

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

FOUR SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES: CREATING A DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE IN A
CARIBBEAN CHURCH CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

FOUR SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES: CREATING A DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE IN A CARIBBEAN CHURCH CONTEXT

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Pastors and church leaders have critical roles to play in the spiritual development of their members. In this study, this student proposes to present a practical solution to a perennial issue that plagues his church and many others in Trinidad and Tobago. Presently, many church members are spiritual consumers of the ministry of a few, while they remain spiritual infants who do not contribute to the local church or to fulfilling the Great Commission. The churches are faced with the problem of determining how to teach, train, and disciple its members effectively to become spiritually mature disciples who know their spiritual gifts, have discovered their purpose, are engaged in ministry, and are ready to fulfill their role in the Great Commission.

In this study, this student will examine four scriptural principles that Jesus employed in preparing His disciples to accomplish the Great Commission. These are the consecration principle, the culture-shift principle, the apprenticeship principle, and the reproduction principle. The purpose of the study is to examine the role that intentional and relational small group discipleship, along with ministry training groups, plays in the maturation of Christians using the four principles. Through applied research, the student will examine the commitment of local churches in Trinidad and Tobago to the discipleship and ministry preparation of their members. This student proposes to unearth the cultural, theological, or social issues that affect spiritual

growth, particularly in the Caribbean, and will assess the responsibility of pastors and their leaders in making disciples.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ministry Context

Discipleship is the main spiritual developmental activity of the church. It is the vehicle by which new and old believers alike are developed into spiritually mature disciples who become preachers, teachers, and evangelists. It is, therefore, no small matter that the last words of Jesus as recorded in the book of Matthew were the command to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).¹ The commission that Jesus left His apostles was more than an instruction to spread the gospel of salvation. That is only half of the picture.

The Great Commission has always carried a greater significance with respect to the responsibility of pastors and church leaders to train, develop, mature, and reproduce people who are passionate and committed disciples of Jesus Christ. Greg Ogden states, “Leaders in the church have been assigned the task of preparing or training ordinary believers, referred to as saints, for their place of service in the body of Christ.”² Any church that stops short of this goal is failing in its responsibility to its members and in its commitment to fulfilling the precise command that Jesus Christ left the church. Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Coleman note that “attendance, busyness, construction, finances, and programs are not real indications of success. The core question of effectiveness — the question that ultimately matters — is whether the people who are getting saved are being conformed to the likeness of Christ.”³ Every church, therefore, should be intentional about developing healthy disciples just as Jesus commanded in

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version.

² Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples A Few at a Time* (InterVarsity Press, 2003), 523. Kindle Edition.

³ Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington and Robert E. Coleman, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 202. Kindle Edition.

Matthew 28:19-20; yet, so many churches appear to have stumbled at this point and have not begun to disciple their members.

In the years following the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Early Church heavily emphasized the practice of discipleship, which resulted in the propulsion of the church throughout the known world. The spiritual relationship between Barnabas and Saul is an example of the monumental transformational power that is released in an intentional and relational discipleship context. Barnabas nurtured and encouraged Saul spiritually, helping the latter to divest himself of his pharisaical past in order to be embraced as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. F. F. Bruce notes that according to “the apostolic record, Barnabas lived up to this reputation: wherever he found a person or a cause needing to be encouraged, he supplied all the encouragement he could.”⁴ As Ogden puts it, “Barnabas was the tool that the Lord used to get Paul into the game.”⁵ Barnabas and Saul worked together assiduously in Antioch for over a year (Acts 11:24, 26), faithfully evangelizing the lost and ministering to the saints there until the Holy Spirit called them to undertake an evangelistic ministry on Cyprus and in Galatia. As they conducted their ministry to the Jews and Greeks (Acts 13:16-41) in those areas, the spiritual anointing and notoriety of Saul, who was also known as Paul, (Acts 13:9) had so dramatically increased that Luke, the author of Acts, began to refer to the duo as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:14, 42, 43, 46) instead of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2; 4, 7, 8). The reposition of their names is an indication of the dramatic spiritual advancement Paul made and the overwhelming confidence he developed as a minister of the gospel during his time with

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 83.

⁵ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 2075. Kindle Edition.

Barnabas. The nurturing role of Barnabas, the son of encouragement,⁶ in Paul's life had come to an end, although they would continue to minister with each other until, after a disagreement Barnabas took John Mark and headed for Cyprus, while Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:37-40). Such was the success of their ministry that "the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region" (Acts 13:49). Luke further notes that, "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (v.52). Indeed, the disciples of Jesus adhered passionately to His command; consequently, they disciplined and taught others to observe all that Jesus had taught them (Matt. 28:20a). They equally believed that Jesus would be with them as they carried out this mission (v. 20b).

As a spiritual leader whom Jesus Christ has given to build His church (Eph. 4:11), a minister's sole source of legitimacy is rooted in the diligent execution of his or her duties as a servant by faithfully obeying the Lord's commandments (John 14:15). To what higher purpose, therefore, could a minister or a pastor aspire than the fulfillment of the Great Commission by making mature disciples for Jesus Christ who can advance the Gospel of the Kingdom as His ambassadors? Rodney Dempsey and Dave Earley have state, "Perhaps the clearest argument for leading small groups is because Jesus gave us an example and we should follow His example."⁷ If a senior pastor follows the example of Christ, he can expect the fruit of Christ's work to be manifested in his local congregation. Conversely, casual ambivalence or indifference regarding the implementation of practical discipleship methods to mature the saints is destructive to the church of God. It is, therefore, critically important to state in no uncertain terms that discipleship is not an option for the church.

⁶ Acts 4:36.

⁷ Rodney Dempsey and Dave Earley, *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying, Small Groups* (Lynchburg: Liberty University Press, 2016), 781. Kindle Edition.

Grave problems exist in many congregations that are directly or indirectly linked to the absence of an intentionally implemented discipleship plan. Dallas Willard goes one step further to remark that “most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have never decided to follow Christ.”⁸ The desire to see believers grow to fulfill the intent of God for their lives must be the paramount and unswerving vision of a senior pastor. Robert Gallaty is correct in his declaration that “until disciple-making becomes the ministry of the church and not a ministry in the church, we will never see our discipleship efforts impact the world the way that Jesus envisioned.”⁹ The objective of church leadership should be the development of healthy disciples who love God, love one another, and are dedicated to the continuation of the commission that Jesus entrusted to His apostles and, by extension, the church. In the absence of discipleship, believers remain undeveloped in their spiritual giftings. Further, the love of Jesus Christ and the pursuit of righteousness may be replaced by a legalistic counterfeit. Worse yet, the world is rendered hopeless as they are left without a clear representation of the person of Jesus Christ through the lives of mature, disciplined believers and without the articulated presentation of the Gospel of salvation. It is no wonder that, as Thom and Sam Rainer write, “With more than 80 percent of North American churches stagnant or declining, the church is quickly becoming nonessential to society. With nearly four thousand churches closing their doors permanently each year, a turnaround is imperative.”¹⁰ Only when believers are trained intentionally in a relational environment where they are pursuing a vertical relationship with

⁸. Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 195. Kindle Edition

⁹. Robert Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus’ Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 221. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰. Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer, *Essential Church: Reclaiming A Generation of Dropouts* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 21.

God, a horizontal relationship with fellow believers, and a missional assignment according to the Great Commission that a regeneration of spiritual life will begin in the church.

This student has had ministerial experience in discipleship training and spiritual formation. It is from this ministry context that this student has noticed that there is a great urgency for the revitalization of the ministry of intentional and relational discipleship within a small group context in the local church. From 2016 to 2018, this student taught a discipleship class at his local church in Trinidad and Tobago using a personally-designed curriculum. The philosophy of the class was to be relational, intentional, and communal as every believer joined in the pursuit of becoming spiritually and biblically mature disciples of Jesus Christ. The class functioned like a family as it continued to grow both in number and spirituality. New members joined the class as the older members spread the word about their spiritual development.

As the director of the class, this student discovered that there were serious and substantial ideological and cultural issues that impeded the spiritual development of the members, when compounded with the diminutiveness of their theological knowledge and understanding of their role as ambassadors of the gospel. Several members of the discipleship class had, by that time, been Christians for many years, but the concept of living a consecrated life unto God had not been ingrained in them and consequently was not the reality of their daily experience.

Before joining the class, some members attended church while they continued to be involved heavily in Carnival activities. Carnival is a yearly event that is ingrained in Trinidadian culture. The festivities only last a week and ritualistically end the day before Ash Wednesday in observance of the Lenten season. The Carnival period is rife with increased sexual immorality as local and international revelers take full advantage of the season to engage in promiscuous behavior both at parties and on the streets. Other members of the discipleship class had been

involved in culturally accepted occultic practices and had retained a belief in them even after their conversion to Christianity. Some of these practices included lighting differently colored candles and wearing beads and jewelry to ward off evil spirits. Another common practice was the use of special liquids such as “Florida Water”. This is a combination of citrus and floral scents that is used in purification rituals to remove negative energy/spirits and to facilitate the ease of communication with spirits. Another prevalent ritual was the practice of bathing persons in water while sweeping or beating them over the body with a broomstick made of coconut leaves to procure a spiritually “protective” effect. The latter practice is called Jarré (pronounced “jah-ray”). This is frequently done to newborn babies in Trinidad and Tobago to deal with issues ranging from mundane ones such as excessive crying to more serious reasons such as physical sickness or infirmity in the child.

Unsurprisingly, before the commencement of the class, most of the members expressed a nominal faith in Christ that characteristically was not manifested in a significant transformation of their attitudes towards prayer, the reading of the Word, or the practice of other spiritual disciplines. Common to every member of the group were the following: (1) they were not knowledgeable in the Scriptures, (2) they were not aware of their spiritual gifts, (3) they were not cognizant of their spiritual identity or purpose as believers, (4) they did not possess any knowledge about the Great Commission or about their role as Christians in fulfilling it, and (5) they had not been discipled prior to their attendance to the class. From the outset of the discipleship class, this student had reached the overall conclusion that the personal spiritual development of Christians cannot be assured by the mere attendance of church on Sundays or weekly Bible study. Rodney Dempsey notes, “What most people need in order to become a

mature follower of Jesus is not [*sic*] curriculum but someone to watch and learn from.”¹¹

Spiritual growth is a developmental phenomenon that must be observed, nurtured, and measured by senior pastors and church leaders as they interact with their members and remain connected to them. Mark Dever states that “spending time with people is a crucial part of raising up leaders, just as Jesus called the disciples to join him on the mountain so they might “be with him.”¹²

Church leaders, therefore, must model the life of Jesus Christ to their members (Eph. 5:1) and must work to keep them accountable, not only for their actions, but also for the fulfillment of their spiritual potential.

This student, therefore, has had personal experience in the implementation of an intentional and relational model of discipleship within a small group context of 12-15 believers and can attest to the efficacy of this model. This student posits that an environment in which church leaders can develop the spirituality of their members by listening to their stories, sharing in their pain, uncovering biblical truth, glorifying God in worship, and ministering with them to the lost is the best context for the maturation of disciples of Jesus Christ. This model is attested in Scripture, and along with other principles that are derived from the ministry of Jesus, will yield positive results that counteract a major problem confronting churches in Trinidad and Tobago.

Problem Presented

The problem addressed in this thesis is that the overwhelming majority of members at this student’s local church are merely continuous consumers of the ministerial efforts of a minority of spiritually mature leaders, while they, the members, remain in spiritual infancy

¹¹ Dempsey and Earley, *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying, Small Groups*, 99. Kindle Edition.

¹² Mark Dever, “9 Ways to Raise Up Leaders in Your Church” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-ways-to-raise-up-leaders-in-your-church>. June 5, 2017, accessed September 1, 2019.

regarding the giftings and the purpose of God for their lives. While there has been numerical growth over the past ten years, the spiritual growth of the general membership during this period remains indeterminable. The church leadership has never taken any steps to measure whether nominal or substantial spiritual growth has occurred in the congregation. Further, the number of new converts is uncertain, and the number of converts who have been disciplined and ushered into ministry is even less clear.

The second problem that this student has observed in his local church is that it does not have a detailed plan for the spiritual development of its members from new converts/believers to mature disciples who can contribute to the life of the local church and the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Further, the church does not have a verification mechanism to monitor the spiritual growth and development of its members through the stages of discipleship and, consequently, there are currently no existing processes in the church to determine or verify whether it is operating efficiently. This student is committed to the development of healthy and mature disciples in his local church and in that of other churches in the New Testament Church of God in Trinidad and Tobago. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to develop a discipleship plan that complements the present evangelistic work of these churches. This plan will present a strategy for senior pastors that involves intentionally and relationally teaching and training believers to become mature disciples who are ready to pursue their role in the local church and the Great Commission. Rather than operating on the supposition that believers are growing, the discipleship model will require senior leaders to measure and validate spiritual growth.

If the church is going to grow healthily and faithfully, it must be in the business of intentionally and relationally developing all its members into disciples who are filled with the Holy Spirit, know their specific giftings and callings in the Kingdom of God, and are

contributing to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Jim Putman, a veteran teacher and disciple-maker, has distilled the process of discipleship into an equation: “An intentional leader + relational environment + reproducible process = infinite number of disciples.”¹³ The process of discipleship is itself cyclical and, therefore, in the view of this student, it is the primary developmental ministry of the church. When new converts are discipled, they eventually become the people who go out into *all the world* with the conviction of the Word of God in their hearts to win the lost for Christ. When new believers come into the church, spiritual leaders are tasked with the responsibility of transforming them into mature disciples. Putman correctly states that “discipleship demands intentionality and relationship — by which each person is invested in specifically. This cannot happen in the worship service.”¹⁴ Believers who merely attend weekend or Wednesday night services are not being discipled, they are being educated. While the church was called to preach and teach the gospel both to the saved and unsaved, it must strive to fulfill its primary commission, that is, to make and nurture committed disciples of Jesus Christ. Many churches in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the Caribbean, however, frequently focus on the evangelistic arm of the commission and neglect discipleship.

This reality is a great indictment on the church, which has become either isolated by its desire to be *separate from the world* or too accommodating in order to become relevant to the world. The responsibility for the apathetic and lethargic spiritual attitudes in the church today lies, in large part, with senior pastors who are commanded by the Lord to make mature disciples of Jesus Christ. The holders of the ministerial offices outlined by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians were commissioned by God to develop spiritually mature people who are being conformed to the

¹³ Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciple* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 390. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 230 Kindle Edition.

fullness of the image and likeness of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:11-13). Having been in the ministry for several years, this writer sees a strikingly apparent dichotomy between the biblical ideal of discipleship and the application of discipleship at his church that has rendered many members deficient of the spiritual power and anointing that God has promised them in the Word.

Discipleship is a word that is floated around at leadership meetings in this student's local church, but the ministry has not been implemented into the life of the church in an intentional and purposeful manner that produces results that can be validated, verified, and reproduced. The church holds a discipleship class every Wednesday, but it is not formalized, and although it is open to every member of the church, only a very few people attend, other than those who are preparing for baptism. While this student's local church is actively pursuing the fulfillment of the Great Commission as it relates to the preaching and teaching of the Gospel and the evangelizing of the unsaved, it has failed to implement any plan for intentionally and relationally making disciples according to the commands of Jesus.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect that intentional and relational small group discipleship plays in the maturation of Christians using the principles of consecration, culture-shift, apprenticeship, and reproduction, with the intention of offering a practical solution to the problem confronting this student's local church. Through applied research in the student's local church and other churches within the New Testament Church of God denomination, this student will engage in a comparative study that examines the commitment of these churches to discipleship. This student seeks to discover the cultural, theological, or personal issues that affect a believers' spiritual growth and to assess the responsibility and effectiveness of senior pastors and church leaders in making disciples. After the study is completed, this student will offer a

practical solution to a grave problem confronting the denomination today, which is the necessity of making healthy, kingdom-minded disciples who are prepared and equipped to fulfill their role in the Great Commission.

Jesus Christ enlisted His apostles in the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. The churches of the New Testament Church of God in Trinidad and Tobago proclaim the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. New converts to Christianity will inevitably come to church with a host of ungodly cultural and spiritual beliefs, misguided perceptions, and unbiblical worldviews that are diametrically opposed to the culture of the Kingdom of God. Church leaders are, therefore, required to disciple new and existing members so that they become thoroughly acculturated to the principles espoused in Scripture as they seek to follow the Lord. Using the data obtained from the surveys, the researcher hopes to sensitize leaders to the central importance of discipleship to their local church ministry and to develop a clear and efficient discipleship plan that serves the local churches of the New Testament Church of God in discipling their new converts and existing members to become mature disciples, thus developing a healthy church.

Thesis Statement

The thesis of the project is that the absence of the implementation of intentional and relational discipleship methods in the operational framework of the church has resulted in the materialization of spiritual lethargy among church members who have developed an attitude of spiritual consumerism instead of a disposition to spiritual maturity and ministerial activation. There are four major principles practiced by Jesus in the Gospels that will produce spiritually mature Christians who are trained, developed, and equipped to participate in the Great Commission. The intended outcome of the project is that recommendations will be made to this

student's local and national church regarding the intentional implementation of principles and strategies that will revamp the culture of the church to produce healthy disciples who know their calling and are prepared for ministry.

Basic Assumptions

This student makes the primary assumption that discipleship is best practiced and achieved in the context of an intentional and relational small group. Dempsey and Earley have stated that, "small groups are the best place for positive change to take place. When people get saved, they want to grow. When people grow, they want to serve. When people start serving, they want to invest strategically. When people invest strategically, they begin to reap the results."¹⁵ This theory finds expression in the discipleship ministry of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel narratives. This student asserts that if the biblical principles Jesus employed in training His disciples are applied intentionally and relationally by senior pastors in Trinidad and Tobago, then results approximating those that Jesus accomplished will be achieved. The goal of the senior pastor should be to make mature disciples who are active in ministry, connected to one another, and rightly related to God in spiritual submission to Him. A thesis project that endeavors to create a definitive plan to commence or improve the practice of discipleship ministry in churches where there has been spiritual lethargy in the development of the members is significant, beneficial, and of immense utility.

This student also assumes the unique importance of small groups. Like cells in the human body, the functional continuity of which is impossible without sustained growth and multiplication, small groups have the potential to generate and sustain spiritual life in the local church body when leaders concentrate their efforts on nurturing individual members in the group

¹⁵ Dempsey and Earley, *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying, Small Groups*, 214. Kindle Edition.

to ensure their spiritual health and development. Dave and John Ferguson note that “when living organisms are healthy, they naturally reproduce. God’s intention for his church is that it would be a healthy, living organism that not only grows but also continually reproduces.”¹⁶ When the components of the cells in an organism are healthy, the entire body will be healthy.

