man’s own culture after Adam’s fall, comes with his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. He developed his own community outside of the presence of God. It was God’s original plan and purpose for mankind to populate the earth (Gen.1:28) according to his biblical cultural design through his divine principles. Instead, Adam and his wife Eve produced human beings according to their kind and began to exercise their own culture outside of God’s original culture. In the new environment outside the Garden of Eden, Cain defected and took on the culture of Satan and killed his brother Abel because of jealousy (Gen. 4:1-10).

Major Cultural Differences.

¹¹³ John Lin, *The Origin of Cultures: Toward a Unified Theory of Human Evolution*, (Los Angeles, CA: Prometheus Press, 2010), 1.

To have effective discipleship programs among the Liberian churches in Worcester Massachusetts, there must be a great enrichment of discipleship programs to be used as fortification of cultural differences. R. Zarwulugbo Liberty confirms that “knowing cultural differences is key to effective inter-cultural ministry. Missionaries are required to take courses, prior to their deployment, in the specific culture that they will serve. They will also continue the study of the particular culture while they are serving in the field.”¹¹⁴

For an effective discipleship program, every Liberian church within Worcester, Massachusetts and the diaspora must study the American culture to know the differences in the thought processes so to enable an effective bicultural discipleship program. The importance of this study of culture will lead to personal adjustments to the Liberian church members which must be done for a smooth transition from their own culture to this new ministry. One may ask why it is necessary to adjust to the American culture since those being served in the Liberian church are mostly Liberians. One reason to adjust is so that children born to the immigrant family might automatically take on the culture of where they were born. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson observe, “there is culture shock which basically constitutes a series of unhealthy reactions to life in a different culture.”¹¹⁵

One must heed these various culture shocks, first, because every country has their unique constitution from which cultures emanate and are used to govern the affairs of their society. Secondly, because there are also common laws that must be observed.

Module # 4: Self-Identity

¹¹⁴ Zarwulugbo Liberty, *Growing Missionaries Biblically*, 23.

¹¹⁵ John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson, *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 266.

In this module on self-identity, an individual must be able to identify himself or herself in terms of the characters, beliefs, culture, values, self-image and their purpose for living and doing what they do. An individual must know who they are as a person, where they were born, and what they were born to do.

In respect to their birth country of origin, family, culture, and beliefs, they have their individual identity. They are created in the image of God with flesh and body, meaning they have body, soul, and spirit. Jeremiah did not realize who he was, then God reminded him of who he was in Jeremiah 1:5, “God said before I formed you, I knew you.”¹¹⁶ It is very important that every person knows that they are created with flesh and blood and accepts the color of their skin, height, size, and the way talk or walk.

According to Genesis 1:26-27, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”¹¹⁷ Genesis 2:7 states, “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”¹¹⁸

God created mankind for a purpose, therefore he distinguished mankind from the rest of the creatures he created. For that reason, men do have a spirit, soul, and body even though he was created from the dust of the earth. Since mankind was created in God’s image, he gives us the responsibility to manage the earth. In order to organize the creatures that God has created,

¹¹⁶ Jeremiah 1:5, NIV.

¹¹⁷ Genesis 1:26-27, NIV.

¹¹⁸ Genesis 2:7, NIV.

mankind was charged to identify and name all the animals. With the skills to know the difference between the creatures created by God, Adam then recognized the woman when God brought Eve to him. Genesis 2:23 says, “The man said, ‘This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, and she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.’”¹¹⁹ It means that man knew the kind of person he was, his value, and his worth. Man appreciated himself by saying this is the bone of my bones and the flesh of my flesh, he was satisfied with himself.

Jeremiah 1:5 asserts, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”¹²⁰ God identified us, as to whose we will be and what we are going to do before we were born in the world. We must also point out that we are made of the dust of the ground. That means there is soul and spirit in the body or tent, formed from the dust of the ground.

The one who will lead the effective discipleship program should know their personal worth or value and believe in themselves, how they were created, and why they were brought to the earth. When an individual has a self-esteem problem, he or she might not be able to disciple others effectively.

Because self-esteem is an internal portrait that reflects how people really feel about themselves, one could visualize that individuals cast their images down very easily by just looking at others. One must have confidence and satisfaction in who they are, knowing what God has done for them. On the contrary, many don’t look at the positive sides of themselves. One

¹¹⁹ Genesis 2:23, NIV.

¹²⁰ Jeremiah 1:5, NIV.

must quit replaying the recording of his or her youthful days which may be associated with negative thoughts about their past.

Larry Crabb said, “my experience suggests that although men and women need both kinds of input, for men the primary route to personal satisfaction is significance and for women the primary route is security,”¹²¹

Knowing who one is and accepting one’s self-image will enable the disciple-maker to effectively embrace the new culture in the new community. Mostly, it will help one to reach the immigrant’s community, to identify with their people, and to disciple themselves effectively. Exodus 2:11-12 states, “One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”¹²²

The pursuit of identity comes with the power of belonging. Moses wanted to identify with his people even though he was living and dressing up like an Egyptian. He knew deep within himself that he was a Hebrew. He knew his identification and the kind of people he was. Therefore, he decided to come to the rescue of the Hebrews, though he went about it at first in his own strength, yet God used him to free his people and disciple them in the wilderness for 40 years. Individuals in immigrant churches or elsewhere must be able to identify with the people in order to disciple them effectively.

¹²¹ Larry Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977), 63.

¹²² Exodus 2:11-12, NIV.

Module # 5: The Approach to Ministry (Caring)

The approach to a discipleship ministry starts with the desire of an individual who is willing to be the disciple-maker. One's willingness and readiness depend on his or her willingness to become a student or follower first. According to the words of Jesus, "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'"¹²³ This requires obedience to the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).

That person must be compassionate and caring for the people of God. One can't approach a discipleship ministry with a naturally or carnally minded personality. An individual who wants to carry on discipleship must be ready to go through a spiritual preparation just as Jesus did both by himself and with his disciples. In Matthew 4:1 after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River he was taken into the wilderness to fast and pray for forty days and forty nights where afterwards he was tempted by the devil. Afterwards he started calling his disciples with whom he spent the rest of his life on earth.

In the final days of Jesus with his disciples before his departure, he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit who was to come and empower them to be a witness of him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and rest of the world. They got their power then from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:6-8). The next step the apostles took in approaching the discipleship ministry started with teaching, fellowship, prayer, sharing their food and meeting with one another. They were socializing, sharing, and praying together as the children of God. The approach to

¹²³ Matthew 16:24, NIV.

discipleship ministry should be for saving lives and giving them direction to serve God faithfully.

Module # 6: Break Down Barriers

A barrier is something such as a natural obstacle that prevents or blocks movement from one place to another or something that makes it difficult or impossible for people to understand each other. Language is defined as “the method of human communication, either spoken or written consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.”¹²⁴ Language is the means of communication in any given society including the professional field. Additionally, it is used in the discipleship ministry where believers are bound to encounter people of various language backgrounds. Language barriers can create a stressful environment for anyone. In many cases different people use languages in different ways. Individuals differ in their language used to express themselves more clearly in various domains.

Certain words in one language mean something different in another language, for instance the French word “common” means something totally different in English. Language competence is very important for a newcomer in Worcester. It affects everything that they intend to say. It restricts them from many opportunities and restricts the person and can even put his or her life in a dangerous position because the person may not know how to read signs and to follow directions. It slows their progress in the community or any environment they may find themselves as a newcomer. Not only do languages affect the people in general, but biblical

¹²⁴ Zarwulugbo Liberty, *Growing Missionaries Biblically*, page 45

language in many congregational settings can cause the newcomers to leave the church if they are not accustomed to the language.

Religious congregations are a main source of social exposure for people from the same culture in a context where opportunities for exposure to new ideas are constrained. A denomination is a recognized autonomous branch of Christian church or a religious group, usually including many local churches. As the newcomers arrive in the city, the first thing they look for on a Sunday or the select time that they worship is the name of the church they knew from home. They may be looking for a Baptist church, a Methodist church, a Pentecostal church, or another church that is still a name of a church they knew from their country. They will want to attend the church. For various reasons, either they are from a very conservative church or liberal church denomination.

Either staying or leaving that church can be determined by the number one thing for the newcomer, which is the language. Even though there might be other factors, language plays the primary role. Once that individual realizes that they can't understand the language they may consider going to another church that conducts its services in a conservative or liberal style which could cause a problem for them. As they struggle with the decision as to whether they should associate themselves with any church, either conservative or non-conservative, it becomes a challenge. They either stay away from any church or denominational activities as a result, ending up just becoming a church goer, and in the end, they do not belong to any church in the community; or they start to visit almost all the churches in that community. Therefore, the churches with an effective and strong discipleship ministry must take into consideration how to meet these newcomers in their search for a place of worship.

Module # 7: Discipling the Adults

Should one disciple an adult that comes to the church? Or more especially, those newcomers within the Worcester community? The answer is very simple yes. Every individual goes through a spiritual growth process at a certain stage in life. Everyone needs the support and encouragement or uplifting to do his or her utmost best in life. Every follower of Christ is sustained in their on-going Christian life not primarily through courses but through worship, mission, and community.

All God's people are created in his image. This is evident in the tribal and ethnic groups of people who arrive in the Worcester community. It is one of the ways to help develop the newcomer with true Christian character, keeping in mind that discipleship suggests a concern for the development of Christian character this characterized the virtue of humility. As one discipled an adult Christian who has just arrived in the city, it reflects the true humility of the church and believers in that city. Because humility is a proper, noble, dignified, and true Christian aspiration. Such an aspiration will bring that newcomer to a point of decision.

The Apostle Peter was an adult who was discipled by Jesus on several occasions. The first time Jesus met with Peter was by the sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:18-22) where he promised Peter to make him a fisher of men. This was not an easy task for Lord because he had to balance between his supernatural power and his earthly ministry. With his supernatural power he could have changed Peter immediately, but instead he used his ministerial strategies to disciple the Apostle. Going back to the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant. Jesus commanded Peter to put his sword away (John 18:10), then Jesus miraculously put the servant's ear back. Peter denied Jesus three times (John 18:15,25), but after

his resurrection morning, Jesus sent a message by the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee to meet him, and he said to *tell Peter also*.

Instead of encouraging and strengthening the other disciples Thomas, Nathaniel, the sons of Zebedee and the other two disciples, Peter told them he was going back to his fishing career and they followed him. Meanwhile, Jesus came from heaven to walk on the shore of Galilee once again to talk with Peter. At that meeting Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love me? Then feed my sheep.”

The Apostle Peter is used as an example because he got carried away with any environment where he found himself. When Peter was on the water, he wanted to walk on it. Also, Peter was one of the first disciples that Jesus called but he still needed to be disciplined. Discipleship is an ongoing process until Christ returns.

Module # 8: Discipling Youth and Children

The youth and children are the future generation of the churches in Africa. These future generations of the churches in Africa have lived in difficulties and hardships due to civil crises and natural epidemics before they could arrive on the shore of America or other western countries. Some of them might have lived in the refugee camp for years or survived the Ebola epidemic. Some of them may have lost their entire family, some of them may have lived in other countries and attended school with different languages such as French, Spanish or Arabic. Before

reaching adulthood, they may have had to go through many transitions of life. Finally, they found themselves on the shore of America or in one of the western countries.

The person who will disciple the youth should bear in mind that the youth and the children have souls, spirits, flesh, and bodies. They have a mind to process things in small and big ways or whatever way they want to handle things. The disciple-maker must take all of the above into consideration. Jesus said, “truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”¹²⁵

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”¹²⁶

There are two statements that Jesus made in these passages, in both Matthew and Luke, stating that whoever welcomed one such child in his name, welcomed him. He said to let the little children come to him, and to not hinder them. The discipleship ministry should focus its work on bringing Jesus to their congregation by bringing the youth and the children to their local churches. There must be visitation, prayer meeting, and other supports to meet their physical and spiritual needs. The youth and the children are the future.

Module # 9: The Style of Music and Worship

Music and worship are two of the most important elements in the life any local church. Music and worship play very significant roles in any ministry. Every pastor, leader, and laity

¹²⁵ Matthew 18:4-5, NIV.

¹²⁶ Luke 18:15-17, NIV.

need to know and understand the importance of music and worship. Music is a universal language with the enormous power to transfix or bring peace to the soul of anyone who listens to it. That is why everyone responds to it in so many ways no matter what language they speak or understand.

To better understand the researcher's mind in this module, one must look at the music on one separate note and the worship on another note. Music is a collection of coordinated sound or sounds. Making music is the process of putting sounds and tones in an order, often combining them to create a unified composition. These collective sounds are burst out into a song with great melody.

Song is one of the greatest gifts that God ever gave to mankind. The moment the children crossed the Red Sea, Miriam, Moses' sister, wrote a song, putting together all the experiences they had at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-21). King David, one of the greatest musicians in biblical times wrote in Psalm 95:1-2, "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song."¹²⁷

David invites everyone to join him to sing a joyful song unto the Lord, sung before him in the presence of the Lord, where God will see them. In Psalm 98:1 he commands that we "sing a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth."¹²⁸ It is not one group of people that should sing unto the Lord but the entire universe. "Singing to God prohibits us from making worship a spectator event. It might be possible for someone visiting a worship service on any particular Sunday to

¹²⁷ Psalm 95:1-2, NIV.

¹²⁸ Psalm 98:1, NIV.

think the choir and soloist are singing to the congregation. Thus, the congregation becomes merely an audience. But the biblical picture is to realize God is the audience. All the music, whether congregational, choral, or featured groups, should be directed to Godward.”¹²⁹

There are two kinds of music: traditional and contemporary; some people love to listen to either, while some people only listen to one of the two. African music and western music are not the same. Africans use African music to express themselves in so many ways. Africans used music in the time of war, to embolden their fighting men to go to war. Music was also used to accompany their workers on their farms but was also used for every good gathering and festival. They used music to worship God. However not all African music is the same, in that they have various styles of performing the art of the music.

In addition to music, worship is the individual telling how they love God. According to Vernon Whaley, “worship is individually telling God you love him. It is intense devotion and admiration of God. It is communicating with the living God. Worship is what nurtures our relationship with God.”¹³⁰ Worship includes the giving of tithes and offerings, praying, dancing, bowing before the Lord, and praise and thanksgiving.

The worship leaders must observe their congregations to know and see what kinds of music the people will accept easily. At times a person may simply come to check out the church for the first time and he or she may decide to stay because of the music. The way one worships the Lord could make others come and stay in the church. Do the people of the congregation truly revere God in their services if while the service is going on some people are walking up and

¹²⁹ Vernon M. Whaley, *Understanding Music and Worship in the Local Church*, (Calumet, IL: Evangelical Training Assoc., 1995), 45.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 49.

down in the church? The discipleship ministry in any church is the frontline group. They should be in the position to alert the leadership of any new developments.

Module #10: The Support for Discipleship Ministry (Financial Resource)

In the Oxford Dictionary, “finance” means the management of large amounts of money, the use of money matters most for those in public life. One must look at money from two opposite perspectives, the secular worldview and the biblical standpoints.