In Scripture, the Apostle Paul paints a picture of the divine life that flows from Jesus, who is the head, through the His Body, which is the Church, to every believer (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18). In his writings to the Romans, Paul also uses the natural familial structure to explain the unity, loyalty, and commitment that God expects to flow among believers who are spiritual siblings in the family of God (Rom. 8:12-17). Joseph Hellerman explains, “Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community. People who remain connected with their brothers and sisters in the local church almost invariably grow in self-understanding, and they mature in their ability to relate in healthy ways to God and to their fellow human beings.”¹⁷ The respective conceptual imagery of the body of Christ and the connectivity of the familial structure give expression to the spiritual reality that the church is the visible, spiritual representative of Christ on the earth, through which His power and presence flow in pursuance of the redemption of humanity.¹⁸ The entire operation of internal spiritual growth among believers and the pursuit of external ministerial goals is only achievable in the context of healthy, dynamic, and life-giving relationships. The necessity of integrative connectivity that leads to spiritual dynamism and effective functional capacity in believers explains why Paul urged the Ephesian church to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). These two

¹⁶ Dave Ferguson and John Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1442. Kindle Edition.

¹⁷ Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was A Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 911. Kindle Edition.

¹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (SCM Classics), 3405-3451. Kindle Edition.

powerful metaphors constitute the philosophical basis of the disciple-making process. There is no true discipleship apart from intentionally training believers, not only to be spiritually connected to God in a vertical relationship, but also to be relationally connected to the body of fellow believers through the Spirit, and to their mission in the world.

This student also assumes that there is a dual rationale for the current state of spiritual lethargy in his church and other New Testament Church of God churches. The first is the personal unwillingness of believers to commit themselves to the spiritually required lifestyle of righteousness and personal denial of the carnal nature. Some believers view the stringency of those requirements as unnecessary provided they “make it to heaven” by the continuous casual repenting of their sin, even without a true transformation and renewal of their mind. The second assumed rationale is that senior pastors and church leaders have neglected to implement discipleship plans and procedures in their local churches that would afford to all believers the opportunity to participate in a training program that is designed to equip them for ministry and aid them in developing their spiritual relationship with God. Speaking of the state of the church in America, Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold write:

A great number of churches are characterized by an inward, self-serving focus, territorialism, bullies, power brokers, passivity, disillusionment, lack of a clearly defined purpose and vision, all accompanied by division and conflict. The result of such attitudes and actions is a mass of churches that are plateaued or declining in membership, attendance, and vitality. Many have become havens for the disgruntled and fortresses against the Great Commission. These “country clubs” have become the antithesis of everything the gospel represents.¹⁹

Pastors are the guardians of their flock and the gatekeepers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their pessimistic attitudes towards the church, the ministry, and the gospel have a deleterious

¹⁹ Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re: Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 384. Kindle Edition.

effect on the spiritual advancement of the members they serve. It is inimical to the development of the church of Jesus Christ, therefore, if pastors assemble their congregations to teach or share a sermon without concomitantly upholding the biblical purpose of those functions which are to build up the saints. The explicitly stated mandate of the fivefold ministry in Ephesians 4:11-16 is nestled around the concept of making mature disciples who become living examples of Jesus Christ.

Definitions

In the examination of the stated problem stated, this student will discuss the general theme of discipleship. He will, however, place significant emphasis on the application of the four specific developmental principles that Jesus utilized in transforming the Twelve into committed disciples and apostles who were equipped to continue the advancement of the Kingdom of God. These themes and principles will now be defined.

The first term to be defined is *discipleship*. Discipleship is the practice of training and developing new converts to become mature believers in Christ through the practice of spiritual disciplines, the development genuine relationships in the church between members and leaders, and the deepening of their relationship with God so that they attain to the fullness of the image of Jesus Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer succinctly defines it as a “commitment to Christ. Because Christ exists, he must be followed.”²⁰ Christlikeness is the only acceptable goal of discipleship. It is not merely another program or Bible study; rather, it is a commitment one makes to follow Jesus Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, choosing to deny the flesh so that he may be conformed to the nature of Christ by the power of the Spirit.

²⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship, Vol. 4 in Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg: Fortress, 2003), 1509. Kindle Edition.

Second, *disciple-makers* are mature leaders within the church whose purpose is to encourage, correct, and edify disciples to live holy as they mature in their vertical relationship with the Lord and their horizontal relationship with the other members of the church. Being accountable to a spiritual leader for how one lives is a vital component of church life as is evidenced throughout the New Testament Scriptures.

The third term to be defined is a *disciple*. A disciple, in a Christian context, is a follower of Jesus Christ. Gallaty explains that “‘disciple’ is a dynamic term for a ‘learner’ or ‘student’ who actively learns, through hearing and practice, the teaching of his or her teacher.”²¹ In this definition, there is the understanding that the teachings, beliefs, and practices of the teacher are to be reproduced in the life of this student. It is also important to say what discipleship is not.

Bob Deffinbaugh explains it best:

Why use the term ‘makes disciples’ then? Why not simply command that we evangelize the world? The reason is that Christianity is more than a decision to trust in Christ as Savior. It is not enough to invite men to believe in Christ as Savior. In the Gospels, our Lord invited men to follow Him, not just to believe on [*sic*] Him. Christianity is more than a moment-in-time conversion; it is the radical transformation or conversion which leads to a whole new way of life. It implies forsaking of our former way of life, and our commitment to live as God requires, by His grace. In other words, discipleship is used because it compresses conversion and Christian living, salvation and sanctification, into one term. Conversion to Christ, in the gospels and the rest of the New Testament, was inconceivable without a commitment to follow Him in life. That is why our Lord persistently challenged would-be followers to count the cost, as well as the rewards.²²

In a biblical context, therefore, a disciple is a person who observes everything that Jesus commanded, particularly the requirement to love one’s neighbor as Jesus loves His disciples (John 13:34) and to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). Jim Putnam notes that “to be disciples, we too must recognize and accept who Jesus is, and we must place

²¹ Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, 1901. Kindle Edition.

²² Bob Deffinbaugh, “What Happened to Discipleship in the Epistles?” accessed March 15, 2020, <https://bible.org/seriespage/18-what-happened-discipleship-epistles>.

ourselves under His authority.”²³ In a real sense, every disciple is one who has so died to self for the cause of Christ (Mark 8:34-35; Rom. 6:11) that he might live in Him and Christ through him (Gal. 2:20). When disciples are integrated into the life of the church in the manner stated above, there is implied accountability on a horizontal level among fellow disciples in the local congregation and on a vertical level between disciples and Jesus Christ as Lord.

The first discipleship principle that must be defined is the *consecration principle*. Consecration means to set oneself apart for a particular purpose. In Christianity, every believer is required to consecrate his life unto God as an act of sacrificial surrender leading to the obedience of Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). In the Gospels, it is evident that Jesus invited His disciples not simply to investigate or examine Him for authenticity, but to follow Him (Matt. 4:19). Jesus demanded total obedience from His disciples. For this reason, He said, “But why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). In another instance, He stated, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me” (John 14:21). Obedience to Jesus Christ, according to Matthew 16:24-25, may incur personal inconvenience, hardship, and sacrifice. A church that is committed to the fulfillment of the Great Commission must develop disciples who have chosen to set themselves apart from the culture of the world to embrace the culture of the Kingdom.

The second principle of discipleship is the *culture-shift principle*. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus engaged and challenged His disciples on the level of their worldview, religious understanding, and cultural beliefs, which conflicted with the superior culture and ethos of the Kingdom of God. Through the means of teaching, preaching, and practical experience in ministry, Jesus revealed divine truth to His disciples to increase their faith, to develop their

²³ Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 283. Kindle Edition.

character, and to cement their understanding in the distinctions between the ways of the world and the nature of the Kingdom of God. In the Gospel of Matthew, there are several occurrences where Jesus began His teaching with the refrain, “You have heard it said..., but I say unto you...” (Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). These statements are culture-shifting statements that require a difference in thinking and belief that are essential to the development of a renewed mind. The idea behind this principle is that to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, disciples must think like Christ concerning every aspect of their lives.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus shared parables with His disciples concerning money, the Kingdom of God, righteousness, leadership, humility, and faith. His intended purpose was to transform their minds by elevating their thinking from the control of rudimentary human limitations of the world in order to access and bring to earth the realm of the Kingdom of God through faith in God. For example, after receiving a request from James and John, the sons of Zebedee to sit as his right and left hand in His kingdom, Jesus enlightened them on the culture of the Kingdom of God which is that the greater the honor and blessing one wishes to attain, the lower they must go in humility, service, and sacrifice (Matthew 20:20-28).

The third principle of discipleship is the *apprenticeship principle* and it is a critical component of this thesis. Since discipleship is about the internal spiritual development of a believer to prepare him or her to be engaged in practical ministerial work for Christ, a discussion on the topic without talking about apprenticeship would be incomplete. Jesus was intentional and relational about preparing His disciples for ministry while He was on earth so that they would be prepared to lead the body of believers after His ascension. He trained and released His twelve disciples to minister under His watch in Matthew 10:1-8 and then released seventy more in Luke 10:1. He allowed them to baptize converts (John 4:1-2) and to preach the gospel and pray for the

sick (Matt. 10:1-8; Luke 10:1-9). He explained to them the principles behind healing (Matt. 17:19-20), fellowshipped with them outside of ministry (Mark 4:35-41; 6:30-32), and allowed them to participate actively in the miracles He performed (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 8:1-8). When disciples are trained and allowed to discover their spiritual gifts, a time eventually comes when they are ready to enter the final stage of spiritual reproduction.

The fourth principle of discipleship is the *reproduction principle*. The concept of reproduction is the final principle that Jesus employed in the maturation of His disciples. At this point in their development, the foundational training was completed, and they were ready to execute the roles and responsibilities of an apostle or a “sent one.” Christopher J. H. Wright states, “Jesus' earthly ministry was launched by a movement that aimed at the restoration of Israel. But he himself launched a movement that aimed at the ingathering of the nations to the new messianic people of God.”²⁴ The principle of sending out mature disciples is found in the seminal passage of Matthew 28:18-20. The reproduction principle is essentially the idea that mature disciples are called to make new disciples through a process of multiplication. The Apostle Peter was transformed in the presence of Jesus over three and a half years and was trained to become the kind of leader who could advance the Kingdom of God when the appointed time came. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the reigns of the ministry were left in the hands of the apostles who functioned under the direction of the apostle Peter. After Peter received the baptism of the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised would come (John 14:15-31; Acts 1:8), he preached a powerful sermon that resulted in the salvation of 3000 men in one day (Acts 2:41). In this example, a basic principle can be discerned which is that “raising up spiritual

²⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 6925. Kindle Edition.

reproducers is the heart of God.”²⁵ Mentoring and training are important before releasing a new leader to lead a group.

Statement of Methodology

This student’s research project is concentrated on the need to develop a practical discipleship method that is suitable to a Caribbean church context. Issues such as a predominantly strong Carnival culture, the presence of other religious organizations that influence new believers both on a familial and personal level, the prevalence of the practice and adherence to culturally accepted spiritual rituals, and the lamentable deficiency of theological convictional knowledge plague Christians in Trinidad and Tobago. These issues form the backdrop to the major problem addressed in this thesis, which is that there is a growing ambience of spiritual consumerism and lethargy that has resulted in the stagnation of spiritual growth in this student’s church and other New Testament Church of God congregations. These believers remain in spiritual infancy with regards to the purpose of God for their lives in the local church and in fulfilling the Great Commission. This student posits that the underlying issues and the problem presented in this thesis can be remedied by the implementation of an informed discipleship plan that is tailored to confront the spiritual and cultural realities that exist in Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean countries that share an analogous cultural story.

The New Testament Church of God Trinidad and Tobago is a congregation of churches under the present administrative leadership of Bishop Alonzo Jones. The movement in Trinidad and Tobago is directly affiliated with the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee, which is the International Headquarters of the entire organization.

²⁵ Dave Earley, *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders – Transforming Your Ministry Outside Your Meetings* (Houston: Touch USA, 2001), 908. Kindle Edition.

In the year 1884 the Church of God, though it was not yet formally known by that name, was started in the United States of America by Richard G. Spurling, a Licensed Minister in the Baptist Church. As a response to Spurling's unanswered calls for reforms and spiritual awakening,²⁶ on Thursday, August 19, 1886, he and a group of friends and ministers "held a Conference and organized a new Church called the 'Christian Union,' which twenty-one years later became 'The Church of God.'"²⁷ Eric John Murray notes, "The Church of God stands against the division of creed and denominationalism and believes that membership in the Church is established by faith in Christ and not through man-made procedures."²⁸ Essentially, the Church of God, both in doctrine and practice, is a part of the 'Holiness Movement' of the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical Christianity.

In July 1956, the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee amalgamated with a local church group called the Christian General Assembly, which was founded by the late Reverend Edward Dickson Hasmatiali and his wife, Vera.²⁹ This amalgamation marked the beginning of the New Testament Church of God in Trinidad and Tobago, "with eight churches, eight missions, fifteen ministers and 350 members."³⁰ Presently, the New Testament Church of God Trinidad and Tobago has 11,500 members, 110 ministers, 67 organized churches, 10 missions, and 16 branch Sunday schools.³¹ This student has been a member of the New Testament Church of God for the past nine years and has served as a minister in different capacities for the past five years.

²⁶ "Our History," New Testament Church of God Trinidad and Tobago, accessed September 9, 2019, <http://ntcogtt.org/our-history/>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Eric John Murray, *Religions of Trinidad and Tobago: A Guide to the History, Beliefs, and Polity of 23 Religious Faiths* (Murray Publications Limited, Port-of-Spain 1998), 70.

²⁹ "Our History," New Testament Church of God.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

It is this student's close affiliation with the organization that has allowed him to observe the issues that exist regarding the discipleship of believers and has prompted an urgent desire to resolve the problem.

In the examination of this problem, this student will conduct the research component of the project in two phases. In the first part of the research, this student will conduct Pre-Discipleship and Post-Discipleship Training questionnaires of ten (10) members from this student's local church between the ages of 18-65 out of a sample population of 200 members. This group will also undergo a discipleship and ministry training course in a controlled relational small group setting throughout a 4-week period, once a week. Each session will span two hours. They will be instructed according to a discipleship syllabus that is developed by this student and which is unfamiliar to them. The rationale for the approach of conducting the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey, the discipleship and ministry training course, and the Post-Discipleship Training Survey, is to record the spiritual development of the participants and to measure any difference in their understanding of discipleship, small groups, the discovery of their spiritual gifts, and their purpose as it relates to the Great Commission.

In the second phase of the study, this student, having obtained the permission of the National Overseer of the New Testament Church of God (NTCOG), will disseminate a pastoral survey that will be completed by eight (8) senior pastors, each of whom has been pastoring a local church with more than thirty (30) members for at least five years in the denomination. One of the surveys will be completed by this student's senior pastor. This survey will assess the pastor's theological and practical commitments to the implementation of discipleship plans for their members. By completing this part of the study, this student will discover the factors that caused or contributed to the spiritual consumerism and lethargy in church members and how

pastoral leaders can implement discipleship plans in their local church to develop mature disciples who are trained, energized, and ready to pursue their role in the Great Commission. This student will also obtain the permission of the National Overseer to disseminate the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey, which is to be completed by ten (10) members in each church where the senior pastor completed the pastors' survey. These church members must be between 18-65 years of age, must have attended the local church for at least three (3) years, but who have not participated in discipleship or ministerial training.

The rationale of the second phase of the study is to conduct an assessment outside of this student's local church that is not prejudiced or influenced by any prior knowledge or interaction with this student and is uninfluenced by a sense of obligation or loyalty to the senior pastor. With the results compiled from this second phase of the study, this student will collate comparative data to synthesize the cultural, theological, and personal beliefs and practices that affect the spiritual growth of the participants and to assess the spiritual responsibility that members believe their senior pastor has in relation to their spiritual development.

In chapter two, this student will set out the conceptual framework that underlies the thesis project. This student will conduct a review of the current literature on discipleship, texts related to pastoral leadership in the church, and on literary works that provide a historical overview of the origins, activities, and expansion of Christianity in the English-speaking Caribbean. Thereafter, this student will detail the theological foundations that underpin the thesis project by engaging in a general assessment of the nature and significance of discipleship ministry, and small groups ministry, and by examining the confluence between discipleship and the Pauline theme of the body of Christ. In this chapter, this student will also examine the four theological principles that Jesus practiced in the spiritual training and maturation of His disciples. These

scriptural principles, which are the theological framework of the entire thesis, are supported by an exposition of several passages that legitimize the use of the consecration, culture-shift, apprenticeship, and reproduction principles in the disciple-making process.

In the third chapter, this student will detail how the research was accomplished using the Pre-Discipleship and Post-Discipleship Training Surveys, the Senior Pastor Survey, and the Discipleship Training Manual. This student will also give a detailed explanation of the participants and why they were chosen to complete the questionnaires. This student will provide the rationale for the use of those survey instruments and will describe the data collection methods and analysis techniques utilized.

In chapter four, this student will analyze the results of the discipleship surveys that will be used in the data collection process. The data from the church members will be assessed according to their current spiritual maturity, their present understanding of discipleship, their willingness to undergo discipleship, their understanding of their ministry calling, their views of the responsibility of church leadership in making disciples, and how effective the leadership has been in that regard. The data collected from the Senior Pastor Survey will also be analyzed with specific emphasis placed on the role the pastors play in discipleship in the local church and the plans they have implemented for discipleship.

After the data from the church members and pastoral surveys are collated and analyzed, this student will develop a new Small Group Discipleship Plan (hereafter called “the Discipleship Plan”) that will be an amalgam of the discipleship training syllabus and the results obtained from the surveys. The Discipleship Plan will be attached as an appendix to this thesis project. This Discipleship Plan will be designed to do the following: (1) provide pastors and their leaders with a theological framework for intentionally and relationally pursuing discipleship

ministry in the local church; (2) provide pastors with the tools required to develop a vibrant discipleship ministry within their churches; (3) help senior pastors avoid the pitfalls of spiritual lethargy among their members which result in the absence of spiritual growth; (4) help pastors understand what biblically constitutes a healthy church; (5) assist pastors and their leaders in helping their members identify and develop their spiritual gifts; (6) help pastors develop a vision for their members being actively involved in the Great Commission both as individuals and as a church community; and (7) explain to pastors how practically to develop small group ministries in their churches that are multiplying and reproducing new groups.

The Discipleship Plan will first be submitted to the student's senior pastor for review and implementation and will thereafter be formally presented to the National Overseer of the NTCOG of Trinidad and Tobago as a researched-based proposal for the implementation of relational small group discipleship ministries in the 67 churches under his stewardship.

Chapter five will be the conclusion of the thesis project. This student will provide summaries of the content in the preceding chapters. These summaries will allow the reader to quickly comprehend the scope, aim, and results of the project. Further, the research problem and the issues confronting the church and senior leaders will be restated briefly as a preface to a discussion on the significance of the research project and its application to Trinidad and Tobago, to churches regionally within the Caribbean, and to international churches that are in a position of stunted or retarded spiritual growth. This student will also give recommendations to senior pastors, pastoral leadership, and to church members regarding practical methods by which they can advance the restoration of the ministry of discipleship in the local church. In this chapter, this student will also discuss the development of a philosophical framework for discipleship ministry in a Caribbean context. This will form the basis of the discipleship plan that will emerge as a

product of the thesis project. Finally, this student will give recommendations concerning opportunities for future research on the topic of discipleship.