To run a smooth and effective discipleship ministry, the church will always need some financial stability to support the work of the church. There are various reasons why finance must be critically considered when it comes to making disciples for the kingdom of God. Finances are used to support the work of the church; the work of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the early life of the New Testament church, other believers in other cities supported the Jerusalem Church financially (I Corinthians 9:6-11). These financial supports were intended to help the church to meet the needs of those who could not afford to care for themselves. “Certain work, including that of ones who minister fulltime in leading the church, inherently requires financial compensation. Therefore, God commands us to give for the support of those whom he sends to serve us, teach us, and lead us in the church. Scripture references I Cor. 9:14, Gal.6:6, I Tim. 5:17.”¹³¹

At times some of the newcomers may not have the means to get to the fellowship. They might have other challenges such as rent, food, and clothing when they find themselves in the middle of the winter and it is their first time in the USA. Therefore, the finances gathered by the

¹³¹ John MacArthur, *Whose Money is it Anyway?* (Nashville, TN: World Publishing, 2000), 7-8.

local church must be carefully managed, in the respect that the church will choose someone who will become a good steward of the funds.

Financial Stewardship in the Local Church

Stewardship is an ethic that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources. One can then say that the concepts of stewardship can be applied to any environment, most especially to the church. Therefore, all funds that come into the local church must be managed well and held into accountability in order to make disciples.

Stewardship is biblical. These Scriptures show God's ownership and he later put mankind in charge to become the steward of his creation. Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."¹³² Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creature that move along the ground.'"¹³³

Finances used in the church to produce disciples for the Lord requires careful planning, attention, upkeep, and the management of resources including the choices that the church should make for the discipleship ministry that are essential for an effective discipleship program in the local church. To manage financial resources implies wisdom and knowledge. The church must be able to understand that the role that money plays in the discipleship ministry is very significant because it goes beyond the disciple-making and involves other areas of the church

¹³² Genesis 1:1, NIV.

¹³³ Genesis 1:26, NIV.

work that require funding. Every contribution represents the time and purpose of the church's work.

Specific Useful Currencies for Discipleship

Are there any specific currencies that are needed for the church to use to further the work of the discipleship ministry in the local churches? This is a great question that all believers who are disciple-makers should ponder. Going back to the time of Jesus, the people came to ask Jesus if they should pay taxes to Caesar and the answer he gave them was very remarkable, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.'"¹³⁴

Jesus didn't have his own currencies, nor did God create currencies that we must use for his kingdom purpose or his work on earth, but at one point in time Jesus told Peter to catch a fish, open its mouth and there he would find money to pay the temple tax (Matthew 17:24-27), but the question is whose inscription was on that money that was taken from the fish's mouth? Was it the coin with Caesar's inscription, the Tyrian silver shekel found in Matthew 17: 24-27, or the quadrans in Matthew 5:25, or the assarius in Mark 10:29, or the denarius in Matthew 18:28? Since it seems like it was the Tyrian silver shekel, then of course it was Caesar's inscription on that coin and was the Roman currency that Jesus used to pay the temple tax.

However, the Bible didn't specify which currency that must be used to propagate the gospel of Christ. All currency around the world is useful for the propagation the gospel and to make disciples. But it will be a wise thing to say that the currency used most to make disciples is from whatever country that opens their door to the gospel ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹³⁴ Mark 12:17, NIV.

Module # 11: Prayer, the Force that Drives Discipleship

Prayer is giving God the permission to do business with you on earth. Prayer is an earthly request for heavenly interference. Prayer is not an option. Prayer is not a religious activity, but rather a Kingdom priority (Matthew 6:5-8, Matt. 7:7-12).

Prayer is a spiritual response spoken and unspoken to God. Prayer covers a wide spectrum of addressing and hearing from God, interceding with and waiting for the Lord, and contemplating and petitioning the Father in heaven. Someone said, “Prayer is talking with God.” Throughout the Bible, many Scriptures show the prayer lives of many women and men of God who feared God and sincerely prayed to the Father and their prayers were answered.

Jesus spent much of His time praying to the Father as well as teaching people and his disciples the better way to pray to the Father. Matthew 4:1-11 says, “Jesus was led out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil.”¹³⁵ For forty days and forty nights he ate nothing and became very hungry. In those forty days Jesus was praying and communicating with the Father. The writer Matthew said he was hungry, because he went without food.

Jesus’ Teaching on the Pattern of Asking Through Prayer

In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus teaches on the prayer of asking and receiving from God. This is the chief thing in prayer, that assurance that prayers will be heard and answered. Observe how he uses words which mean almost the same thing and each time repeats the promise so distantly: “Ye shall receive, ye shall find. It shall be opened unto you.” “Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” Such a promise does by no means, in the first place, refer to the grace or blessing we need for ourselves. Here are the three key words in the teaching.

¹³⁵ Matthew 4:1-11, NIV.

1. Ask and it shall be given to you
2. Seek and ye shall find
3. Knock and it shall be opened unto you

Ask and it Shall Be Given to You

In any dictionary the word “ask” means the following: “to seek, to be informed about, or to request.” But the asking which Jesus mentioned in Matthew 7 is not to be informed, but to be awarded of something because he said, “ask and it shall be given to you.”

James 4:3 says, “ye ask, and ye receive not because ye ask amiss.” One most likely will feel love in this six-fold repetition. He wants to impress deep on believers’ minds this one truth that they may most confidently expect an answer to their prayers. He knows too, how even when his disciples believed that God is the hearer of prayer, believing prayer that spiritual was too high and different for the halfhearted disciples. He, therefore, at the very outset of his teaching, put the truth deep into their hearts: prayer does avail much, ask and ye shall receive, everyone that asks receives. This is a fixed eternal law of the kingdom: If one asks and receives not it must be because there is something amiss or wanting in the prayer. According to this teaching of Jesus, prayer consists of three parts, the human sides and the divine side. The first side is the human as the petitioner, the divine side is the giving. The third side is the human side that is receiving, and these make up the whole.

Seek and Ye Shall Find

Jesus told the story or parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin. In Luke 15:1-10, according to Dr. Warren, professor at the Luther Rice Seminary, “this chapter is the lost and found department in the Scripture. If you pay very close and kind attention you will see what he’s talking about. So many losses, the sheep, the coin, and the lost son and the lost brother who

was angry with his father at the return feast of his lost brother. This big brother was also lost in self-perfection and pride. 'I have been with you all these years and you have not hosted a little party for me, but instead for this your son who wasted all your riches.' He distanced himself from his brother, but thank God his father sought after him, by re-uniting him to the family through his words of wisdom."¹³⁶

The shepherd who sought for his sheep and the woman who looked for her coin, they all made an effect. The sheep owner went after the sheep by walking from place to place in the wilderness while the woman had to go on her knees searching for the coin; the father of the lost son stood on his feet gazing at the entrance of the road where his son would return. Physically, they all worked hard and emotionally, they were relieved of stress.

Where should one go to seek in order to find? In Psalm 121:1-2, David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Verses 2 answered verse 1: "my help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Jesus taught his disciples a prayer in Matt. 6: 9-13, teaching them to directly address God, by saying, "our Father which is in heaven hallowed be thy name." David said that his help came from heaven.

Knock and it Shall be Opened unto You.

There is no specific way one had to knock in prayer. Jesus left an example with an assurance in Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me."

Jesus is standing at the door and knocking. If he is standing and knocking, then on the reverse he is waiting for one to knock in prayer and he is ready to open the doors that are lacking

¹³⁶ Warren, Luther Rice Seminary, Classroom Lecture, December, 2005.

for his child. He will not chide for things not done or completed. Matthew 16:19 says that he first gives us the keys to the kingdom of heaven to loosen and to bind anything on earth. So, one's earthly reaction, produces one's heavenly condition.

Jesus Teaches Prayer through Parables

Man ought always to pray and not faint (Luke 18:1-8). Jesus gave great encouragement on prayer, sometimes by parables sometimes by intercourse with those who were praying. A Syrophoenician woman met Jesus with the problem of her daughter that was possessed of an evil spirit. A Syrophoenician is an inhabitant of the region near Tyre and Sidon; modern Lebanon. In Mark 7:26, there was crisis on hand and the woman wanted a solution to her problem. So, she addressed her prayer to Jesus. Jesus practically taught his disciples a new lesson at that moment, how if one persisted in prayer, one will get an answer which they need.