Limitations and Delimitations

This thesis is focused on the relationship between pastoral leadership and the transformational development of ordinary believers into mature disciples of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the thesis is to provide practical and theological recommendations to senior pastors and their leaders that will help them develop a plan to disciple their members so that they will move from spiritual apathy and lethargy to becoming spiritually mature disciples who are ready to pursue their role in the Great Commission. The first limitation in this study is that there are some aspects of discipleship that will not be the focus of this research project such as the practice of discipleship in cell-group churches and home-group structured churches. The analytical and scientific research that will be conducted in this study is limited to churches in Trinidad and Tobago and is yet further delimited to the New Testament Church of God denomination. This means that the study will not contemplate the religious and theological positions that pastors or elders hold in other contemporary denominations in Trinidad and Tobago, such as the Evangelical, Presbyterian, Reformed, Open Bible, Anglican, or Roman Catholicism. This student, however, did communicate with senior ministers in these denominations to determine how they view and practice discipleship principles in the maturation of their members.

The first delimitation of this study is that the churches of the New Testament Church of God denomination are all traditional in their organizational and operational structure. In traditional church settings, the pastor or senior elder does most of the work of the ministry and is regarded as the most spiritual person in the church by virtue of his post and function. The

ministry in the church not only revolves around the pastor, but also around the church building.³² As a result, most of the spiritual activities are done within the church walls. In this church structure, change is resisted, provided that the main services in the church are well attended. There are no intentionally designated small groups, cell groups, or home groups in the traditional structure. Finally, dynamic spiritual growth is expected from the preaching in the pulpit and while saints are encouraged to engage in soul-winning,³³ they are minimally trained and equipped to accomplish this task.³⁴ Since the study will examine the effect of the acceptance or the rejection of the biblical principles of discipleship in traditionally structured churches, the study will have little application to churches that have an organizational structure that differs from the traditional church structure. Attractional, hybrid, and organic church operations are, therefore, not within the scope of this study.³⁵

Many of the churches where the surveys will be utilized do not have an existing discipleship plan. Since these churches are in their infancy regarding the practice of discipleship, it is presumed that the results that will be yielded from the study will be consistent with general discipleship theories and practices that exist today. There is the possibility, therefore, that some of the recommendations that will be offered at the end of this study will not advance the general discussion on discipleship further than they would have had the churches been considerably advanced in their discipleship methods before the commencement of the study. This student will,

³² Dave Earley and Rodney Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 3962. Kindle Edition.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 3980. Kindle Edition.

³⁵ For greater analysis of the distinctions between the traditional, attractional, hybrid, and organic church structures see chapter 24 of *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 3944-4059. Kindle Edition by Dave Earley and Rodney Dempsey.

however, offer recommendations from Scripture and make conclusions based on theological reflections to advance the learning on the practice of discipleship.

The thesis is also delimited in its scope by the fact that this student will not pursue an analysis of all the possible principles of discipleship practiced by Jesus during His ministry. In this study, this student will focus on the consecration, culture-shift, apprenticeship, and reproduction principles. This student is of the view that these principles are clearly enunciated in the Gospels and are appropriately chosen themes that accurately summarize the ministry of Jesus in relation to His discipleship method. These themes will, therefore, serve as appropriate markers and tests by which this student's local church and the other churches in the denomination can be assessed for their consistency with standard biblical principles of discipleship.

A further delimitation factor is that this student is bound to the country of Trinidad and Tobago. The study will not consider the social, political, psychological, or theological landscape that exists in North America or any other region of the world, except that the thesis will have general relevance to churches whose structure operates within a traditional framework and whose membership count is within the range of 30-1000 members. Since many countries in the Caribbean share a similar traditional church culture, and to the extent that similar problems exist in other Church of God congregations in that region, the recommendations from the study will offer relevant practical and theological guidance that will be effective in creating a dynamic discipleship culture in that setting. Pastors and their leaders will be prepared with the tools and knowledge required to develop a plan to train, teach, and equip ordinary believers to become mature disciples who are ready to undertake their role in the Great Commission.

Due to the usage of self-reporting instruments to gather critical data in the survey component of the thesis, the results of the survey may be limited by the unwillingness of church

members to be truthful about their personal experiences in their local church. Members who have been in a church for several years may be reluctant to express feelings of dissatisfaction, thinking that to speak frankly may be a betrayal of their pastor or church. Similarly, the pastors of the New Testament Church of God who are asked to complete the Pastors' Survey may be reluctant to speak truthfully about the present state of discipleship training in their church. In an effort to circumvent or significantly reduce the occurrence of this limitation, this student will reiterate and emphasize the absolute anonymity and confidentiality of the study and the responses of the participants.

The research will also be limited by the number of participants from his local church that this student will be allowed to use in the research component of the study. Out of a sample size of approximately 250 members, this student is permitted to use ten members to gain critically important and relevant data in the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey, the 4-week discipleship teaching manual, and the Post-Discipleship Training Survey. A study that conducts a comparative assessment between two or three groups within the church would yield potentially more accurate findings with respect to data relating to their level of spirituality, their opinions on the effectiveness of the training program, their view of discipleship and its importance in ministry, and their views on the effectiveness of the pastoral leaders in making disciples at the church.

The nature of the thesis project carries inherent time deadlines that will limit the number of churches that this student can attend to conduct the research. In addition to this limitation, this student foresees that this research project may be further limited by the number of senior pastors who will be willing to facilitate the execution of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey and the Senior Pastor Survey in their local church. Senior pastors may be reluctant or unable to permit an

outsider to assess their members and their church structure for reasons ranging from the perceived apprehension of criticism to the inability to schedule an appropriate date for this student to attend the church.

Conclusion

The value of the proposed study is of immense proportions to the church in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean at large. For far too long, churches have focused solely on making converts to Christianity while they have neglected to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Having observed the deleterious effect of the church's operation in Trinidad and its failure to develop spiritually healthy disciples who can reproduce new disciples for Christ, this student sees the necessity in examining this phenomenon to discover what are the cultural, theological, and personal factors that generally contribute to a spiritual culture of consumerism and lethargy in church members. While this study has academic value, it is also personal to this student who is dedicated to the development of healthy discipleship practices in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

The following is a review of the relevant literature that informs and guides this thesis project. The books, journals, and dissertations/theses relied upon in this study all demonstrate the need for the implementation of relational and intentional discipleship ministry to make mature disciples who can continue the mission that Jesus left for the church. Many of these texts reveal the extreme significance of creating and maintaining a discipleship culture in the church, the responsibility of which, these sources reveal, lies with the senior pastor and pastoral leadership. The senior and teaching pastors have the responsibility of communicating effectively the importance of spiritual growth through the practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reading of and meditation on the Word of God, and fasting. Without such growth, believers remain spiritually immature, fail to discover their purpose, fail to participate in the Great Commission, and, ultimately, fail to obey the commands of Jesus Christ.

Principles of Discipleship

In *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*, Dallas Willard discusses the philosophical and biblical basis for the restoration of discipleship ministry in the church. Willard views discipleship as the primary mechanism by which spiritual formation occurs in the life of the believer. He observed that “both gifts and fruit are the result, not the reality, of the Spirit’s presence in our lives. What brings about our transformation into Christlikeness is our direct, personal interaction with Christ through the Spirit. The Spirit makes Christ present to us and draws us toward his likeness.”³⁶ This text is immensely valuable to the

³⁶ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 513. Kindle Edition.

thesis project because Willard solemnly outlines the responsibility of believers to apply themselves to spiritual formation. This is achieved by intentionally following and imitating the person and the character of Jesus Christ, which is the essence of discipleship.

Another contribution that Willard makes to the discussion on discipleship is his uncompromising analysis of Christianity and discipleship. He outrightly states there is a distinction between what is understood as a “Christian” today and the biblical definition of a disciple. He notes, “disciples of Jesus are people who do not just profess certain views as their own but apply their growing understanding of life in the Kingdom of the Heavens [*sic*] to every aspect of their life on earth.”³⁷ The propagation of the idea that it is possible to be a Christian who ‘believes in Jesus’ but is not a ‘committed disciple of Jesus’ has led to what he terms, the “Great Disparity” between the life of Jesus Christ and the spiritual lives of Christians.³⁸ The existence of this disparity, in turn, affects the church’s ability to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.³⁹ This text is a treatise on the procedure, necessity, and benefits of reintegrating the practice of discipleship into local churches.

Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence by Dave Earley and Rodney Dempsey is a work of inestimable value that this student will cite extensively in this thesis. In this book, Earley and Dempsey lay the foundation of the biblical rudiments of discipleship, so the text is a perfect introductory treatise on the pivotal role discipleship plays in the development of Christians from their spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. For the authors, discipleship is the ministry in which believers are trained and prepared

³⁷ Ibid., 112.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

to engage with the purpose of God in the Great Commission. They note, “The Christianity practiced by the first Christians was more than following a religion, ritual, creed, or doctrinal statement. It was a vibrant relationship with God and with each other. Discipleship was not a program; it was a communal relationship.”⁴⁰ This text will be useful in defining discipleship and explaining its relevance and importance to the development of the local church, in examining the constitution of small groups and how they can be implemented in the local church, and in recommending to pastors and leaders the manner in which structural reorganization of the church to facilitate the completion of the Great Commission should be approached.

A. Boyd Luter Jr. wrote a journal article entitled, *Discipleship and the Church* which will be useful in writing the thesis project. He discusses the practice of discipleship as it is presented in the New Testament and concludes that discipleship is critically important to the central purpose of the local church. He states that it is “the means to the end of planting and developing local churches (Acts 14:21-23), thus building Christ's universal church (Matt. 16:18).”⁴¹ This article supports the essential theme of the thesis project that discipleship is the primary ministry of the Church and it is the spiritual machinery by which believers are prepared to extend the Kingdom of God in pursuance of the Great Commission.

In *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*, Bill Hull provides an in-depth analysis of spiritual formation. Hull describes it as a process that is essential to the holistic development of new believers into spiritually mature disciples of Christ through the practices of the disciplines of prayer, reading and studying of the Word, fasting, and participating in a living spiritual community of Christians. This book is essential to the thesis

⁴⁰ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 1271. Kindle Edition.

⁴¹ A. Boyd Luter, Jr. “Discipleship and the Church,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 137, no. 547 (July 1980): 272.

because it emphasizes the responsibility of the believers as it relates to their spiritual growth and development as disciples of Jesus Christ. Hull also presents in this text the conundrum confronting the church today. He notes that there are two competing philosophies that he terms, “the Jesus way” or “the consumer way.”⁴² He notes that these philosophical viewpoints are categorically and diametrically in opposition with each other in that “the consumer way” emphasizes: (1) competence before prayer, (2) individualism instead of congregation, (3) impatience rather than endurance, and (4) celebrity over humility.⁴³ This text supports the main thesis of the project that there is a culture of consumerism pervading the church that can only be confronted with the reintegration of biblical discipleship in the local church.

In *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples A Few at a Time*, Greg Ogden highlights the importance of practicing spiritual disciplines in the process of making mature disciples of Jesus Christ. Spiritual disciplines are foundational to the development of healthy spiritual growth in a believer. Donald S. Whitney defines spiritual disciplines as those “personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth.”⁴⁴ Ogden observes that it is obvious from the Word of God “that leading the Christian life will require spiritual discipline. No accomplishment comes without practice and discipline.”⁴⁵ This work is instrumental to the thesis project because it establishes the fact that spiritual growth is not solely dependent on pastoral leadership; it is also dependent on the disciple.

⁴² Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 4449. Kindle Edition.

⁴³ Ibid., 4468-4545.

⁴⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado, CO: NavPress, 1991), 25.

⁴⁵ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 267. Kindle Edition.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *The Cost of Discipleship*, expounds on the spiritual correlation between the body of Christ, which is the Church, and the human body. There has been a gradual disintegration of the concept of the corporate church body, and in its place has arisen an unorthodox theology of individualism and consumerism. Bonhoeffer notes, “The Church is one man; it is the Body of Christ. But it is also many, a fellowship of members (Rom. 12.5; I Cor. 12.12 ff). Since the Church is a body made up of many members, no separate member, such as hand or eye or foot, can transcend its own individuality.”⁴⁶ This book is important to the thesis project because it establishes the principle that each member of the local church assembly is essential to the proper functioning of the entire church. Therefore, the church thrives when each member is disciplined, discovers his purpose, and is committed to functioning faithfully in that call.

Joseph H. Hellerman’s work entitled *When the Church Was A Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community* is extremely influential to the thesis project because it provides a biblical framework for the theological position that the church is a community of disciplined believers who are working together for the common goal of the fulfillment of God’s mission to the world. Importantly, Hellerman states, “Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community. People who remain connected with their brothers and sisters in the local church almost invariably grow in self-understanding, and they mature in their ability to relate in healthy ways to God and to their fellow human beings.”⁴⁷ A major aspect of spiritual growth, therefore, occurs when believers are connected to one another; and this thesis project posits that this is best achieved in the context of small groups. The implementation of discipleship in a local church context is the primary means by which believers develop the

⁴⁶ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 3281. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁷ Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family*, 43. Kindle Edition.

perspective of the church as a purposefully connected community that God has mobilized for His will in the Great Commission to be fulfilled.

Leadership in Discipleship

In *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying Small Groups*, Rod Dempsey and Dave Earley give the overarching reason why discipleship ministry must not only be incorporated but be a central focus of the church. They state that “perhaps the clearest argument for leading small groups is because Jesus gave us an example and we should follow His example.”⁴⁸ This text is extremely valuable to the thesis project because it locates the obligation to pursue discipleship in the person of Jesus Christ. The acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the primary discipleship leader and the scriptural commandment to fulfill the Great Commission supports the theological framework of the thesis. It is also from the ministry of Jesus that this student has identified the four biblical principles of discipleship.

In *Assimilating New Converts into the Local Church*,” R. Larry Moyer assesses the practical and spiritual issues that inhibit new believers from assimilating into the life of the local church. This journal article is relevant to the thesis project because Moyer lists four requirements that are critical to the successful assimilation of the new believers into the life of the church. These are that: (1) the responsibility of follow-through is on the whole of the local church, not solely on the pastor, (2) follow-through must be done in a parental, caring spirit, (3) prayer is a crucial part of the follow-through process, and (4) the goal of the interaction is spiritual maturity.⁴⁹ These requirements are all relational in nature and point to the need for a disciplined church community to ensure that new believers consecrate themselves to God, develop a new

⁴⁸ Dempsey and Earley, *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying, Small Groups*, 781. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁹ R. Larry Moyer, “Assimilating New Converts into the Local Church,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* vol 151, no 603 (July-September 1994): 348.

spiritual culture, are apprenticed by disciple-leaders, and are then released to reproduce the life of Christ in others.

In another text written by Greg Ogden entitled, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*, he highlights the current impractical and unbiblical distinction between the clergy and laity. The purpose of Ogden's text is to advocate for pastors and spiritual leaders to train their congregations (the people of God) to engage in ministry as God intended. He makes the troubling, but honest statement that "the first cause of the low estate of discipleship is that pastors have been diverted from their primary calling to 'equip the saints for the work of ministry.'"⁵⁰ This book is primarily important to the thesis project because it summarizes how the absence of pastoral direction in discipleship has led to its disappearance and/or devaluation in church ministry. Second, the book supports the thesis project in its assessment that each member of the body of Christ has a unique calling and function and each part is indispensable to "the health of the whole. For the body to thrive, every part must operate according to its design."⁵¹ This sort of one-on-one interaction is only possible in the context of a small group.

Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman co-authored a key text on discipleship entitled *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. The authors advocate that "everything in the corporate body of the local church needs to be aligned in a way that funnels people toward these discipleship environments."⁵² This text is valuable to the thesis project because it emphasizes that pastoral leaders have a positive

⁵⁰ Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 523. Kindle Edition.

⁵¹ Ibid., 581. Kindle Edition.

⁵² Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 171. Kindle Edition.

responsibility to ensure that they create a church environment where believers can be trained and equipped to realize their purpose, gifting and the call of God on their lives. Secondly, the authors developed a phenomenal diagram that maps the development of Christians from being spiritually dead through to spiritual parents. This diagram is instructive in helping pastoral leaders to chart a path in developing a practical discipleship model in their churches. This student will also develop a new discipleship model based on the findings of the research component of the study.

In *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples*, Jim Putman discusses the biblical and practical discipleship principles that pastors and church leaders must apply to develop churches that produces disciples. Putman writes about being intentional with discipleship, changing the spiritual environment of the church by being relational, nurturing spiritual infants, guiding spiritual children, training young adults, and then releasing spiritual parents to make new disciples. The relationality and intentionality referred to by Putman are essential core values that guide this student's approach in developing a discipleship method based on small groups. This text is central to the thesis project because it systematically examines each stage of the discipleship process and provides pastoral leaders with guidance on how to discover and develop budding leaders.

Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold wrote a book entitled *Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church*, and in it, they present and discuss relevant data on the state of pastoral leadership in America today. The authors also discuss the steps that pastoral leaders must take to reform the church, the main step being the necessity for pastors to re-envision their role as leaders in the development of their members. This text will assist this student in providing recommendations to help senior pastors re-envision their church as they implement the new small group discipleship plan that will be presented to them when the project is completed.

Multiplication and Church Growth

In the text, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church*, Gary L. McIntosh acknowledges that churches that are growing spiritually and numerically are those that are pursuing the Great Commission in the community. Conversely, churches that are not growing are those that are focused solely on meeting the personal needs of the members of the church. This text is particularly valuable because it supports a central idea of the thesis project that the spiritual life and vibrancy of the church depends on how quickly pastoral leadership connect new members to discipleship small groups, have them trained and disciplined, and then mobilized into active ministry.

In the journal article entitled, *Relationships: The Missing Link in Evangelistic Follow-Up*, Gordon L. Everett contends that “the development of personal relationships between local church members and new believers who are not members is the key to incorporating new converts successfully into the church and closing the follow-up gap.”⁵³ This article is valuable to the thesis project because it supports the idea that intentional and relational discipleship of new believers is the key to spiritual and numerical growth, which is the goal of the reproduction principle in discipleship.

Allison A. Trites wrote a journal article entitled *Church Growth in the Book of Acts* in which she identifies the preaching of the Gospel in Acts as a major contributing factor to the “deepening of spiritual life in the developing Christian communities throughout the Mediterranean basin and the Roman Empire. Wherever the gospel was preached, there was an

⁵³ Gordon L. Everett, “Relationships: The Missing Link in Evangelistic Follow-Up,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 142, no. 566 (April-June 1985): 152.

increase in godly living.”⁵⁴ This article helps to develop the thesis project by supporting the idea that preaching and teaching in pastoral ministry are instrumental in developing mature Christian disciples.