On another occasion, Jesus told the parable of the friend at midnight. He told of the man who had an unexpected guest, an old friend, who came late to his house. "At midnight he went to the home of his neighbor and asked the friend, 'Lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' The friend refused to open his door unto him, but he insisted. Finally, he opened the door and gave him the loaves so he would stop knocking his door" (Luke 11:5-1).

Persistence Without Giving Up

Jesus spoke another parable again on prayer. He said in a certain city there was a judge, a harsh unfriendly man who feared not God neither regarded man. A poor widow who had been wronged by some evildoer came to the judge, begging him for justice. Time after time the judge put her off because he expected no reward from the poor woman. The woman continued to ask

for justice. This poor woman was not asking for vengeance, but justice. In spite of the rough and repeated refusal at the hand of the judge, the woman kept coming and asking the judge to do justice on her behalf, until at length, weary of her coming, and lest she should weary him still more. The judge heard her case and avenged her of her adversary. “And shall not God,” said Jesus, “avenge his own elect” (Luke 18:1-8)? He meant that if this heartless wicked judge, for whom one could feel only scorn and contempt, yielded to the solicitations of the poor widow, how much more the infinitely good and merciful God will give his salvation to those who earnestly seek Him. It will be an interesting thing if one would consider looking at the word “justice,” which the widow was seeking from the unjust judge.

In the Psalms and the prophets, God is portrayed as having a special concern for the poor, particularly the widow, the fatherless, and the oppressed (Psalms 10:17-18; 82:1-8). When they summoned God to judge them, the poor and oppressed did not expect him to reward them with material benefits beyond what they were normally entitled to receive in order to lead a normal and good life. When they sold their produce and services, they expected a fair deal from the merchants (Amos 2:6-7). Ownership of land, property, freedom and security all constituted their inalienable human rights that were endowed upon them by God, their Creator. For this reason, passages which refer to justice for the poor are actually referring to the rights of the poor (Jeremiah 5:28).

Watch and Pray

Jesus taught prayer by example. It was demonstrated in the Garden of Gethsemane; he made that prayer for himself. Coming close to the day to pay the price of redemption upon the cross, “Jesus sweat as it were great drops of blood as he prayed. ‘O my Father, if it be possible,

let this cup pass from me: Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39-42). In verse 41 he asked his disciples to watch and pray. Stand ready at all times and speak to the Father, have communion with God so one will not enter into temptation. Christ had completely surrendered himself to the will of the Father. Prayer had been the tool which Christ used throughout his ministry even on the cross. On the cross Christ uttered three prayers.

1. “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” This beautiful prayer of forgiveness was to show that Christians should be able to forgive those who have offended them.

2. “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me.” Christ was forsaken, not in the sense that God abandoned him, but that in the eternal counsels of God, in the plan of salvation, and by his own volition, Jesus was experiencing that separation from God that is the penalty of sin.

3. His final prayer, “Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit” (Luke 23:46). It is the prayer of the 31st Psalm: “Into thine hands I commit my spirit.” This was a psalm that Hebrew mothers taught their children.

“Thus, with a child’s evening prayer upon his lips, Jesus fell asleep. The battle is won. The struggle is over.”¹³⁷ According to Clarence Edward Macartney, this final prayer of Christ is a prayer both for life and death. As believers go forth to the life of unknown trials, they can say this prayer because Christ said it for us, “Father into thy hands, I commend my spirit.”

Module # 12: Accomplishing the Goals and Mission of Discipleship

What should be the goal and mission of discipleship? The goal and mission of discipleship is to show love and care to the new believers in Christ Jesus. It is to help the new

¹³⁷ Clarence Edward Macartney. *Putting on Immortality* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 34.

and old believers to grow spiritually in their walk with God. In Acts 2:42, the believers were devoted to the teaching of the apostles, to prayers, to fellowship and they were sharing their meals together. They were strengthened and committed to the Lord's work because they implemented the art of discipleship.

The context of this study is to show love and care to the newcomers who will be arriving in the city of Worcester, Massachusetts. It is also to help to continue serving the Lord in a foreign land and not to be sidetracked by other forces that may influence the newcomers' walk with Christ Jesus.

The role of the discipleship ministry can be considered as the same as that of Jeremiah 29: 4-14. Verses 4-7 are a part of the Jeremiah letter containing a message of God to the people of Israel. They were told to settle down in the foreign land and to make it livable. They were to get married, give their children in marriage, build houses, make gardens, eat the fruits, and increase in number and to not decrease. Then in verse 8, Jeremiah gave them either a warning or advice from the Lord not to listen to, or follow, or to be deceived by false prophets and diviners. There are false teachers, preachers, pastors, and churches in these communities that will try to reach out to the newcomers and their children. If the discipleship ministry is not far-sighted to reaching the newcomers, their children could be trapped into harmful groups.

This passage says much for the newcomers in any foreign country, or in the West. One of the first things God wanted the children to do in that country was to establish themselves. Once the person was established by getting a home and a good job, and raising a healthy family, they still needed God. They had to pray for the peace and prosperity of the community that provided every good thing for them to be established in the foreign land (Jeremiah 29:7).

The discipleship ministry must always be ready to meet with people of different backgrounds, behaviors, histories, social makeups, emotional and even traumatic states who have moved into the city with these various experiences of life. It must be ready to pick up the cross of Jesus Christ. His cross was not smooth, it was full of suffering, painful, and heavy. It must always have a willingness to help whenever it is summoned.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will mainly be providing the suggestions and recommendations for the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts, who seek to develop an effective discipleship building strategy. This was revealed by a survey of groups of discipleship ministry specialists who have developed a comprehensive proposal that will enhance the ministry effectively. The Liberian churches will be encouraged to utilize these suggestions and recommendations from this research to exercise the effective discipleship program strategy which will then help the growth of their churches.

Project Review

Chapter one started with the definition of the terms related to the elements of discipleship. It gave meaning to the words: evaluate, discipleship, and effectiveness. To do this, the researcher used the Bible, as well as scholarly books, journal articles, and other research materials to build the framework of the local church's discipleship programs.

Chapter two delineated the evaluation of discipleship program effectiveness and used a biblical theoretical basis so to broaden the reader's understanding on the subject matter concerning the people of Liberia who have just migrated into Worcester, Massachusetts in the search of a better opportunity.

Chapter three dealt with evaluating and analyzing discipleship programs in the local churches. In this chapter, the results of the interviews and the surveys concerning the evaluation of discipleship program effectiveness in the local church was compared and analyzed.

Chapter four gave the biblical strategy for an effective discipleship program that contributes to the growth of the Liberian churches in Worcester. Graphs provided a clear demonstration of the differences between populations, cultural diversity, churches (inter-denominational and denominational), academic, and non-academic were all displayed.

Chapter five gave suggestions and recommendations for the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts that sought to develop an effective discipleship-building strategy. This provided a comprehensive proposal that may enhance the discipleship ministry's effectiveness.

This study has increased the knowledge of this topic through the collection of the scholarly materials and surveys as an effort to show effective discipleship practices within the Liberian churches. Comparing statistical data from the interviewed churches helped to enhance the research's assertions. This church interview research helped to provide much-needed data to support local churches in order to address membership decline challenges.

Recommendations

This thesis project evaluated effective discipleship programs in the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. This research was based on the biblical practices of the early church in the book of Acts (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37) who came together to share everything in common from prayer to food, whether rich or poor; all were in one accord. They sold their properties to give to those that were in need.

The researcher met with pastors and leaders of the Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts, before and during the time of the survey. Some of the Liberian immigrants have minimal English skills, preventing them from participating in many activities in the community and in the local churches. In their book, *Simple Church*, Rainer and Geiger state, “nearly 60 million people are searching for answers. They are the un-churched next door. They wonder why churchgoers with whom they worked and lived are silent about their faith. They are waiting on you to open your mouth and your heart.”¹³⁸

Many of these immigrants have language, economic, educational and social barriers that may prevent them from participating in church activities and once they feel they are not part of what is going in the life of the church, it is easy for them to steal away from church. It is where members of the discipleship programs must take the initiative to reach out to those people across the various barriers to make them to be comfortable.