In the journal article written by Benjamin R. Wilson entitled *The Depiction of Church Growth in Acts*, the writer investigates how numerical growth and the expansion of the church is depicted. This is a critical piece of scholarship in which the author examines the role and importance of the proclamation of the Word and the testimonies of spiritual power among the community of believers. Wilson notes that where these factors are found in the book of Acts there is a concomitant correlation to “the quality of the community life and visible actions of Christian congregations.”⁵⁵ This journal is useful to the thesis project because it demonstrates how a strong and vibrant spiritual community of disciples contributes to the spiritual and numerical growth of the church.

In Dave Ferguson and John Ferguson’s *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Movement*, great emphasis is placed on multiplying small groups. They note, “When living organisms are healthy, they naturally reproduce. God’s intention for his church is that it would be a healthy, living organism that not only grows but also continually reproduces.”⁵⁶ This book is critically important to the thesis project because it gives credence to the biblical discipleship principle of reproduction and explains how multiplication of small groups benefits the numerical and spiritual growth of the local church.

⁵⁴ Allison A. Trites, “Church Growth in the Book of Acts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 145, no. 578 (April-June 1988): 165.

⁵⁵ Benjamin J. Wilson, “The Depiction of Church Growth in Acts,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 60, no. 2 (June 2017): 331.

⁵⁶ Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 1442. Kindle Edition.

In *Multiplying Missional Leaders*, Mike Breen discusses the concept of reshaping church culture when developing a discipleship plan. Breen noted that if “you’re going to create a community where leaders can flourish, you’re going to have to create a certain kind of culture. It’s the only way that can happen.”⁵⁷ This text is extremely valuable to the thesis project because it validates the culture-shift, apprenticeship, and production principles in the development of mature disciples.

Christianity in the Caribbean

Several books have been written about the importation of Christianity into the Caribbean region. Many authors on the subject have viewed Christianity as a form of cultural and spiritual oppression of the historically practiced cultural beliefs and religion of the African people who were shipped to the Caribbean during the transatlantic slave trade and of the aboriginal people who were largely exterminated when the settlers arrived.⁵⁸ Due to the largely anti-Christian feelings of many authors, the texts carry a predominantly weighty emphasis on the evangelization or “Christianizing” of the Caribbean from the perspective of the inimical effect on slaves and emancipated freedmen. Texts such as *The Shaping of the West Indian Church 1492-1962* by Arthur Charles Dayfoot, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to World Christianity* by Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond, *Christianity in the Caribbean* edited by Armando Lampe, and *Religions of Trinidad and Tobago* by Eric John Murray are extremely instructive in tracing the arc of the presence of Christianity in the Caribbean and how it was disseminated

⁵⁷ Mike Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders: From Half-hearted Volunteers to a Mobilized Kingdom Force* (Crowdscribed, LLC, 2014), 2010. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁸ “West Indies, Christianity,” In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by Livingstone, E. A.: Oxford University Press, 2006.
<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198614425.001.0001/acref-9780198614425-e-6173>.

throughout the region. These texts also delve into the practices of African religions and explore the progressive intersectionality between those ancestral traditions and Christian denominations.

Theological Foundations

Jesus' practice of discipleship during His earthly ministry is the theological foundation of this project. Intentional and relational discipleship was the primary method by which Jesus developed ordinary and unlearned men into mature disciples whom He would later send out as apostles to continue His work (Matt. 28:18-20). Dave Earley and Rodney Dempsey have correctly stated that "the primary term in the Great Commission is the imperative verb 'make disciples.' The other words 'go,' 'baptize,' and 'teach' all modify and explain how we are to fulfill the primary task: make disciples."⁵⁹ Discipleship is, therefore, a key component in the life of the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ. If church members "are not taught, disciplined, and encouraged, they will end up demanding to be fed and cared for and never grow to the point that they can take care of others."⁶⁰ Discipleship is, therefore, the spiritual machinery by which new and old believers alike are developed to become preachers, teachers, and evangelists.

The Biblical Framework of Discipleship in Matthew 4:19

In the Gospels, several passages of Scripture relate directly to the ministry of discipleship, perhaps the most notable of all being the Great Commission. This student, however, proposes that the calling of Peter and Andrew in Matthew 4:19 is the seminal scriptural passage on the subject of discipleship. This student asserts this view because this passage succinctly contains the four essential thematic elements that are related to making disciples, beginning with the command of Jesus for His disciples to be consecrated to Him. The first element is "*Come*,"

⁵⁹ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 134. Kindle Edition.

⁶⁰ Putman, Harrington and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 832. Kindle Edition

the second element is *“Follow me,”* the third element is *“I will make you,”* and the fourth element is *“fishers of men.”*⁶¹ This student has further dissected these four elements into four principles of discipleship. These are the consecration principle, the culture-shift principle, the apprenticeship principle, and the reproduction principle.

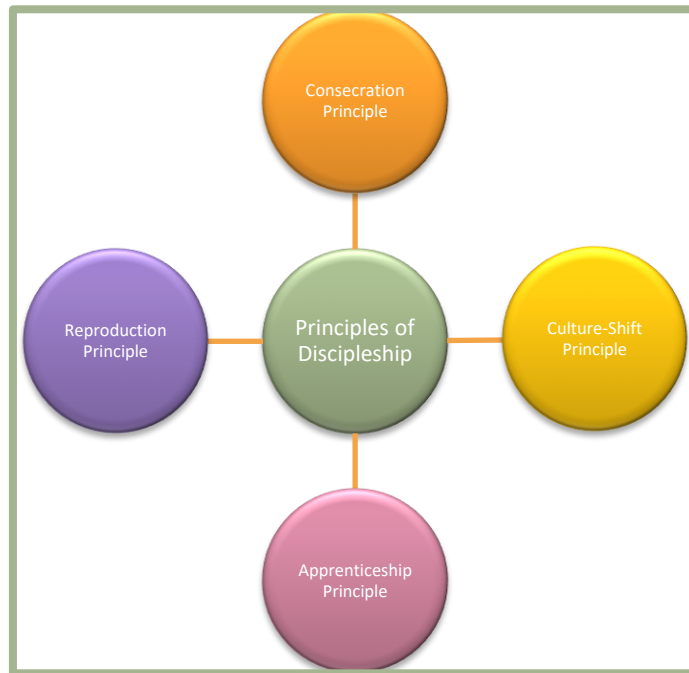


Figure 1. Four Essential Principles of Discipleship

Consecration Principle: Jesus Gives a Command to “Come”

In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, “Come, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”⁶² The command to come to Jesus was immediate and intentional; it was not a suggestion. Jesus made a personal call to Peter and Andrew, not merely requesting that they believe in Him but that they would follow Him. At that moment, these fishermen were required to make a life-altering decision to follow Jesus with an absolute commitment to Him. For the disciples to come

⁶¹. Matthew 4:19, NIV Copyright © 1984.

⁶². Ibid.

to Jesus, they had to come away from their work. The directive to leave behind their daily means of livelihood was a considerable sacrifice, but when weighed on the scales of importance, it was a sacrifice that they were willing to make without hesitation (v. 20). Prior that time, those Galileans had only caught fish, but when they received the divine imperative from Jesus to “Come,” they left everything they had known to follow Him. The commitment to come involved urgency and intentionality. The immediacy of their answer is the only kind of response that is fitting for those who desire to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

To become a disciple, a relationship of intimacy must be established and developed with Jesus that is founded on salvation. Putman, Harrington, and Coleman note that “Jesus invited people into relationships with himself; he loved them and, in the process, showed them how to follow God. His primary method was life-on-life.”⁶³ Discipleship is, therefore, not just a word that applies to every person who is saved. It applies only to those who have made a solemn commitment to lay down their lives to follow Jesus. David Watson comments, “Every Christian is called to a clear and dedicated discipleship, whatever the personal cost may be.”⁶⁴ In Luke 14:26–27 Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” Such an intense and sacrificial commitment can hardly be said to be at the forefront of every believer’s mind at the moment of salvation. Salvation requires repentance (Matt. 4:17; Luke 3:8; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20).

⁶³ Putman, Harrington and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 422. Kindle Edition

⁶⁴ David Watson, *Discipleship* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1981), 19.

In the New Testament, the Greek word μετανοια (*metanoia*) “chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God.”⁶⁵ There must, therefore, be a recognition of one’s sinfulness, a change of the heart engendered by an attitude of sincere remorse for one’s sins, and then a commitment to forsake those sins that are attested to by the profession of faith in Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9; John 8:11). It involves surrender, trust, and sacrifice. One must become completely dependent on Christ, having the utmost humility and reliance on Him.

The true test of a Christian’s belief in Jesus Christ is not the number of hands that were raised or the number of persons who stood at the altar, but by the number of people who have continued to leave the world behind to pursue Jesus faithfully, to deny themselves sacrificially, and to obey His commandments unreservedly after their conversion so that in all things Christ is Lord over their lives. According to N.T. Wright, “‘Disciples’ means not just head-learners, not just heart-leaners, but life-learners. We have to discover, through prayer, study of the Scripture, and above all devotion to Jesus himself such as we express when we come to his table, how we in our generation can implement the decisive victory which he won.”⁶⁶ Salvation, therefore, is only the beginning of the relationship. Scripture clearly reveals that Jesus is invested in the development of His people into mature disciples who are obedient servants (John 14:15), who manifest His nature (Eph. 4:11-16; Eph. 5:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18), and who are prepared to fulfill their calling in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

⁶⁵ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible Red Letter Edition: Greek Dictionary of the New Testament 3341* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson), 162.

⁶⁶ N.T. Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 822. Kindle Edition.

Willingness to Deny Oneself (Matt. 16:24-27)

In as much as believers are called to live a sacrificial life for the sake of Christ, Jesus was the forerunner of this extraordinary level of obedience and sacrifice (John 6:38; John 5:19). When Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24-25), He immediately established a hierarchy of spiritual values with personal submission to the Kingdom of God as the pinnacle of that edifice. J. Dwight Pentecost stated that “To be disciples of Christ, people must reject every other authority and be solely under the authority of Christ. Unless they are willing to do so, they cannot be Christ’s disciples.”⁶⁷ To take up one’s cross is to put all things that pertain to the carnal nature to death. This is the willingness of the believer to actively resist the temptation of sin and the seduction of living solely for pleasure and comfort as one remains ever conscious of the pursuit of the nature of Christ in one’s life. He was expressing to His disciples the level of sacrifice that He was prepared to make as the Servant of God for the sake of humanity (Zech. 3:8; Isa. 42:1). Later in His earthly life, Jesus made this explicitly clear to the disciples when He said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Therefore, while the command of Jesus Christ to “follow me” in Matthew 4:19 undoubtedly necessitates a closeness in spiritual proximity to Jesus, there was more to the Messiah’s call to discipleship than this. Jesus decided before the foundation of the world to leave Heaven and become the servant of all (Rev. 13:8). Similarly, disciples of Christ are required to live a consecrated life before God by dying to self so that the life and nature of Christ can be manifested in their daily lives as they reverentially serve the Lord and faithfully minister to the world.

⁶⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1891), 332.

What or Whom One Loves More (Matt. 19:16-30)

The command given to believers to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength is a foundational teaching that spans the history of both the Old and New Testament (Deut. 6:4-7; Matt. 22:37-40). God not only invites people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, but He also requires believers to set Him on the throne of their hearts (1 Pet. 3:15) as the one whom they love even more than family (Matt. 10:37) and the world (1 John 2:15-17). In short, He is to be the one that their hearts adore, that their souls long for, that their minds meditate on, and for whom their strength is poured out in worship. The place of authority that God has in the life of a disciple is entirely dependent on the level to which the disciple has decided to submit to Him. For the believer who wishes to graduate in his spiritual relationship with God, there will be a cost attached that will appear, at first, almost unbearable. The price that must be paid for deeper and greater intimacy with God is the commitment to love God above all else, even to the point where loving Him may cause the disciple to be at odds with those closest to him.

Consecration is a devout commitment of one's life or time to God. It requires a disciple to set aside everything he holds in high esteem to first please the Lord and follow Him according to the requirements set out in Scripture. The disciple must, therefore, bear in mind that "discipling is not an event; it is a process."⁶⁸ The commitment to forsake the things of the world to set oneself apart for the work and will of God is the first stage in the developmental process of becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ. If one loves Him, He must be first theologically, intellectually, and practically in one's life.

⁶⁸ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church: Leading a Body of Believers on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 502. Kindle Edition.

A new Christian might be tempted to find the idea of forsaking the world to serve Christ a harrowing concept that inspires thoughts and feelings of control. This feeling, however, only betrays the existence of the carnal nature of man that is rebellious to the idea of total submission to the lordship of God. This is one of the reasons why Jesus commanded His church to make disciples. Carnality cannot be left unchecked because it is contrary to the will of God and the purposes of God. The mind that is hostile to the Spirit of God cannot please God (Rom. 8:7-8). A second issue is that such a thought or feeling is only experienced by a Christian who has not yet realized that obedience to God is the pathway to life and peace, thereby betraying the need for understanding and discipleship. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus makes it clear that the demonstration of one's love for God is manifested in one's willingness to obey His commandments. Consecration to the Lord is therefore manifested in unreserved obedience to Him, but to achieve this, the second principle of discipleship is critically essential.

Culture-Shift Principle: Following Jesus Requires Kingdom Acculturation

Jesus' command to "Follow Me" is a specific injunction that involves faithful commitment and obedience to the Lord. Following Jesus implies that wherever He goes, His disciples are to go, and whatever He does, they are likewise to do. In John 14:15 Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commands." Again, in verse 23 Jesus says, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." As if to emphasize the seriousness of His message, Jesus reiterates the command to follow Him in the negative. He states, "Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching" (v.24). For Jesus, therefore, discipleship "is not just trusting him but also truly following him. It is about becoming more and more like him in the power of the Holy Spirit to

the glory of God. To be conformed into Jesus' likeness is the goal (Rom 8:29)."⁶⁹ The goal of discipleship is not to increase in knowledge; rather, the desired end is the development of intimacy with the Lord that comes through one's relationship with Him as guided by the Holy Spirit.

A true disciple is always following Jesus and becoming like Him; he is not stagnant. The type of disciples Jesus envisioned are those who are mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:4; Eph. 4:11-16). Christians who are half-hearted or lukewarm are incapable of making the spiritual sacrifices required to expand the Kingdom of God on earth because they are still yielding to the carnal nature. The hallmarks of true disciples are that they have consecrated themselves to the Lord by yielding to the Spirit and, by so doing, have crucified the flesh (Rom. 8:12-13; Gal. 5:16-17, 24; 1 Pet. 3:15). They have put on the mind of Christ and are renewing their minds in the Word of God.

The practical manifestation of this principle in the life of a disciple requires a steadfast commitment to the yielding of one's soul to a process of continuous spiritual re-education and refinement. Every true disciple of Jesus, therefore, has so submitted to the Lordship and authority of Christ that in his faithful commitment to follow Him, he has begun to appropriate the nature of Christ into his life. In short, he has been and continues to be transformed from his former carnal way of living to a life that flows from the realm of the Spirit of God. This new life is demonstrated in a manifestly observable difference in the disciple's thinking, speech, attitudes, desires, and behaviors. In a real sense, there is a reconditioning or renewing of the mind that leads to a spiritual transformation in which the brilliance of the nature of Christ shines through the life of the believer (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18). This is a transformation that occurs daily in

⁶⁹. Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 31.

the life of a true disciple that is manifested in a sharp reversal from secular and cultural worldviews to spiritual and sacred beliefs that are rooted in the Word of God. A worldview is an internal orienting construct that is formed from the amalgamation of a person's cultural, political, and social beliefs, practices, values, and ethics. While it is evident in the Gospels that Jesus spoke authoritatively about the inherent superiority of the Kingdom of God over the sayings, beliefs, and practices of the world, it does not appear that it has always been clear to ministry leaders that when they preach to their congregants or the unsaved, that they are engaging in a direct conflict of opposing worldviews. In the Catholic tradition, for example, there is a break in the theological-anthropological eco-system of spiritual transformation due to the absence of interpersonal relationships amongst the laity and between them and the clergy. After the preaching of the homily, there are no institutional systems or procedures systems in place to ensure that the laity are maturing in their faith in God or are passionately pursuing Christlikeness. Undoubtedly, pastors and church leaders have an indispensable role to play in this process if they truly desire to train and develop mature disciples of Christ. Pastors and their leadership are tasked with the responsibility of creating a discipleship culture that facilitates the spiritual growth that is needed to transform new and old believers into mature disciples of Christ through the stages of spiritual development.

Stages of Spiritual Development

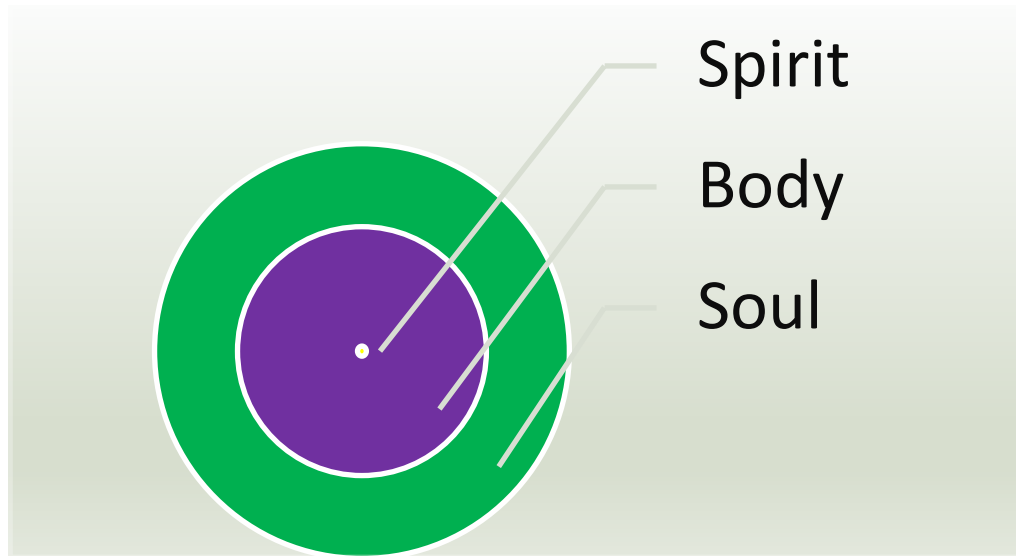


Figure 2: Stage of Spiritual Deadness

Figure 2 is a graphic that illustrates the spiritual deadness of the unbeliever. The life of an unregenerate person is ruled by the soul while the spirit remains dormant, waiting to be reborn upon salvation. In this state, the body is ruled by the soul (the mind, will, and emotions).