It is recommended that churches in Worcester, Massachusetts and the diaspora will use this thesis project for their work or improve upon it so that it can be a tool that will help the Liberian diaspora churches to be effective in their discipleship ministries.

Conclusion

The researcher has increased the available knowledge of this topic through extensive analysis of the scholarly materials and survey results as an effort to show effective discipleship practices within the Liberian churches. Comparing statistical data from the interviewed churches

¹³⁸ Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 86.

helped to support the assertions of this study. This church research helped to provide much-needed data to support local churches in addressing their membership decline challenges.

Even though the exodus of refugees and asylees from the Liberia has decreased after the Ebola epidemic which caused the last of the great influxes of Liberians into the United States and ultimately into the city of Worcester, there is still a growing immigrant and un-churched population in America. The local Liberian churches in Worcester, together with non-Liberian churches and other Christian denominations must address this growing population by taking the initiative to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the unsaved. If these churches will coordinate their resources, mainly in creating effective discipleship programs, to reach the saved and unsaved at all costs for the Kingdom of Christ Jesus, then all of the churches will be achieving the purposes and goals of the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thesis Restatement

This thesis project was developed to implement a strategy study for effective discipleship programs that will help the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. This project targeted the needs of the newcomers and made a decisive proposal through the discipleship programs to help them get over the language, social, economic barriers and challenges that may slow discipleship and growth in these churches.

It is hoped that this thesis project will be used not only by the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts but also other churches or nationalities in the diaspora, who will take advantage of this opportunity to build an effective discipleship program in their churches in order to reach new immigrants in their community with gospel of Christ.

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Appendix A

Student name: Jesse G. GIBSON

This survey is a research requirement for the Thesis project, for the Doctor of Ministry from the Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA. This survey will facilitate the topic: **“Evaluating Discipleship Program Effectiveness of Liberian Churches In Worcester.”**

D. Min Survey Questions

“Evaluating Discipleship Program Effectiveness Of Liberian Churches In Worcester.”

1. What is your gender?
 - Female
 - Male
2. What is your age?
 - 18-25
 - 26-35
 - 31-45
 - 41-55
 - 51-65
 - 66 and Above
3. Highest education level
 - High School
 - First Degree
 - Masters
 - Other
4. How long have you lived in Worcester?
 - Less than 2 years
 - 3-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 11 years and above
5. How long have you been a member of your current local church in Worcester?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 2-3 years
 - 4-5 years and above
6. How often do you attend religious or worship services, not including weddings and funerals?
 - Once a week
 - More than once a week
 - I attend on special occasions
 - Never
7. What are the challenges you face, if any, in attending church services?
 - Lack of transportation
 - Work Schedule

- Fatigue
I am not interested in church anymore
8. How many times an average week do you engage in personal Bible study?
Once
1-3 times
4-6 times
7 or more
9. Prior to your stay in Worcester, have you lived anywhere?
Liberia
Refugee camp
French speaking country
Other countries
10. How would you rate your spiritual growth since relocating to Worcester?
Some growth
No growth
Not sure
11. How active were you in your local church in Liberia or the refugee camp?
Very active
Somewhat active
Not active
12. What leadership roles did you play in your local church in Liberia or refugee camp?
Elder
Sunday School teacher
Lay evangelist
Music
Lay Pastor
Deacon
Other
14. Have you been involved in leading a Bible study before?
Yes
No
15. Would you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ?
Yes
No
I am not sure
16. Does your church have a discipleship program for new converts?
Yes
No
I am not sure
17. How satisfied are you with your church discipleship program if any?
Very Satisfied
We could do better
Not satisfied
18. Do you feel a burden placed on your heart concerning other Liberians in Worcester who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior?

Yes

No

19. If given proper training and resources, do you see yourself leading a small group of other Liberians in Worcester to Christ?

Yes

No

20. Does your local church have a mandate to lead others to Christ?

Yes

No

21. How do you multiply disciples?

By teaching or transformation

Yes

No

By Baptizing or formation

Yes

No

By evangelism or maturity

Yes

No

22. Does your church have a reasonable discipleship program?

Yes

No

23. Is an effective discipleship program a main goal for your church?

Yes

No

Appendix B

The Liberty University
Institutional Review
Board has approved this
document for use from
10/5/2018

Consent Form

**Topic: “Evaluating Discipleship Program Effectiveness of Liberian churches in
Worcester, Massachusetts.”**

Jesse G. Gibson

Liberty University

You are invited to be in a research study of “Evaluating Discipleship Program Effectiveness of Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts.” Your church was selected to participate because the members and the ministerial team have worked seriously for years, in Worcester, Massachusetts and your church has more than 200 members. Your church has set high standards for disciples and for discipleship program management. I ask that you read this form and for any question (s) that you may have please feel free to communicate with me.

This study will be conducted by **Jesse G. Gibson, D. Min.** in the Doctoral program at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this thesis project is to develop and implement a strategy study of an effective discipleship program that will help the local Liberian churches in Worcester, Massachusetts. Discipleship is the process of a follower of Christ becoming more like Him. This study is being done in hopes that the findings of this research may help Liberian Churches to develop a more effective discipleship program.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you are required to do the following: To meet with the interviewer in person, or via e-mail, or phone. The interview is not more than 30 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

There is little risk for participants in this study; the survey is strictly confidential.

Participants will receive a \$10.00 Visa gift card. Your participation in this research may lead to better tools for churches to use in making disciples.

Compensation:

As a token of appreciation, participants will receive a \$10.00 Visa gift card.

Confidentiality:

Participant's names and personal information will not be used in this research.

The response is voluntary. Responders will not be identified by their names. All responses will be compiled and organized into groups. For this reason, confidentiality can be assured.

The records of this study will be kept private. I might publish, but I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely in a password-protected file on the researcher's laptop, and only the researcher will have access to the records. The records or documents will be deleted after the study is complete.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Jesse G. Gibson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 508 405 5008 or jggibson1@liberty.edu. His mentor is Dr. C. Fred Smith. Dr. Smith can be contacted at 434 444 1822 or Cfsmith@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board,

Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ Please check here to indicate that you give the researcher your permission to audio record the interview.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Jesse G. Gibson
36 Gates Street Apt: #3R
Worcester, MA 01610
October 7, 2018

Dear Senior Pastor and Congregation:

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity pursuing my D.Min. in the Doctoral program at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for my Doctoral degree in church planning and evangelism.

The purpose of my research is to help churches to become more effective in retaining and growing church members, through an effective discipleship program, and I am writing to invite you and your congregation to participate in my study.

Participant criteria: Your church was selected to participate because the members and the ministerial team have worked seriously for many years, in Worcester, Massachusetts and your church has more than 200 members. Your church has set high standards for disciple-making and for discipleship program management. If you and your congregation are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. It should take approximately 30 minutes for the survey to be completed.

Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal identifying information will be collected.

A consent document will be provided along with the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research project. There is need to sign to return it. If you choose to participate, you will receive a special gift as a token of appreciation.

Sincerely,
Jesse G. Gibson
D. Min. Student

Appendix D

Dear Jesse Gibson,

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)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(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 retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

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.