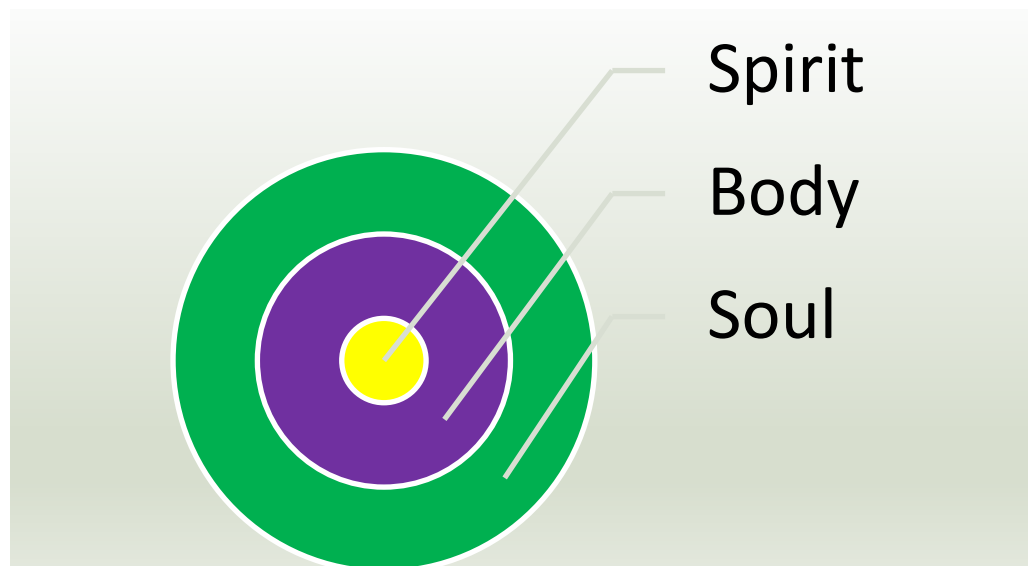


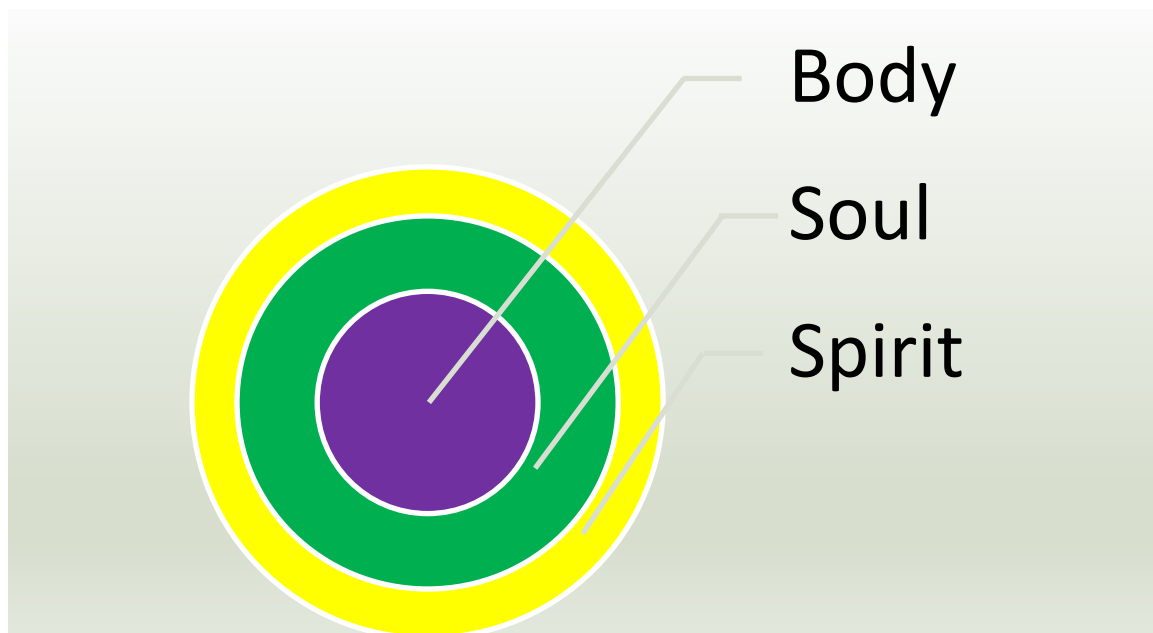
Figure 3: Stage of Spiritual Infancy

Figure 3 demonstrates the life of a spiritually alive but immature Christian. Upon salvation, the believer becomes a new creation and his spirit is connected to the Spirit of God. At

this stage, however, the new believer must learn to submit to the Spirit of God and deny the fleshly or carnal desires that have ruled him or her up until that point. Dallas Willard notes that

it is the movement of the Spirit in the spiritual formation of the individual personality that transforms the roots of behavior throughout the soul and body of the believer which goes beyond simply hearing and receiving this word. Thus, when we have put on the new person—and we must *act* to do this, as it will not be done for us—we find the outflow of Christ's character from us to be, after all, the fruit of the spirit.⁷⁰

At this stage, the spiritual infant/new believer requires sound spiritual guidance from mature believers. Unfortunately, many churches stop their ministerial work with believers at this stage. Being satisfied with salvation, they fail to disciple the believers so that they can mature to greater levels of spirituality and become spiritually active members of their local churches.



⁷⁰ Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation in Christ: A Perspective on What It is and How it might be Done.” Published in *The Great Omission*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006, accessed March 15, 2020, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/individual/spiritual-formation-in-christa-perspective-on-what-it-is-and-how-it-might-b>.

Figure 4: Stage of Spiritual Maturity

Figure 4 is a graphic representation of the spiritual life of a mature believer. The goal of discipleship is to nurture both new and existing believers to become spiritually mature disciples. Thomas Rainer and Eric Geiger note, “Spiritual growth (sanctification) is the process of a believer being transformed into the image of Christ. Simple churches have chosen to align themselves with the way God works. They have chosen to partner with the discipleship process revealed in Scripture.”⁷¹ In this diagram, the circle of the spirit is the largest of the three circles. This is a representation of the optimal or desired spiritual life of the disciple. No longer controlled by the carnal impulses of the sinful nature that influence the soul, the spirit of the disciple now has authority over the soul and the soul, in turn, has authority over the body. This is the proper authority structure of the inner life of the new believer. When the soul and body of the believer are submitted to his or her spirit as it, in turn, is submitted to the Holy Spirit, then spiritual acts of reverence such as worship, prayer, fasting come naturally for the believer. Further, such a believer is more empowered to resist sin and temptation because, through daily submission to the Spirit of God, the spirit of the believer has grown and has put to death the misdeeds of the body (Rom. 8:13).

Apprenticeship Principle: Jesus Personally Transforms His Disciples

Discipleship is a transformative process in which ordinary people become like Jesus Christ through the combined operation of the Holy Spirit and an intentional decision on the part of the disciple to die to self and follow Jesus. Earley and Dempsey define a disciple as a learner, student or protégé “who learns and follows his teacher’s precepts and instructions. It speaks of a

⁷¹ Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 15-16.

follower who adopts the lifestyle of his master.”⁷² In such a relationship of absolute surrender, Christlikeness is developed in the heart of the individual so that even though Christ is in heaven (Acts 7:55–56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20), He can manifest the nature of His life through the disciple on earth.

There is an element of the discipleship process of Jesus that is indispensable to the development of healthy disciples. It is the apprenticeship relationship between the student and the rabbi in which the former observes, patterns, and follows, his teacher in such a manner that the lesser becomes like the greater. Dave and Jon Ferguson explain that “apprenticeship is not about finding people who can help us do tasks more effectively. We’re not talking about preparing people to simply replace us so we can move on to something else. At the heart of biblical apprenticeship is a mindset of reproduction: reproducing our leadership so the mission will be carried on to future generations.”⁷³ Jesus understood that it is impossible for people to discover their spiritual gifts and ministerial calling outside of a relationship with God. On this point Henry and Richard Blackaby state, “People do not choose to become spiritual leaders. Spiritual leadership flows out of a person’s vibrant, intimate relationship with God. You cannot be a spiritual leader if you are not meeting God in profound, life-changing ways.”⁷⁴ Throughout the New Testament, there are multiple examples of the relational interaction between disciple and disciple-maker, student and rabbi, spiritual son and spiritual father that typify the kind of ministry approach that the church is required to adopt. The discipleship ministry of Jesus is an example of the amalgamation of theory and praxis as He taught and ministered with His

⁷² Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 873. Kindle Edition.

⁷³ Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 943. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁴ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 100.

disciples. There is a great distinction between knowledge and practice, education and relationship, information and direction, belief and applied faith. Most vividly depicted in the life of Jesus Christ, discipleship is an intentional, personal, and dynamic relationship between Master and student.

In the Gospels, Jesus prayed for the sick, delivered the demonized, and taught the untaught, all in the presence of His disciples. The Fergusons winsomely express the apprenticeship relationship in the following five-step model, “1) I do. You watch. We talk. 2) I do. You help. We talk. 3) You do, I help. We talk. 4) You do, I watch. We talk. 5) You do. Someone else watches.”⁷⁵ For example, the miracle of the bread and the fishes was not done without the intentional participation of the disciples. Jesus took the loaves and the fish, gave thanks, but then gave the food to His disciples to distribute to the crowd (Matt. 14:15-21). In Matthew 10:1-8, He summoned and commissioned His followers, giving them the title of apostle, to minister in His name and authority and then sent them out. In Luke 10:1-11, he appointed seventy others to go into ministry. What is also significant is that when they returned to Him with the reports of their ministerial work, He spent time listening to them and rejoicing with them (Luke 10:17-21). It is also noteworthy that Jesus rested with His disciples (Mark 6:31), indicating to the church that the process of making disciples is not solely a matter of teaching or ministry, but one of fellowship and spirituality. Resting with Jesus is a spiritual activity that should supersede ministry. Again, this is validated by the order of Jesus’s first command to His disciples. The directive to come and follow Jesus indicates spirituality, which is the believer’s response to His call. The process of transformation that occurs thereafter is His

⁷⁵ Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 955. Kindle Edition.

response to the disciples' obedience. After obedience and the transformation are complete, the disciple is prepared for ministry.

In the discipleship process, therefore, it is insufficient to merely educate people about the Bible, theology or church doctrine. Indeed, Willard notes that “what this most recent version of evangelicalism lacks is *a theology of discipleship*. Specifically, it lacks a clear teaching on how what happens at conversion continues on without break into an ever fuller life in the Kingdom of God.”⁷⁶ The pastor of the church must intentionally seek to integrate the intended disciples into the life of the church, connecting them to God in a personal and intimate way, connecting them to other believers in a meaningful and honest manner, and to the mission of God as revealed in Scripture.

Reproduction Principle: Mature Disciples Make New Disciples

The final principle of discipleship that Jesus masterfully illustrated in Matthew 4:19 is the concept of reproduction. When believers submit to the direction of the Lord by coming to Him and following Him, He begins the process of transformation in them. That transformation is not based on some vague abstraction; rather, the object of the transformation or metamorphosis of the disciple is based on the person of Jesus Christ Himself. As Jesus came to fish for them and pull them from the sea of darkness, so too Jesus promised Peter and the disciples that He will make them fishers of men. The goal of all discipleship is to become like Jesus Christ. Christians were never called to remain at the same helpless level of spirituality in their church pews while awaiting death or the return of Jesus Christ. The Lord desires that as His disciples are more perfectly made into His image and likeness, they would be ready to engage with Him on the *missio dei* which is the building of His Kingdom and the salvation of souls. Winfield Bevins

⁷⁶ Dallas Willard, “Discipleship,” in *Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 245.

notes that Jesus “imparted His message and mission to His disciples so that they would reproduce themselves in others and make disciples of all nations.”⁷⁷ There is nothing, therefore, like a true disciple of Christ who is lethargic or merely a consumer of the ministerial efforts of other Christians, because those who are pursuing Christlikeness know the urgency of the work to which God has called them.

Underlying the vision for discipleship is the belief that Jesus did not die simply to ensure that believers would get to heaven. When all the saints are participating in the ministry of the church and are living in the tension of anticipating the future of the Kingdom of God while manifesting that Kingdom on earth through love, faith, power, and authority, then and only then will the church be on the path to the fulfillment of the Great Commission as Jesus desired. This student believes that the spiritual tension aforementioned is the true meaning of the priesthood of believers as expressed in 1 Peter 2:9. Justo L. Gonzalez explains, “To be priests does not mean primarily that we are our own individual priests, but rather that as part of the priestly people of God we are priests for the entire community of belief, and that they are priests for us as well – while all of us, as the believing community, are priests for the world.”⁷⁸ This kind of continuous spiritual development and deployment of disciples is possible in the greenhouse of small group environments. A church of 200 members, for example, that is dedicated to the development of developing healthy and mature disciples in a small group setting will quickly grow to the point of saturation and will produce two effects: (1) the production of new small group leaders and (2) the multiplication of new groups as those discipled members go out on mission to win the lost for

⁷⁷. Winfield Bevins, “How Jesus Made Disciples,” accessed September 8, 2018, gcdiscipleship.com/2012/06/04/how-jesus-made-disciples.

⁷⁸. Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to Present Day* vol. 2, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), 923. Kindle edition.

Christ. This is the vision and dream of God which every Christian leader should carry in his or her heart for the believers over whom they were appointed as an overseer.

The Philosophical Rationale for Small Group Ministry in Discipleship

Small groups are a prominent feature of discipleship in the New Testament. Rodney Dempsey and Dave Earley note that “healthy small groups are the best place to develop Christ-followers as evidenced by the fact that Jesus Himself used a small group to develop the first group of world changers.”⁷⁹ In the Gospels, Jesus trained His twelve disciples for ministry in a small group setting during a period of 3 ½ years and then officially commissioned them in Matthew 28:18-20. Although they had been commissioned previously with authority and power for ministry in Matthew 10:1-8, this was only a shadow of what was yet to come. Jesus was still with the disciples, guiding, teaching, and correcting them. However, a time was quickly coming when He would return to His Father. He knew that the continuation of His ministry was dependent upon the impregnation of His message in the disciples, past the level of intellectual superficiality and was birthed with the passionate conviction of seeing God’s Kingdom come to earth.

The summary of the ministry of Jesus described above is a description of discipleship. It is relational, intentional, developmental, and ultimately transformational. Any pastor who decides to make the treacherous journey of transitioning from their current style of ministry to a cell-based or small group approach is on the right track if his desire is to create the type of world-changing disciples that Jesus made. It is the view of this student, however, that the decision to embark on the pursuit of developing small group ministries is not enough. Along with that pursuit, there must be a rational basis for the ministry. The noted author Joel Comiskey

⁷⁹. Dempsey and Earley, *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying, Small*, 107. Kindle Edition.

observes that “many churches successfully implement cell church ministry. One of the key differences in these churches was establishing a strong foundation for why they were doing cells. These deep convictions carried them through the tough times and caused them to stay firm while waiting for God to bring the results.”⁸⁰ Healthy churches, therefore, that desire to develop a small group ministry must understand the biblical and theological underpinnings for the ministry that guide the operation of ministerial personnel in the church so that the groups remain pure, focused, and ultimately reaches its biblically prescribed goals.

Small groups that are managed properly grow quickly and have the potential to multiply exponentially, thereby significantly increasing the number of members in a church over time. The clearest example of a church, however, that utilizes small groups with the wrong intent is one that seeks merely to increase in number and size without focusing on the priorities of the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the New Commandment. These biblical cornerstone principles must be identifiable components that are measurable in the church, the small group, and the life of the disciple. The goal must not merely be church growth; rather, church growth must be a bi-product of theological convictions held by the pastors, leaders, and the members of the local church.

The Great Commandment

The first foundational principle of healthy church growth is found in Matthew 22:36-40. This is referred to as the Great Commandment. In this passage, Jesus is asked to identify the greatest commandment in the Old Testament. Doubtless, this was a genuine concern for the Jews of that day because there were approximately 613 laws that were binding on them. Jesus, in His

⁸⁰. Joel Comiskey, *Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church* (Moreno Valley: CCS Publishing, 2012), 180, Kindle Edition.

wisdom and full authority, compacted the Old Testament laws and their requirements down to two simply worded, but loaded sentences, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” A standard gauge of the spiritual life and effectiveness of a congregation is simply to measure the church by their intentional pursuit of these commandments. The cultivation of the love of God in believers is best done in the context of a small group where disciples can interact with one another in a wholesome environment and pursue intimacy with God through times of worship, prayer, and the study of the Word. Additionally, a small group setting is an appropriate context in which disciples can learn how to be effective ministers of the Gospel to the world both in tangible ways and by supernatural means through the power of God.

The Great Commission

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gives His disciples a clear command to “make disciples” in all nations or people groups. Disciple-making is, therefore, not just a good idea, but is an idea rooted in the heart of God for His people. After all, being transformed into the image of Christ is His goal for the church (2 Cor. 3:18). Thankfully Jesus, knowing how the human mind works, not only give the command to make disciples, he also explains that His followers should (1) “be going,” (2) “baptizing...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” and (3) “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Jesus reveals that the church’s mission is to make more of the kind of people who will forsake the entire world to pursue Christ and His Kingdom, who are filled with a profoundly ever-increasing sense of the presence of God, who love God and their neighbor as Christ loves them, and who are anticipating the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

The New Command

In John 13:34, Jesus gives the church a new commandment. He says, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” In a real sense, this is an upgrade from the second commandment given in Matthew 22:40. Jesus, knowing that He was about to die for the world, was about to show His disciples a higher level of love. It was a love that did not depend on the righteousness of another person, a love that was consistent, and a love that persevered through trials. Jesus displayed His sacrificial love on the Cross to pay the price for the sins of the world and set before the church a model for how it ought to love the world and fellow believers. A church that is intentional about and committed to the pursuit of small groups on these three biblical foundations will experience the life of God flowing through the group, leading to multiplication, new groups, new leaders, and the continuing sense of the presence of God in the environment.

Jesus Led A Small Group Ministry

Jesus Christ set the standard for discipleship in the New Testament. While on earth, He developed a healthy small group with His twelve disciples. Apart from the fact that the number twelve was chosen as a representation of the twelve tribes of Israel and as a sign of the restoration of His Kingdom,⁸¹ practically Jesus was looking for quality, not merely quantity. He understood that it was wiser to have a small number of people who are sincere than 100 who are lukewarm.

Even though Peter denied the Lord, after being forewarned, Jesus demonstrated true restorative love towards him, which is a critical aspect of a healthy small group ministry. Following His commandment to love your neighbor, Jesus willingly forgave Peter in John 21:15-

⁸¹. Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church?* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 132.

19 and restored him not only to his position of ministry as a disciple and apostle but primarily to his position of intimacy with Jesus. This first aspect of this two-fold restoration is revealed in Jesus' question, "Do you love me?" Upon receiving an affirmative response from Peter, Jesus replied, "Feed my lambs." The first principle to be noted in this passage is that a believer's relationship, obedience, and intimacy always precede works of ministry. The second principle that is instructive to note and that is worthy of mention is that Jesus probed Peter three times, the same number of times Peter denied the Lord before His crucifixion. The point was to signify to Peter that His forgiveness was thorough and complete. This exchange with Jesus was also a significant lesson for Peter in forgiveness, for it was he who had previously asked the Lord about the number of times one must forgive the trespasses of another (Matt. 18:21-22). It is doubtless true that in leading a small group, there will be defectors and/or those who are less than faithful, but even in those situations, Jesus has an answer and a directive to disciple-makers who wish to lead healthy small groups.