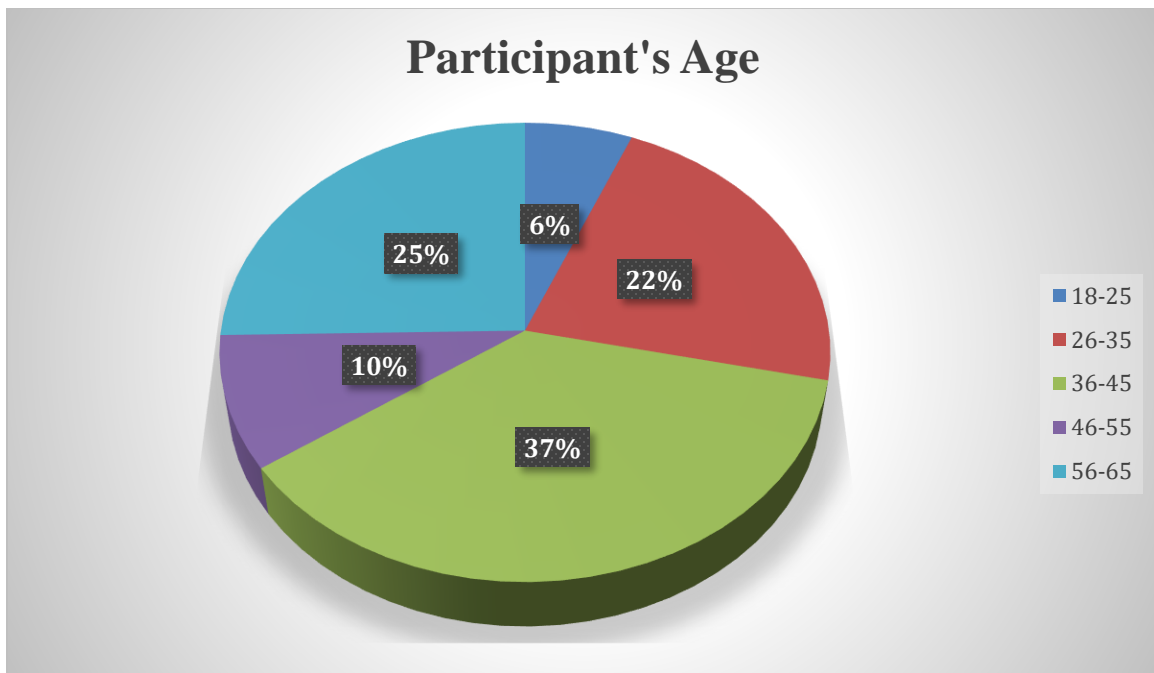
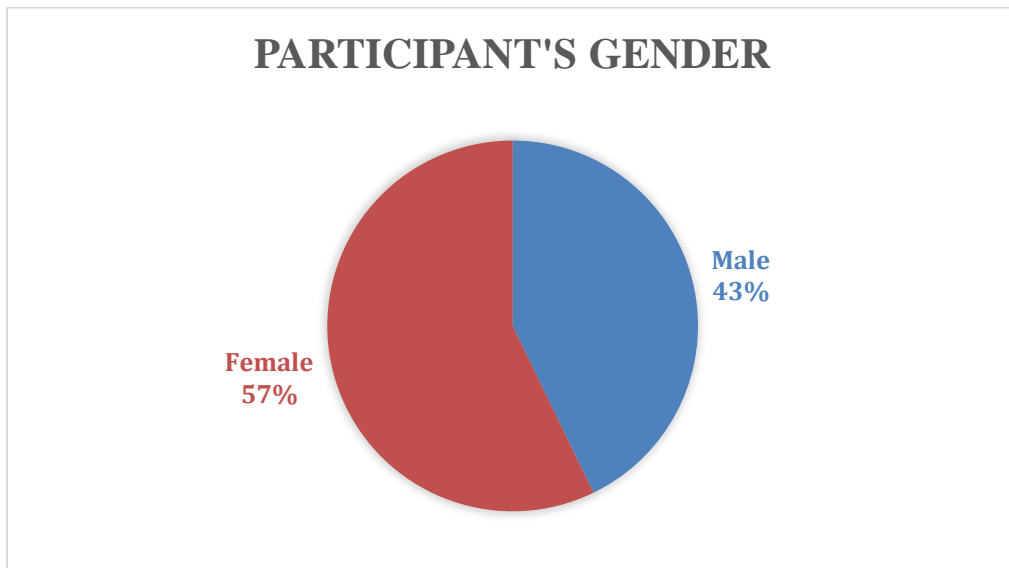
If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP^[SEP] *Administrative Chair of Institutional Research^[SEP]*
The Graduate School.
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

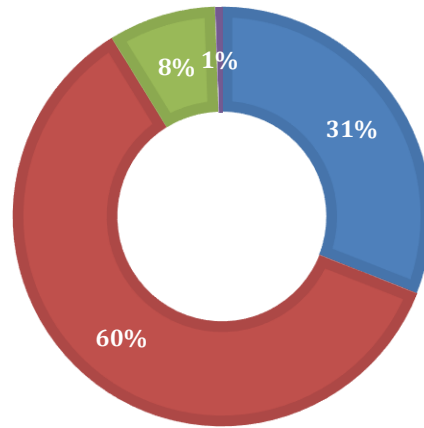
Appendix E

The Survey Data Collection Analysis Charts

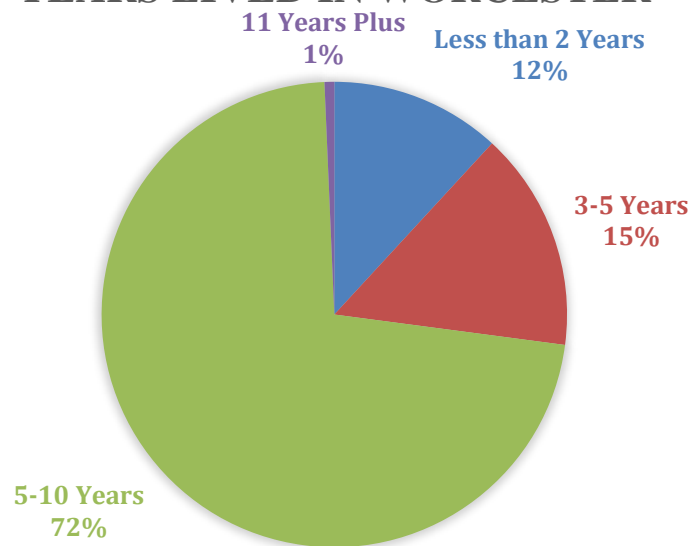


PARTICIPANT'S EDUCATION LEVEL

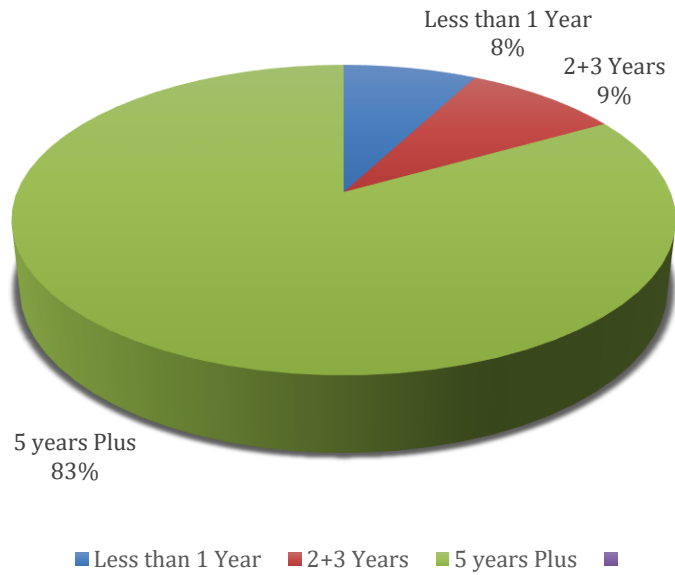
■ High school ■ First Degree ■ Masters ■ Other



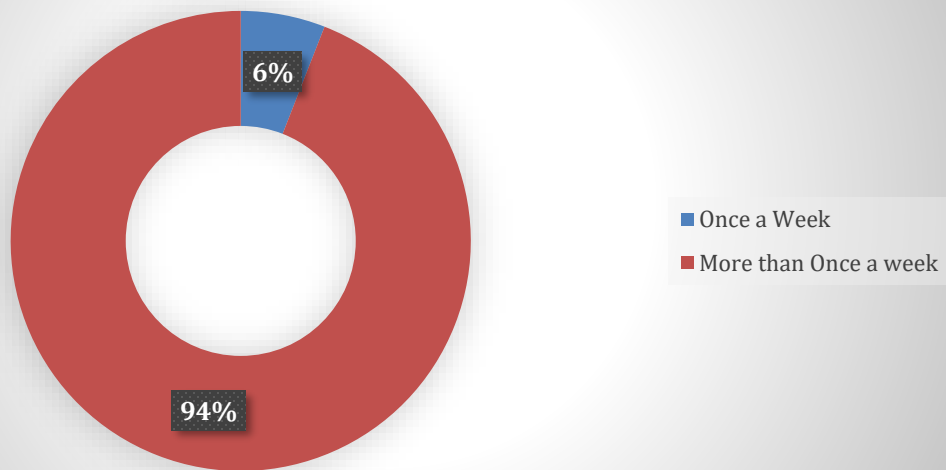
YEARS LIVED IN WORCESTER



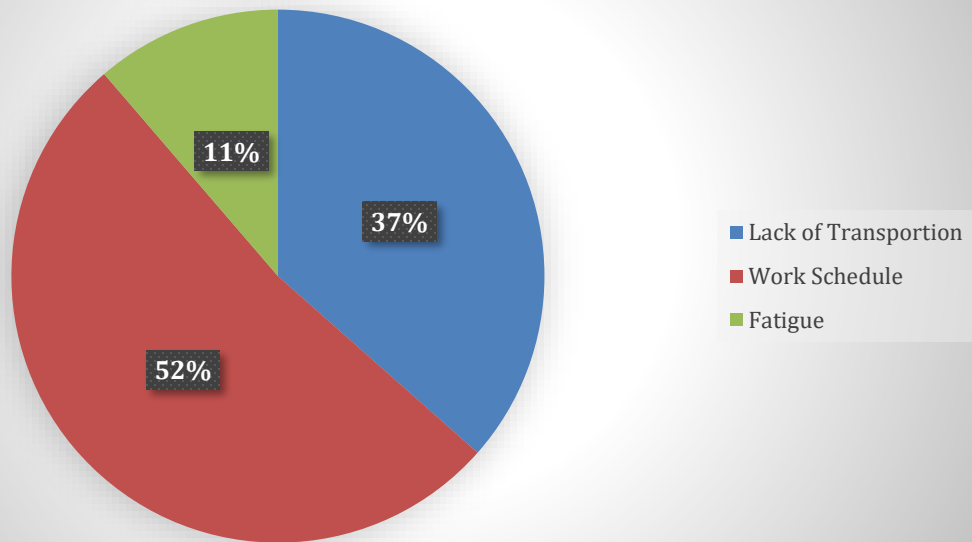
Years in Current Church



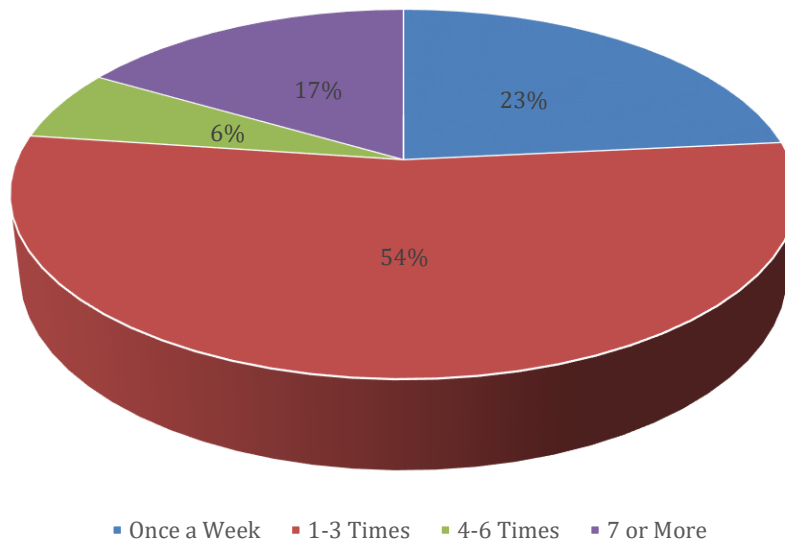
Service/Worship Attendance



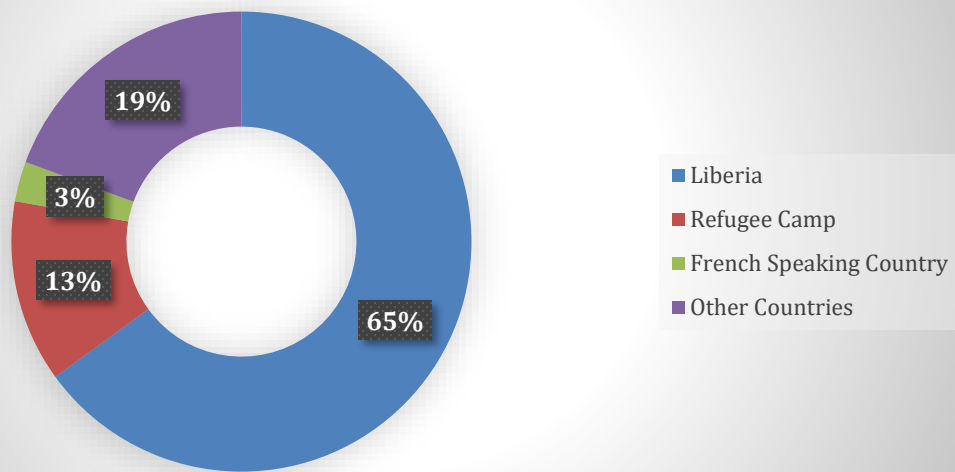
Challenges to Church Attendance



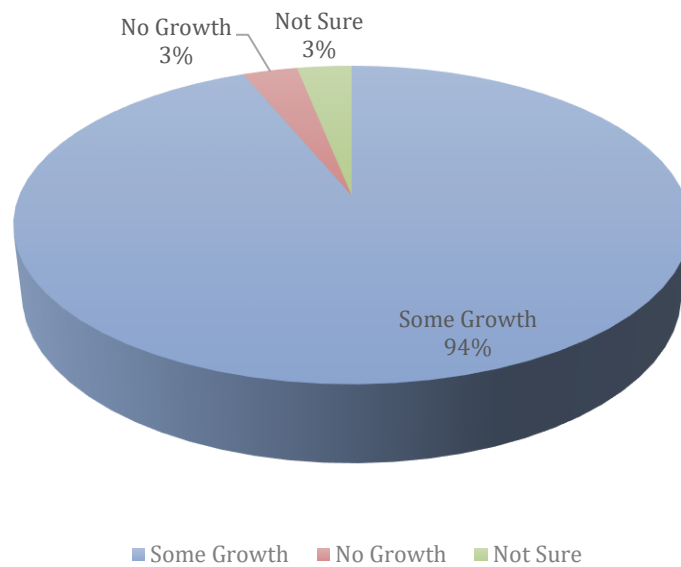
Personal Bible Study



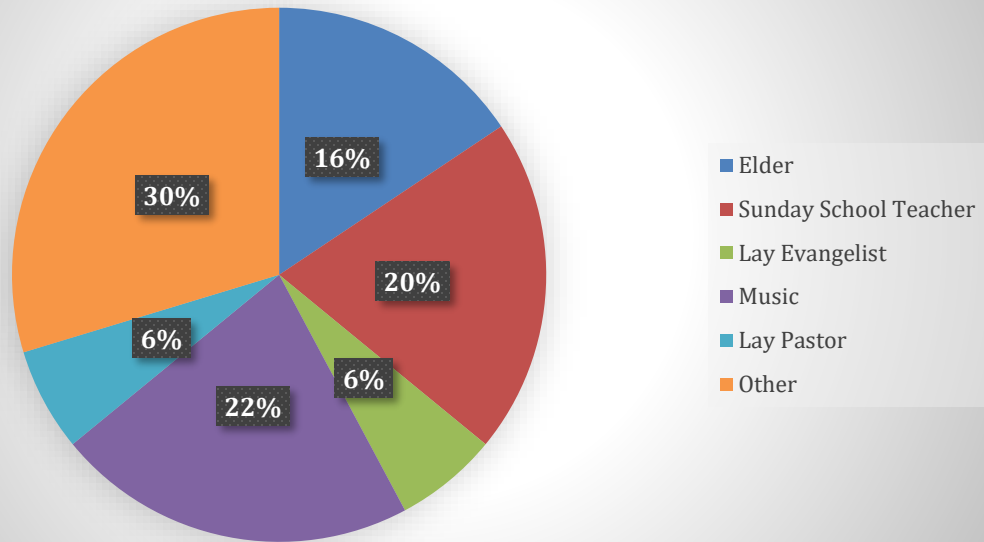
Previous Places Lived