Another prominent feature of Jesus' small group leadership is style is that He intentionally and relationally engaged with His disciples, not merely on the level of their intellect, but more significantly on a personal level that touched every aspect of their otherwise mundane lives. Comiskey notes that Jesus ushered in a "spiritual kingdom that entered into the hearts and minds of families in the house setting."⁸² In demonstrating the reality of this Kingdom, "Christ utilized the most natural, practical, and reproducible structure to extend the kingdom message—house-to-house ministry."⁸³ He brought the message of the Kingdom down to the level of their daily practical experience and gave them the ability to be actual partakers in His

⁸². Comiskey, *Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church*, 1101, Kindle Edition.

⁸³. Ibid.

ministry, thereby ensuring the longevity of His work and mission. For the disciples, the message of the Kingdom of God was not merely a new philosophical ideology developed by a fringe sect seeking notoriety. On the contrary, it was a powerful and transformational supernatural message (Rom. 1:16) that had been imparted to them as they followed and obeyed Jesus. Such was the totality of their metamorphosis that when Peter and John, unschooled and untrained men, had been brought before the Sanhedrin that their language, boldness, and persuasiveness could only have been explained by the fact that they had “been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). The Sanhedrin, Caiaphas, the High Priest, and his family marveled as they saw and heard men who were the fruit of Jesus’ small group. Added to their confusion was the fact that not only were these men competent and persuasive speakers, but they performed the miraculous healing in Jerusalem of a well-known beggar at the Beautiful Gate (v.14). The result of Jesus’ small group was the development of ministers who spoke and ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, just as He had done during His incarnational ministry. When disciples in a small group are influenced and transformed on the level of their cultural, ideological, and, social presuppositions, there is a radical transformation that materializes in the life of the disciples leading to righteousness, sanctification, and a burning desire to share the life they have received with others.

Another element of the small group ministry practice of Jesus is that He demonstrated the operation of the Kingdom of God in His life and ministry and subsequently directed His disciples to do the practical work of ministry in the real world (Matt 10:1-8; Luke 10:1-17). This is the principle of apprenticeship that is a critically important element in making disciples. Comiskey notes that “Christ knew that theoretical information separated from practical experience would have little lasting value. After Christ’s disciples finished their ministry tour, they met with Jesus to discuss what happened. The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had

done and taught (Mark 6:30).”⁸⁴ Jesus did not restrain his disciples, He empowered and released them to unleash the wrath of God on the powers of darkness just as they had seen Him do. When one surveys Jesus’ ministry of discipleship in the Gospels, one sees the successful reproduction of the nature and character of Christ in ordinary men of no repute. Mike Breen notes, “What we desperately need are more leaders whose lives and ministries look like the life and ministry of Jesus.”⁸⁵ This student thoroughly agrees with this assessment. The messianic directive to fulfill the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the New Command in the pursuit of expanding the kingdom of God and making mature disciples of Jesus Christ is a biblically sound rationale for the implementation of small groups in a church setting.

The godly love and forbearance that are expressed between saints as they pursue the nature of Christ in their lives and their church are an indisputably essential element in making disciples and, indeed, are a sign to the world of the transformational effect that occurs in the hearts of men and women when they become disciples of Christ. Next, the fact the Messiah, the Head of the Church, developed small groups in His earthly ministry is a significant and meaningful rationale for the creation of small groups in a church setting. The rationale of small group discipleship is not church growth. Oftentimes, pastors and leaders measure the “growth” of their church by a numerical increase while neglecting or omitting to measure whether there has been any corresponding spiritual growth in the church. Jesus preferred spirituality over numbers, intimacy over ministry, and effectiveness over mere existence.

In the ministry of Jesus, there were disciples and then there were customers. The distinction between the two classes of listeners could be determined by examining what satisfied

⁸⁴. Comiskey, *Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church*, 979-1001. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁵. Mike Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders: From Half-hearted Volunteers to a Mobilized Kingdom Force* (Crowdscribed, LLC, 2014), 270, Kindle Edition.

each group when they came to Jesus. The customers were content to hear the Word, to receive healing, and after they had been fed to satisfaction with loaves and fishes, to depart from the presence of Jesus and return to their towns (Matt. 14:13-21). Disciples, however, think differently. When Jesus asked the Twelve whether they would leave Him as the others had done (John 6:66-67), Peter indicated His resolve to remain with Jesus, citing two reasons that are indicative of true discipleship. The first reason was, “You have the words of eternal life” (v.68). The second reason was, “We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v.69). The first explanation exemplifies the response of Jesus to His first temptation by Satan which is that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Peter and the Twelve had concluded that the uniqueness of the message of Jesus was not related to His intelligence, but to the fact that He was speaking the words of eternal life that proceeded from God. The Twelve were no longer satisfied with the natural food and the natural existence that the crowds and the other apostate disciples were determined to accept. Contrastingly, as the Twelve spent increasing time in the presence of Jesus, they discovered that they experienced spiritual life and freedom when they fed on His words. As a disciple follows the Lord and develops a personal relationship with Him, a hunger for the spiritual develops that supersedes a desire for the natural/carnal way of life. This is the product of the process of sanctification. The second reason also carries great merit and instruction for disciple-makers and disciples alike. A true disciple of Jesus Christ must, above all else, be convinced of the supremacy of Jesus Christ as the Messiah who was sent by the Father to be the author of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. It is virtually impossible to be a disciple of Jesus Christ without an unflinching conviction of the person and work of Jesus. The

disciples, therefore, were not consumers, they were dispensers of the reality of the Kingdom of God as they ministered with Jesus.

The pursuit of church growth, therefore, must be biblically and theologically oriented around Christocentric themes such as salvation, righteousness, the sanctification of the individual and the congregation, growing in love, and being led by the Spirit. A church whose main purpose is to add numbers will always miss the mark, but one that is built on the strong theological foundations of the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the New Commandment will flourish as they function under the lordship of Jesus Christ to create healthy disciples and a healthy church. These disciples who are assimilated into small groups must be trained in the Word of God, equipped with knowledge to discern and develop their giftings, and must be prepared for the work of ministry in the world. Jesus, who was called Rabbi, Master, and Teacher, trained and equipped His twelve disciples until His nature was reproduced in their lives and they were able to continue the mission that He began (John 17:18; John 20:21; Acts 1:1). The underlying philosophy of the small group is that believers are one spiritual family under God and, as such, “the best way to make disciples is in a relational context.”⁸⁶ In this small group environment, believers come together to fellowship by sharing their lives in a loving manner that reflects the commands of Jesus Christ to demonstrate the type of love that signifies to the world that they are His disciples (John 13:35).

The Philosophical Relationship Between Discipleship and the Body of Christ

Pauline Interpretation of the Body of Christ

In the Pauline Epistles, believers in the church were referred to as being members of the body of Christ and were given familial epithets such as “brothers” and “fathers” to emphasize the relational bond that holds all believers together in Christ as the members of the family of God.

⁸⁶ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 4685. Kindle Edition.

These references are used multiple times in different epistles to explain the special spiritual relationship that believers share with each other (1 Cor. 8:9, 13; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; 1 John 4:20; Hebrews 13:1); 1 John 4:7). Though not connected by blood or human genealogy, Christians are connected by the Spirit of God through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It is the Spirit of God that unites believers together in a spirit of righteousness wherein they are required to submit to one another as unto God. Jesus Christ, the elder brother who has gone before the Church as the firstborn from the dead (Matt. 12:50; Col 1:15,17-18; Rom. 8:29; Rev. 1:5), relays the direction, will, and commandments of the Father to the body of Christ so that His will is accomplished on earth. In relation to the concepts of the body of Christ and the family of God, discipleship is the process by which believers develop into mature disciples as they follow Jesus, discover their spiritual gifts, become personally and intentionally connected to the lives of their spiritual brothers and sisters, and participate in the mission of God together.

In 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, Paul masterfully described the church as a body of believers metaphorically to explain the relational and dependent connection among each believer (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 2:13-14). In the body of Christ, there is a fundamental reality of interpersonal relationships that underlies the operation of each part of the body. The arm is powerful but cannot fully operate without the elbows, the wrist, and the fingers. Similarly, the foot performs a multiplicity of actions, but it cannot function if it is not properly connected to the toes, the ankles, and the leg. In Paul's understanding, a body and a family must work together for the common good of the whole. This is the essence of community. The head is connected to the body and the body is jointly fitted one to another so that the divine life of Christ flows unrestrictedly to every joint and organ.

Personal Discipleship Affects Corporate Spiritual Growth

Paul explained the theological significance of unity in the body of Christ as it pertains to the healthy spiritual operation of the church when he wrote that “God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:24-26). In these verses, the Apostle Paul reveals the principle that both the great and the lesser are joined in one body and are dependent on the other for the complete function of the body. The reality is that each part is essential to the proper functioning of the whole. Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains this principle when he notes that “the Church is one man; it is the Body of Christ. But it is also many, a fellowship of members (Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 12:12 ff). Since the Church is a body made up of many members, no separate member, such as hand or eye or foot, can transcend its own individuality.”⁸⁷ Not only is this so, but there is a deeper spiritual connection that believers share, not only with each other but with Christ. Examining this reality, Bonhoeffer noted that having entered into the body of Christ through baptism, believers have a greater richness and assurance of the communion and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives than that which the first disciples had. This is true because we now have access to the body of the glorified Christ.⁸⁸ Conversely, there is a debilitating effect that occurs when believers shortsightedly dabble in the carnal nature rather than live in the Spirit. This is a dysfunctional behavior that affects not only the believer’s relationship with Christ but his effectiveness and connectivity to the rest of the body.

⁸⁷. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London, SCM Press), 3281. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁸. *Ibid.*, 3185. Kindle Edition.

Bonhoeffer also extends the Pauline metaphor of the body of Christ to the concept that when a believer sins sexually, he not only sins against his body but also against the body of Christ. He states, “Such irregularity is a sin, not only against our own bodies, but against the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 6.13-15). Even our bodies belong to Christ and have their part in the life of discipleship, for they are members of His Body. Jesus, the Son of God, bore a human body, and since we enjoy fellowship with that Body, fornication is a sin against Christ’s own Body.”⁸⁹ He further notes, “For the Christian however, whoredom is in a very special way a sin against the very Body of Christ, for the Christian’s body is a member of Christ, and belongs exclusively to him.”⁹⁰ This is a powerful reality that is often missed. The wholeness, effectiveness, and spiritual power of the Body of Christ is reduced when one part of the body fails to live up to the standard of righteousness and holiness required by Scripture. What does this say about discipleship? The understanding is that discipleship should not simply be understood as a private matter but must be viewed more broadly as a matter that affects the entire local church to which the believer is connected. There is a personal responsibility for the corporate development of the body. Indeed, this fact may appear extremely burdensome to the mind, but it is nevertheless true. Jesus Christ, the head of the body, died to sin through crucifixion. Believers are not called to death by crucifixion in a literal sense, but in a spiritual sense, they are required to put the flesh to death so that the Spirit of Christ can live in and through them. The Apostle Paul notes in Galatians 5:24, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Since the head died, so too the individual parts of the body need to die to sin (Rom. 6:5-11). When disciples in a local church are pursuing the manifestation of this biblical truth in their personal

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1880. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3893. Kindle Edition.

lives, the Spirit of God can truly flow from the head down to the feet of Christ's body without the impediment of the old nature to disrupt the work of God in the local church. A critical aspect of the discipleship method, therefore, is that personal discipleship affects the corporate body. A church that is not disciplined will never grow or accomplish the purposes of God.

The philosophy of the body of Christ phenomenon in the discipleship is winsomely knitted together by Paul in Ephesians 4:11-16. In these verses, Paul explains that God has given some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for purposes that all relate to spiritual maturity. These purposes are (1) to equip his people for works of service, (2) so that the body of Christ may be built up until the members all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, and (3) to become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. The first concept that this passage conveys is that discipleship is “becoming a complete and competent follower of Jesus Christ.”⁹¹ The second revelation in this passage is that spiritual maturity can only be achieved as the members of the body of Christ stay in right relationship with one another. Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman correctly observe that “we cannot separate relationships from the disciple-making process. Our interactions with other people are one of the means God uses to teach us truth. Relationships in the body of Christ are where we learn from others what a mature Christian life looks like.”⁹² The body of Christ is, therefore, the conduit through which the life of Christ flows in the process of discipleship. When the life of Christ flows through the church body, those who are being disciplined intentionally and who are equally intentional about being disciplined, “will grow to become in every respect the

⁹¹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2001), 17.

⁹² Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 140.

mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ” (v.15). Disciples, therefore, who vertically remain connected to the life of Christ by continuously living in the Spirit and who participate without reservation horizontally in fellowship with the saints will experience the fullness of the divine life of God and grow up into maturity as faithful disciples of Jesus.

Theoretical Foundations

Many hours of research have been undertaken to develop biblically accurate discipleship models that are relevant to the church. Most of these models, however, have been developed based on an American socio-cultural perspective which has little bearing on a culturally diverse region such as the Caribbean, apart from the enunciation of general discipleship principles. For example, there has been a study by Jeremy H. Upton on the effect of discipleship on the African-American male community.⁹³ This study theorizes that the negative state of the black community in America is linked to the absence of spiritual engagement through discipleship in the lives of African-American men. Upton’s thesis is that issues such as social and economic challenges, educational challenges, gang and crime challenges, and self-esteem challenges could be remedied by the use of *empowerment discipleship* which, as the term suggests, encourages African-American men to become “empowered heroes, [and] *sic*. deliverers, as in the Book of Judges”⁹⁴ who can “rescue and restore their people.”⁹⁵ While Upton’s study is similar to the researcher’s in that the spiritual effect of discipleship on an ethnic and racial cross-section of society is considered, *empowerment discipleship* would not apply to a Caribbean context because

⁹³ Jeremy H. Upton, “Contextualized Discipleship for African-American Men: Beginning a Trophic Cascade in the African-American Community” (DMin Thesis Project, Biola University, 2017).

⁹⁴ Upton, 99.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

African-American males face largely different socio-economic challenges than Caribbean people.

In 2014, Daniel Allen Smith wrote a thesis entitled “A Pastor’s Approach To Discipleship And Its Effect On The Local Church: A Three-Step Approach To Biblical Discipleship.”⁹⁶ In that study, the researcher theorized that the implementation and expectation of biblical formation, biblical transformation and biblical application in his church members would result in a disciplined congregation and consequently forestall “the decline in American churches.”⁹⁷ Daniel Allen Smith’s study was premised on the concept that there is a fundamental decline in churches that can be remedied by the adherence to general biblical discipleship models. The researcher’s thesis project rests on that foundation and further particularizes four theological principles that are founded in the life and ministry of Jesus. These principles are applicable to an Anglo-Caribbean church in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape.

A more theoretically foundational and relevant study was done by Jonathan Eric Smith in 2018. Entitled “Cultural Based Discipling According to The Strategies of Jesus,”⁹⁸ Smith theorizes that many churches in America are in an unfortunate condition of ill-health which is demonstrated in the stagnation of church growth and the closure of churches. His solution is the implementation of “four primary strategies for developing disciples. They are the gathered strategy, the small group strategy, the mentoring strategy, and the sending strategy.”⁹⁹ Smith’s study shares some semblance to the present study being undertaken by the researcher, such as the analysis of

⁹⁶ Daniel Allen Smith, “A Pastor's Approach to Discipleship and its Effect on the Local Church: A Three-Step Approach to Biblical Discipleship” (DMin Thesis Project, Liberty University, 2014).

⁹⁷ Ibid., iv

⁹⁸ Jonathan Eric Smith, "Cultural Based Discipling according to the Strategies of Jesus" (DMin Thesis Project, Liberty University, 2018).

⁹⁹ Smith, iv.

the spiritual reasons for lethargy in the church and an analysis of biblical principles that can be used to ameliorate the declining condition of the church.

The research in this study differs primarily and significantly from the Smith study in that it concentrates on an entirely different demographic of people who live in a socially, culturally and spiritually distinct locality. Therefore, factors that negatively influence the church in America are not relevant considerations in this study. For example, American churches are being confronted with the impending threat of atheism and the stifling of religious freedom. Further, they are under severe attack from the outside by LGBT organizations and governmental institutions and from the inside by liberal clergy who are canvassing for the inclusion of homosexuality and “gay marriage” in the church. While there is increasing pressure by local and international organizations in Trinidad and Tobago on the general society to accept changing mores on homosexuality and “gay marriage,” there is no corresponding pressure that has been exerted on the church at this time.

The Caribbean is comprised of a richly diverse melting pot of racial and ethnic groups that have assimilated into one diasporic network of multi-lingual island nations that share a common heritage. It is therefore unsurprising that no study has been completed to date on the effectiveness of discipleship strategies within Caribbean churches. This study seeks to be the first that specifically invites the consideration of four broad biblical principles that the researcher theorizes would be effective in eradicating the plague of spiritual consumerism and lethargy that exists in the churches today. These are the consecration, culture-shift principle, apprenticeship, and reproduction principles. The writer posits that each of these principles is indispensable to the development of biblical disciples in a Caribbean context.

Perhaps, there is no better Caribbean island in which the present study could be completed than Trinidad and Tobago. The reason for this statement is that the Church in Trinidad and Tobago is comprised of individuals who are intimately connected, whether in a personal way or by way of familial ties, to other religions that are radically distinct from Christianity. For example, one significant issue with which pastors and ministers are confronted when interacting with unbelievers or new converts is the incidence of pre-existing spiritual knowledge or experiences in other religions that radically conflict with the basic doctrines of Christianity. Another presenting problem confronting the church that affects the discipleship of new converts and existing believers is the cultural acceptance of carnival festivities. These factors highlighted here are but a few that are inimical to the development of a discipleship culture that is focused on developing Christlike disciples. The consecration and the culture-shift principles that are discussed in this thesis are specifically designed to tackle these issues by requiring new converts and existing believers to commit wholly and unreservedly to Jesus Christ and subsequently to submit their pre-salvation lifestyle, worldviews, and cultural perceptions to the authority of the Word of God as they seek to become mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

A fundamentally important theoretical framework that underpins this thesis is the discipleship model that Jim Putman has developed in his major work, *“DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples.”* Putman, along with his co-authors, developed a diagram that explains the five stages of spiritual life. It was this diagram, and the corresponding explanation of each stage of spiritual life, that first inspired the researcher to analyze the spiritual status of the churches in the New Testament Church of God in Trinidad and Tobago. Once this analysis was complete, the next step was to discover what biblical principles could be implemented to take new converts and existing members along the journey of

spiritual transformation from being spiritually dead to becoming spiritually mature adults. The writer has developed four biblical principles to achieve this goal.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In the two previous chapters, this student endeavored to lay a foundation for the examination of discipleship practices in the New Testament Church of God (NTCOG) denomination of which he is both a member and a credentialed minister. In this chapter, this student will detail the operational methodology that was utilized in the applied research.