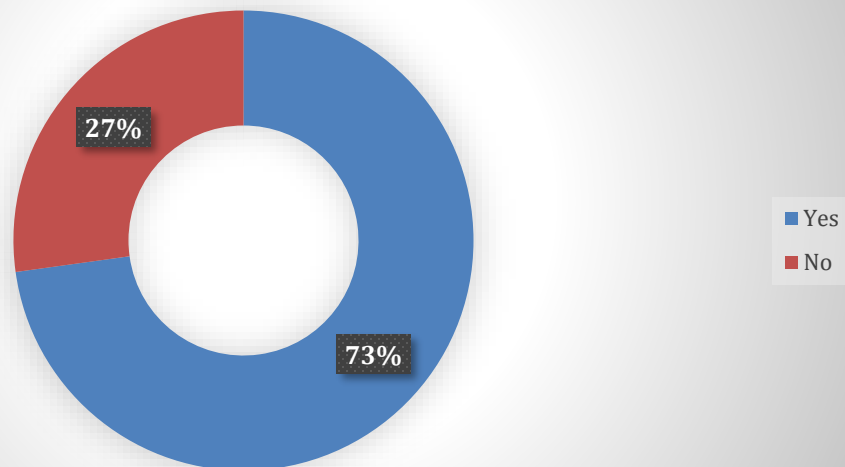
Spiritual Growth Indicator



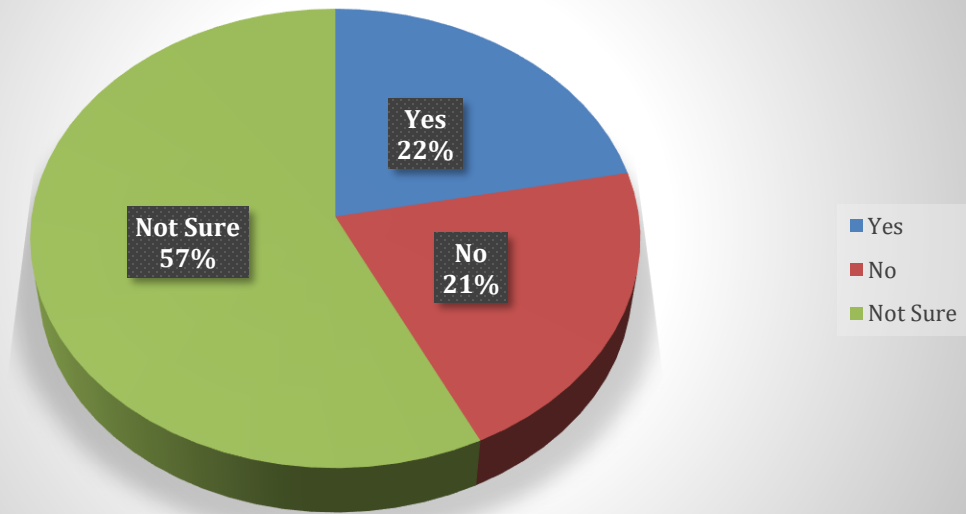
Previous Leadership Roles



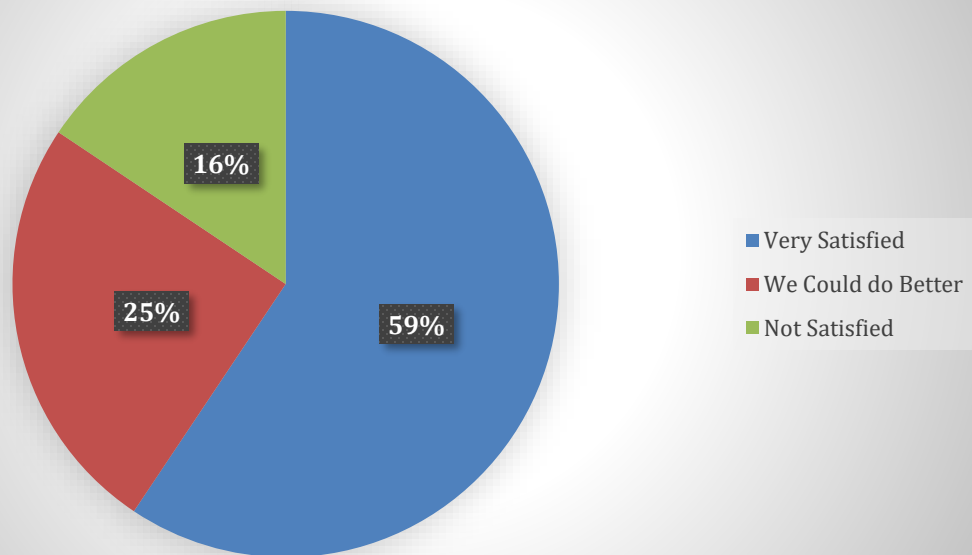
Leading a Bible Study



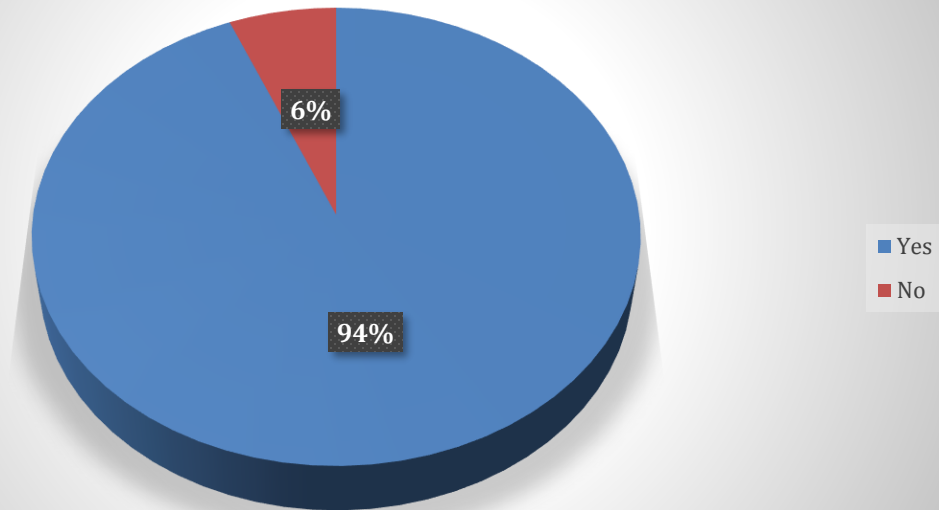
Does Church Have Discipleship Program?



Are You Satisfied with Church's Discipleship Program



Interest in Leading Small Group



Is Effective Discipleship your Goal?