The goal of this student's research was to discover the spiritual, social, and psychological factors that contribute to a definitively detrimental culture of spiritual lethargy and consumerism in NTCOG churches in Trinidad and Tobago. The great author and disciple-maker Bill Hull has noted that churches "throw the word *disciple* around freely, but too often with no definition."¹⁰⁰ From this student's observation, Hull's statement has proven to be a factual reality even in a Caribbean church context. This student surmises that the existence of the problem may be explained by the fact that pastors have focused almost exclusively on making new converts to Christianity while failing to give due care and attention to nurture the spiritual development of new believers in an intentional and relational manner. The issue may be that pastors have talked about discipleship in a manner that leads their members to the conclusion that they can be inactive in ministry or live spiritually shallow, provided that they strive to live a morally upright life. The phenomenon of immature Christian development is an affront to the purpose of God for the church as expressed in the Great Commission and revealed in the life of Jesus in the Gospels and of His disciples in the book of Acts. Robert Gallaty states that "Jesus' command to make disciples was not a theoretical expectation. Not only did Jesus tell his disciples to disciple others,

¹⁰⁰. Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 35.

but he also showed them how to do it.”¹⁰¹ The phenomenon is, therefore, a problem with which ministers should be seriously engaged to change the present tide that is washing away the spiritual fervor that leads to the development of spiritually mature disciples of Jesus Christ. To this end, Greg Ogden notes, “If the pastor-teacher and other leaders fulfill their biblically prescribed role, then positive consequences naturally follow: the body of Christ is built up, a unity of faith is grounded in the knowledge of God’s Son, and the church grows to maturity.”¹⁰² Guided by this aim, this student conducted a largely quantitative research project, the data from which was utilized to conduct a comparative analysis between the following groups: (1) NTCOG senior pastors against their respective church members, (2) NTCOG senior pastors against NTCOG senior pastors, and (3) the student’s local NTCOG church members against other NTCOG church members. The research also contained qualitative elements that were designed to discover the possible phenomenological reasons that explain the present miserable state of discipleship in local churches in Trinidad and Tobago.

Intervention Design

On January 2, 2020, permission was issued by the Institutional Review Board of Liberty University (IRB) to conduct this student’s research project. The study involved executing surveys among senior pastors of the NTCOG and the members of their church. As part of the requirements to gain IRB approval, this student sent a letter to the National Overseer of the NTCOG of Trinidad and Tobago, Bishop Alonzo Jones, seeking permission to conduct the surveys. In this letter, this student outlined that the purpose of the research was to create a discipleship plan that would be used within NTCOG churches. The objective of the plan is to

¹⁰¹. Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, 2376. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰². Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 521. Kindle Edition.

arrest the ongoing phenomenon of spiritual immaturity in existing members who are unaware or are not operating in their gifts, callings, and purpose by developing an intentional and relational small group environment in which converts to Christianity can become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. On December 5, 2019, Bishop Jones sent a letter to the IRB granting permission to this student to survey the NTCOG in Trinidad and Tobago.

After permission was granted by the IRB, this student contacted the secretary of the national office of the NTCOG to request a list of the senior pastors in the denomination who have, for at least five years, pastored churches with a congregation of more than thirty members. On January 6, 2020, this student received a list from the national office by email, but that document, however, contained the names of every senior pastor within the denomination. The necessity to make further inquiries to ascertain which of the named pastors met the criteria for the study resulted in an unnecessary delay in commencing the Senior Pastor Surveys and the church member surveys. While making those inquiries, it was indeed stunning to discover that the membership of many churches was below thirty members and that even if there were slightly more, many of the members were either above 65 or below 18 years old or were not members for at least three years or if they met the first two criteria, were involved in some form of ministry activity in the local church that precluded them from consideration. What this student discovered in preparation to conduct the surveys was that the smaller churches had a higher incidence of underage or mature members and a higher percentage of members in ministry due to their size. In the IRB application, it was indicated that this student intended to conduct the surveys within 40 NTCOG churches. Upon the implementation of the research design, however, this student discovered that the restrictive criteria utilized in the research to create a controlled sample of participants ultimately resulted in the exclusion of many churches from consideration in this

student's research project. There were also time and financial constraints that limited the number of NTCOG churches surveyed in this study. Nevertheless, this student compiled a list of seven pastors who met the criteria, both for the Senior Pastor Survey and the General NTCOG Church Member Survey.¹⁰³

Research Participants and Rationale for Participation

The participants in the research project were church members and senior pastors of NTCOG churches in Trinidad and Tobago. The NTCOG church members were required to meet the following criteria: (1) they must have been between the ages of 18-65 years old, (2) they must have been an active member of their local church for at least three years, but (3) they must not presently serve in any ministry at their local church. These criteria were used to filter the participants to collect data from members who were within an age group of personal responsibility and accountability, but who were also not too advanced in age to be considered unfit physically, mentally, or intellectually to participate in the life of the local church or the community.

By requiring church members to meet these basic criteria for participation in the study, particularly the requirement of church membership in a local church for at least three years, this student also hoped to mitigate the appearance of bias in the design of the study. Tim Sensing states that the role of a researcher "as the primary qualitative research tool necessitates the identification of your biases, values, emotions, and agendas."¹⁰⁴ It is reasonable to expect that new converts or new members of a local church would not be taught immediately on the

¹⁰³ The General NTCOG Church Member Survey is the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey. The Pre-Discipleship Training Survey was used in the student's internal local church study as well.

¹⁰⁴ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 1313. Kindle Edition.

operation of spiritual gifts in ministry, the role of the believer in the Great Commission, or on discipleship, if these topics are even taught at all. Had the three-year minimum membership criterion not been utilized, most of the participants may have had no knowledge of small groups, the Great Commission, discipleship, or spiritual gifts. This finding may have confirmed the underlying problem which is that there is an absence of discipleship training in the church. For an honest evaluation of the matter, however, it was critically important for this student to gather data that addressed the question whether the absence of discipleship in local churches is truly the fault of factors personal to the believer or the senior pastor's approach to the topic. The requirement of membership in the local church for at least three years, therefore, was fixed into the criteria to protect against personal bias. The assumption was that participants who met this criterion would have been in the church long enough to have had an opportunity to be taught and trained in discipleship and to have been prepared to participate in practical ministry.

There were requirements as well for participation in the Senior Pastor Survey. These pastors must have led a NTCOG church in Trinidad and Tobago with over 30 members for at least five years. This group of participants was chosen to investigate and examine the varied approaches of senior pastors regarding the practical implementation of discipleship in their local churches. Further, this student compared the results obtained from the Senior Pastor Survey and the results obtained from their respective church members and offered suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of their discipleship processes to create healthy, mature, and spiritually contributing disciples in their local church.

The requirement to have pastored a local church for at least five years was implemented to safeguard the study against the presumptive bias that pastors are the sole reason for the absence of discipleship in the local church. If a senior pastor who participated in the study had

only been appointed for one year, the data could not conclusively determine whether lack of ministerial interest and spiritual growth in the church was the fault of the pastor or the members. Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold state, “When pastors have been leading a church for five years or longer, the church assumes the character of their pastor. As goes the leadership, so goes the church!”¹⁰⁵ This student, therefore, implemented this requirement to operate as a basic threshold or minimum period in which it was expected that pastors would have conceived, developed, and imparted their vision to their local church for discipleship and the participation of believers in the Great Commission.

An informed consent form was the first page of the student’s internal Church Member, Senior Pastor, and General NTCOG Church Member Surveys. Sensing states that “informed consent involves a set of practices designed to give everyone connected to the project the necessary information to decide whether to participate in the project.”¹⁰⁶ Obtaining the informed consent of participants before they submit to the demands of a researcher whose sole aim is to complete the thesis or dissertation is the methodologically ethical and prudent approach. There is also a moral element in obtaining informed consent. Bruce Berg notes that “informed consent means knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation.”¹⁰⁷ The ethical and moral duties of the researcher are neatly expressed in Philippians 2:3-4 which states, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but

¹⁰⁵. Malphurs and Penfold, *Re: Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church*, 384. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁶. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 1141. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁷. Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon), 47, 1998.

also for the interests of others.” The responsibility of the researcher, therefore, to inform the participants of the parameters of the research is a manifestation of the love that God expects of His people.

The Senior Pastor Survey and the student’s internal Church Member Survey were confidential because their data could be traced back to participants. This student, therefore, used pseudonyms to protect their identity, and they were required to sign and return their consent forms. In addition to the need to protect these participants’ identities, this student used pseudonyms for the participants of the student’s internal church study to link the results of the Pre-Discipleship and Post-Discipleship Training Surveys. The comparison of data obtained from these two surveys will form a major aspect of this students’ analysis and eventual recommendations for the improvement of discipleship practices in local churches. This comparative data will be used to record and measure the individual growth of the participants regarding their spiritual and ministerial readiness and to record and measure the essential differences, if any, in their understanding of small groups, discipleship, and the Great Commission before and after the discipleship training class.

The General NTCOG Church Member Survey was anonymous and, as such, participants were not required to sign the informed consent form. This student intended to conduct these surveys online, but the National Educational Director of the NTCOG Trinidad and Tobago and each senior pastor who agreed to participate in the surveys requested that this student personally visit their churches to request participants for the surveys. This student was further advised that instead of recruiting the senior pastors by email, this student should make initial contact with the senior pastors by telephone. This student took the initiative and made these calls during the last three weeks in January and the first week in February. This student will not identify by name the

churches he contacted due to the confidentiality of this information. Rather, an alphabetical letter will be used to protect the identity of the church and the senior pastor.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Church A NTCOG

The first church that this student contacted was Church A. The senior pastor invited this student to visit his church on a Friday night in January for a service called Family Training Hour. The pastor anticipated that several members would have been present for this service and that from that those present, this student would have been able to choose 10 eligible participants to complete the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey. This student attended the service but was unable to carry out the research instrument at that church because it was a small church of close to 40 members, the majority of whom were generally active in ministerial activity in the church. It was apparent that the pastor, who is an elderly man, did not understand the parameters for the study because he still asked this student to disseminate the study. No results were collected from this church. The evening ended with the pastor requesting an impromptu lecture on discipleship which this student obliged to do.

Church B, Church C, and Church D NTCOG

The unsuccessful implementation of the research instruments at Church A revealed that Sundays would be the best day to visit churches to complete the surveys. Consequently, this student made appointments to visit on Sundays when most of the congregation would be present. This student also surmised that potential participants would be more inclined to complete a survey if the researcher was physically present to explain the nature of the study versus if they were asked to read an email from a person they had never met. After Church A, this student went to Church B, Church C and, thereafter, to Church D. Before the end of these services, the

respective senior pastors invited this student to explain the nature of the study and to request participants. Participants, however, were not always forthcoming. At Church B, this student was approached by some willing participants but was also required to ask members whether they fit the criteria for participation. This was a hassle as some members were anxious to leave. This student, nevertheless, conducted the study there successfully.

The process at Church C was slightly different. There, the senior pastor, in anticipation of this student's arrival, asked members who matched the survey criteria to remain in church after the service. This approach significantly assisted this student in managing the amount of time it took to complete the survey assignment at that church.

In Church D, the senior pastor allowed this student to speak directly to his congregation about the nature of the study and to request participants. This student found that this church assembly was the most unwilling to participate in the study. Many members left the church directly after the announcement and, even when approached directly, they took the survey with apprehension and reluctance. Whereas in the other churches the Senior Pastor Survey and Pre-Discipleship Training Survey instruments were collected immediately after they were completed, this student agreed to allow the senior pastor to collect the survey instruments and return them to this student due to the unwillingness of the participants to complete the surveys on site. This was not the optimum manner for the collection of the surveys, but any other approach would have deterred members from taking the survey, thus frustrating the opportunity given to this student. It is with great disappointment that this student must state that the survey results were never returned. This student made several calls to the senior pastor to ask that the results from the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey and the Senior Pastor Survey be returned, but he failed to do so. This student then suggested that he could return to Church D to collect the results. The senior

pastor responded that that was not necessary and that he would deliver the results to this student. This student contacted a mutual church acquaintance who lives nearby to the pastor and asked if he would be willing to collect the surveys from him to which he responded affirmatively. This student called the pastor to inform him of this new arrangement. The results, however, were never delivered. This student had to make the difficult decision to move forward with the analysis of the results from the five churches where results were obtained.

Church E NTCOG

This student contacted the senior pastor of this church to set a time and date to conduct the Senior Pastor and Pre-Discipleship Training Survey instruments. After the nature, purpose, and intended execution of the surveys were explained to the senior pastor, he refused to commit to the dates that this student suggested to him. Rather, the senior pastor stated that he would contact this student in February to give a date when it would be convenient for this student to conduct the study. After this telephone conversation, this student met the senior pastor on two occasions at a minister's conference. On the first occasion, this student asked whether he had chosen a date, and the senior pastor stated that he had not yet done so. On the second occasion, the senior pastor briefly spoke to this student but did not mention the topic of attending his church to conduct the surveys. This student was not provided the opportunity to conduct the surveys at this church.

Church F NTCOG

This student attended Church F and received a warm and inviting welcome by both the senior pastor and the members. This church, which normally seats between 80-100 members, only had approximately 50 members present. As such, this student rightly concluded that most of the members present were actively engaged in some form of ministry, were either under the age

of 18 or over 65 or were not members of the assembly for at least 3 years. Nevertheless, this student collected 8 survey responses from this church. The senior pastor completed his survey later and returned it to this student.

Church G NTCOG

This student, quite fortuitously, attended Church G on Carnival Sunday in Trinidad and Tobago. That said, the church, which has the capacity to seat around 150 members, was still reasonably full. The senior pastor allowed this student to address the congregation regarding the nature of the study. The members eagerly responded to this student's solicitation for participants to complete the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey. The church member participants and the senior pastor remained in the church to complete and return their respective surveys. The experience at Church G was immensely encouraging after the failed attempt to obtain participants at Church D and the refusal of the senior pastor of Church E to invite this student to that church.

Church H NTCOG

Church H is the local church of this student. The concept for the thesis and design of this research project was birthed after having been a member and subsequently an active minister in the church for approximately ten years. The Church H study involved conducting the Senior Pastor Survey, the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey, a 4-week Discipleship Training Program, and a Post-Discipleship Training Survey at the local church building. Church H was the sole church that was required to complete the Post-Discipleship Training Survey because only participants from this church completed the Discipleship Training Manual. In the original design of the project, this student intended to conduct this study first before going to other NTCOG churches. The design implementation timeline was adjusted, however, due to the belated grant of

IRB approval to conduct the surveys. This student, therefore, endeavored to conduct both the internal Church H surveys and the external Senior Pastor and General Church Member NTCOG Surveys simultaneously.

In January 2020, this student affixed the recruitment survey poster on the church's bulletin board and, thereafter, announced the study to solicit participants before the end of the Sunday morning service. Unsurprisingly, no members offered to participate in the surveys. After this dismal start, this student compiled a list of the church members who fit the criteria to participate in the surveys. This student made telephone calls to these members, all of whom agreed to be participants in the surveys. A group chat was created to disseminate information regarding the time and date of the first session. The sessions were agreed to be held on Tuesday nights between 7-9 pm for four weeks. It was agreed that in the first session, the participants would complete the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey and that the first class would be held directly afterward. The purpose of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey was to assess their current spiritual development and their understanding of discipleship

This student was not in the room while the Pre-Discipleship and Post-Discipleship Training Surveys were being completed by participants. The participants were not identified by name but were given pseudonyms that this student used to identify the corresponding Pre-Discipleship and Post-Discipleship Training Surveys. The list of the pseudonyms for the Church H participants was stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's home office and on a locked computer. Only the researcher and the faculty mentor had access to that list. The completed surveys were placed in a collective envelope.

The Discipleship Training Manual was designed to cover essential topics that pertain to the development of the spiritual life of the believer. It was intentionally designed to re-

acculturate the participants to process every facet of their lives from a spiritual perspective by renewing their mind in the Word (Rom. 12:1-2). The four themes, “Identity,” “How We Are to Live,” “Spirituality in Ministry,” and “Spiritual Warfare,” were chosen to impress upon the participants the significance of the radical spiritual transformation that occurred at salvation. Moreover, the topics in each theme directed the participants to the monumental personal responsibility that they have towards the body of Christ as joint partakers of God’s divine nature to the world as reconcilers and to God as worshippers.

Each participant was given a copy of the manual on which he was permitted to make notes. The discipleship training program was a serious interactive session between this student and the participants that was envisioned to lead them to develop their consecration to the Lord and to find their place in ministry. The sessions were didactic in nature. Participants had the opportunity to share personal past and present life stories, to ask questions and receive answers related to the Bible. Importantly, the sessions were used as a “safe space” to engage in practical ministry such as praying for the sick and having opportunities to preach and teach the Word. They were also encouraged to develop spiritual disciplines such as fasting, journaling, prayer, worship, and reading and studying the Bible. Bobby Harrington notes that “the Divine Context of discipleship gives us the capacity to engage fully in the other contexts. Without a one-on-one friendship with God, we have nothing of substance upon which to build our lives and relationships. The Divine Context is often thought of as the place where we engage in spiritual disciplines or habits.”¹⁰⁸ The practice of spiritual disciplines allows the disciple to evade the emotional and mental trappings of the flesh and to establish and develop a spiritual relationship

¹⁰⁸. Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, *Discipleship that Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 3122. Kindle Edition.

with God. This student, therefore, emphasized the importance of practicing those habits throughout the training period.

The plan was to begin promptly at 7:00 pm, but this was never realized. Although each participant ultimately came to the class, they were all late. This resulted in an unanticipated delay in the start of the discipleship training class from which there was never a recovery. Every Tuesday, the class started late due to the failure of participants to arrive promptly at 7:00 pm. The fourth week of the class, which was intended to be the final session, passed and this student had only completed the second theme in the Discipleship Training Manual. Fortunately, every participant agreed to extend the number of sessions to complete the manual.

It became apparent, however, that lateness was not the sole reason for the delay in completing the manual; rather, the deeper issue was that each participant had a great desire to learn information that they found to be extremely pertinent to their spiritual lives. The participants spent much time asking questions and sharing their testimonies. Naturally, the nature of the questions posed by participants and the inherent bias that this student has regarding the significance of discipleship resulted in the formation and development of an emotional connection with the participants in the session. Tim Sensing, referring to Alan Peshkin's work, *In Search of Subjectivity*¹⁰⁹, states, "For Peshkin all researchers (qualitative and quantitative; consciously or not) assume different identity modes based on the research setting, participants involved, and the researcher's feelings about the observations."¹¹⁰ Indeed, the experience of teaching the participants over the period of six-weeks invoked feelings of great concern that there was more information to relay to the participants than this student was allotted the time to

¹⁰⁹. Alan Peshkin, "In Search of Subjectivity: One's Own," *Educational Researcher*, vol. 17, no. 7 (October 1988): 17–21.

¹¹⁰. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 1329 Kindle Edition.

share. Emotions in the research process, however, are not inherently counterproductive, provided that the researcher is aware of any biases that may affect the quality of the research or analysis. Sensing notes that “when researchers recognize their emotions, these feelings can be used as a tool to increase analytical interpretation.”¹¹¹ This student endeavored to give as much time and attention to the needs of the participants during the training session. This student’s goal was that the knowledge of the will of God for their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ might be increased and the passion of their desire to become actively engaged in ministry might be ignited.

Conclusion

In chapter four of the thesis, this student will observe the major themes run throughout the survey responses. This student will analyze, inter alia, the following: 1) the perception of church members regarding their pastor’s leadership regarding discipleship, 2) whether or not discipleship or ministerial programs are being used by senior pastors that produce spiritual growth in members and prepare the members for practical ministry, 3) whether there is a correlation between the absence of spiritual maturity and the incidence of believers not knowing their spiritual gifts or calling, and 4) whether there is an observable correlation between the size of the church and the relative spirituality of its members.

¹¹¹. Ibid., 1392. Kindle Edition.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In chapter three, this student explained the methodology of the research project. This student attended seven churches, was permitted to conduct the required surveys in six, but only received results from five. As such, the data to be analyzed is derived from the five churches at which this student successfully completed the research component of this project. As stated in chapter three, the churches in which the surveys were completed will not be named to protect the identity of the church and the senior pastor. In this chapter, the student will use a number to identify the churches that participated in the surveys.

Pre-Discipleship Training Survey Results

This student collected results from forty-five members amongst the five churches using the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey (Appendix A). These participants ranged in age from 18-65 years of age, with 24.4% of respondents being between the ages of 18-30, 31.1% being between the ages of 31-40, 17.8% being between the age of 41-50, and the remaining 26.7% being between the age of 51-65 years of age. These respondents were asked a series of preliminary questions to identify their compatibility for the study. The respondents were asked to state how many years they have been saved and how many years they have been members at their local church. The results were as follows:

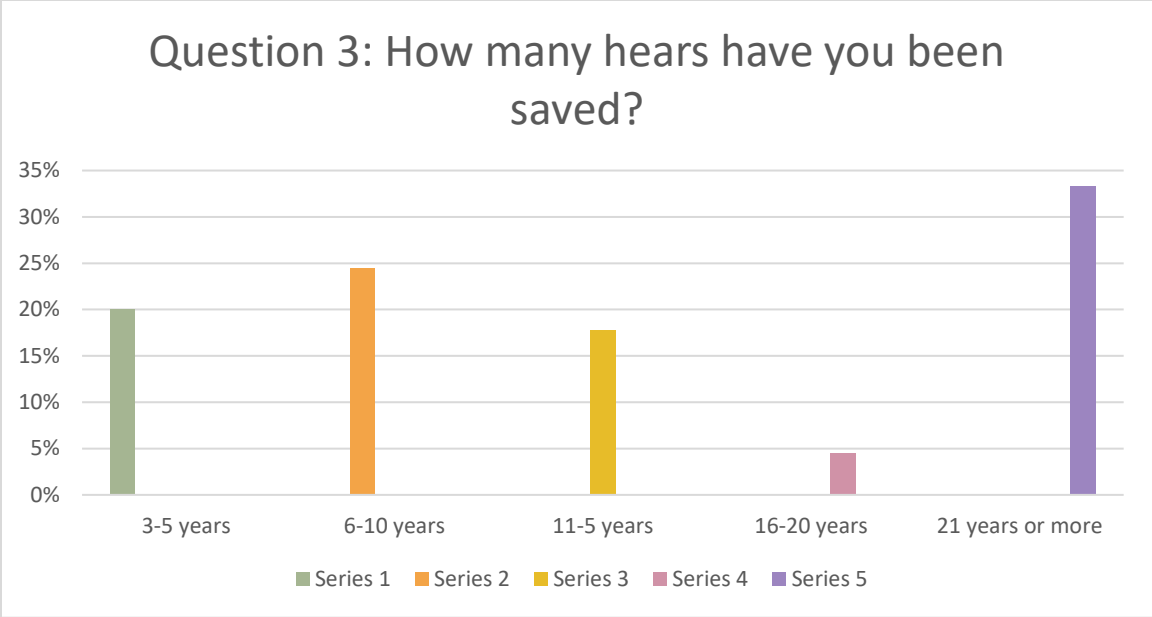


Figure 5. Responses to Question 3 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

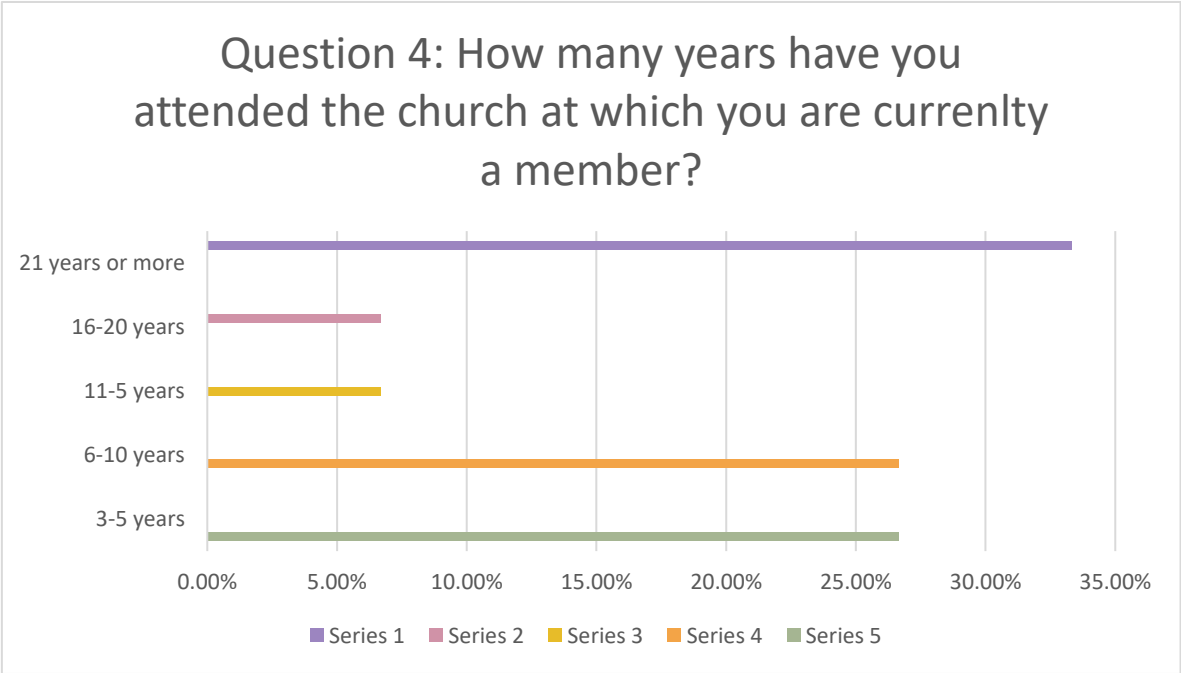


Figure 6. Responses to Question 4 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

What was truly surprising to this student is that out of the forty-five participants in this study, fifteen of them or 33.3% had been saved for at least twenty-one years or more and had attended the church of which they are currently a member for the same length of time. They, however, were not involved in ministry in their local church. The data here shows a distressing reality, which is that the believers who ought to have been the most spiritually developed and active in ministry had nothing to show for their longevity in the faith. The same level of concern was warranted for those members who had been saved for at least six to ten years and had been members of their present local church for the same length of time. After this period, twelve out of the forty-five members, or 26.67%, were not currently functional in the church. This preliminary data revealed that the thesis of this research project was valid and the undertaking of developing a discipleship plan to counteract the spiritual lethargy and consumerism in the church was a worthwhile endeavor.

The responses to Question 5 were particularly interesting when the results of the participants were analyzed by church. In Church One, 80% of the respondents stated that there were between 101-150 while the remaining 20% stated that there were 151-200 members in the church. The senior pastor of Church One, however, responded that there are 201 or more members in the local church. In Church Two, 70%, 20%, and 10% of the participants respectively stated that their church contained 101-150, 151-200, and 201 members, whereas the senior pastor responded that there were 101-150 members at his church. Out of the eight participants who completed the Church Three survey, 62.50% of the participants stated that there were between 51-100 while the remainder stated that there were 30-50 members. The senior pastor of Church Three responded that there were between 51-100 members.

The seven participants from Church Four were also divided in their estimation of the number of members in their local church. 85.71% of those participants stated that there are 51-100 members and 14.29% stated that there are 101-150 members. The senior pastor of Church Four stated that there were 51-100 members. In Church Five, 40% of the members stated that there were 201 or more members, another 40% stated that there were 151-200 members, and 20% stated that there 101-150 members in the congregation. The senior pastor of Church Five stated that there were 201 or more members. These varied results revealed that although the respondents had been continuous members of their local church for a period of years, there was yet inconsistency in their answers regarding the average number of members in their church. This fact implies that there is a measure of disconnect that exists between these members and the rest of the congregation.

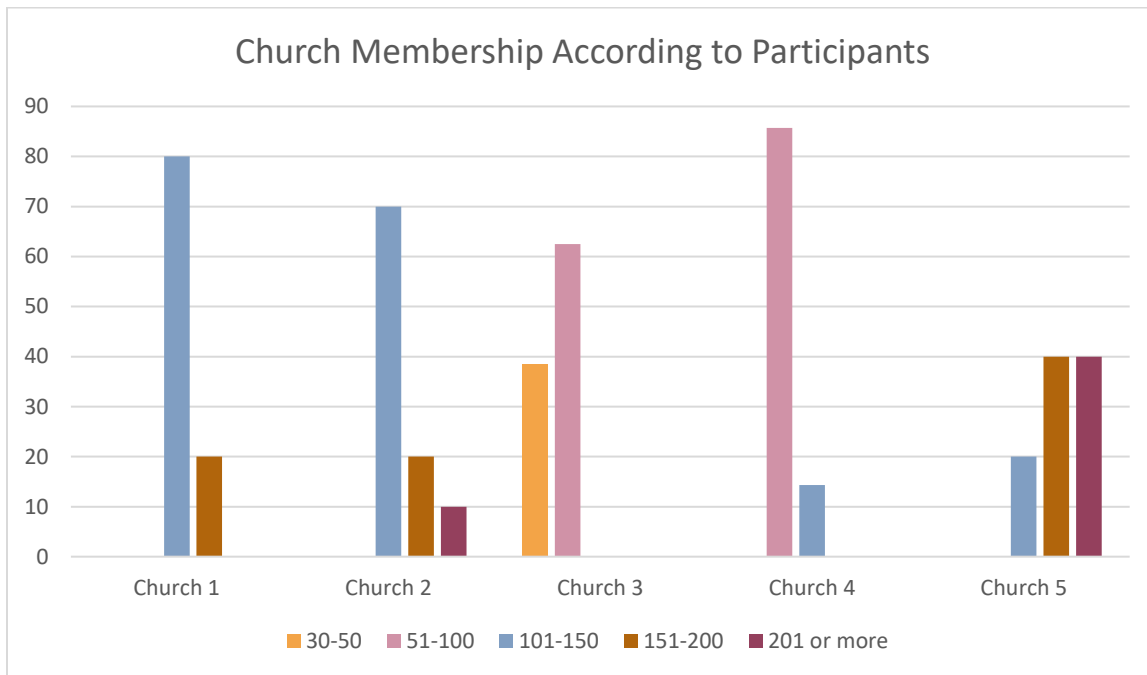


Figure 7. Responses to Question 5 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

After those preliminary questions, the participants were asked to provide responses to substantive topics relating to discipleship, the Great Commission, small groups, their assessment of the ministerial and spiritual operational structures in their church, and they were asked to examine their personal background and spiritual motivations as Christians.

The first of these substantive questions was whether the respondent had ever heard about the Great Commission. Overall, thirty-five of the forty-five respondents stated that they had heard of the Great Commission, but when they were asked in Question 7 to define the Great Commission briefly in their own words, only twenty-eight respondents attempted to define it. This means that 37.78% of the respondents did not answer the question either because they did not have an answer or because they were unsure about the definition of the Great Commission. The twenty-eight respondents (62.22%) gave varying answers, most of which revealed that they had no understanding of the concept. The results are as follows:

Church One – five out of ten responses

The Great Commission is to go into all the nations of the world and preach the Gospel (good news) of Jesus.
We as Christians are called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.
The Great Commission is to spread the Gospel to all nations.
To go forth and spread the Gospel of the Lord/the teachings of God.
To go out into the world and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ as stated for all believers in the Bible.

Table 1. Church One Responses to Question 7 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

Church Two – eight out of 10 responses

To go out into the world and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ as stated for all believers in the Bible.
The Great Commission is to go preach, teach and talk about Jesus.
The Great Commission relates to working towards God's work and being and living the life of God as a <u>disciple</u> .
The Great Commission is proclaiming the Word of God to the lost.

The Great Commission is to go, tell and preach the Gospel.
The Great Commission is to go out and witness about the Word of God to people.
The Great Commission is to share the good word of Jesus Christ our Lord.
The Great Commission is to go and witness to others.

Table 2. Church Two Responses to Question 7 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

Church Three – five out of eight responses

The Great Commission refers to the mandate given to Christians in the Bible to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and cleanse lepers.
The mandate is to spread the Gospel of Christ to the unsaved, and those who have not heard it.
The Commission to go into the world and spread the gospel with everyone.
Spreading the Gospel
Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the Gospel, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Table 3. Church Three Responses to Question 7 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

Church Four – five out of seven responses

The Great Commission is to go and spread the Gospel with the lost.
The Great Commission is spreading the Gospel in different ways to reach the unsaved.
The Great Commission is proclaiming the Gospel in and out of season. It is praying without ceasing.
I have heard about the Great Commission, but I am not sure what it means.
The Great Commission is working with God to save the lost.

Table 4. Church Four Responses to Question 7 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

Church Five – five out of five responses

The Great Commission is to preach and teach the Word of God and to assist others to know Christ.
The Great Commission is the mandate to spread the Gospel to the world and the unbeliever
The Great Commission is the commandment that Jesus gave to his disciples to go out into the world and preach the Gospel.
The Great Commission is going out into the world and share the Gospel to everyone.
The Great Commission is about preaching the Gospel to the unsaved people of the world.

Table 5. Church Five Responses to Question 7 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

In the twenty-eight responses that have been set out above, the respondents gave varying formulations of their understanding of the Great Commission, which is expressed in Matthew 28:18-20.¹¹² Only two out of the twenty-eight respondents mentioned the word “disciple” in their answer. What is worse is that the word “disciple” was not used to define the Great Commission but to state the persons who are given the responsibility to carry it out. The fact that twenty-six out of the twenty-eight respondents and forty-three out of forty-five of the participants did not make the connection between the Great Commission and the command not only to make converts but to “make disciples” is staggering. This data reveals one of the principal issues in local churches in NTCOG churches in Trinidad and Tobago, which is that senior pastors have directed much of their focus and attention towards the pursuit of evangelism but have failed to strive towards the deeper goal of discipleship.

Questions 8 and 9 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey were related to each other. In Question 8, this student asked whether the participants had ever heard about discipleship, to which forty-four out of the forty-five responded affirmatively. When they were asked in Question 9, however, to give a definition of discipleship, six of the respondents skipped the question, and out of the thirty-nine who answered the question, three stated that they could not define it. Thirty out of the of the thirty-six definitions of discipleship given were biblically consistent with the scriptural paradigm which calls upon believers to follow Jesus Christ and allow Him to transform them into His likeness by daily surrender and obedience to Him. The remainder of the answers related discipleship to a ministry activity like preaching or saving the lost.

¹¹². 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 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

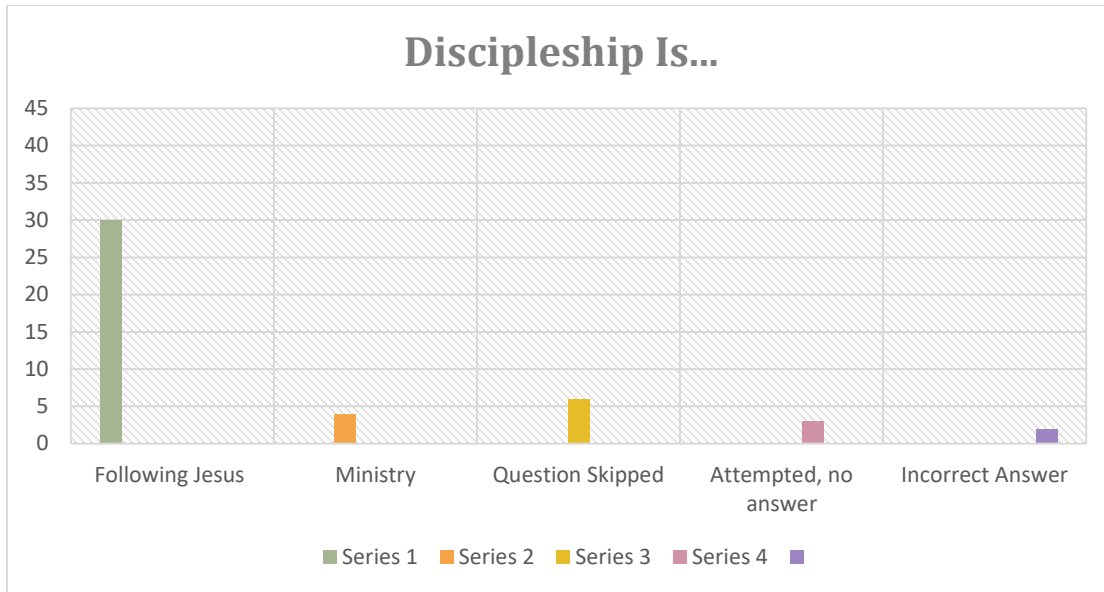


Figure 8. Responses to Question 9 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

It was quite interesting to see that many participants correctly defined discipleship or related to ministry, but that by their own definitions, they were not submitting themselves to discipleship.

When the forty-five participants were asked if they had ever heard about small (cell, peer, or home) groups, thirty-seven responded in the affirmative. When they were asked to give a brief explanation of the purpose of small group meetings thirty-two of the respondents attempted the question, the majority of whom were correct in stating that the purpose of small group meetings was to gather the believers together in smaller groups to discuss and study topics pertinent to the Bible, to pray and have fellowship with each other, and to strengthen their mutual faith.

Each of the participants was asked in Question 12 to select the services that they attended at their local church apart from the Sunday morning service and unsurprisingly, 82.22% stated that they attended Prayer and Bible Study while only 17.78% and 15.56% respectively stated that they attended a discipleship class/group or a small group. These responses were expected. They reveal that the operational structures of the six churches surveyed are not designed intentionally or specifically to foster the development of disciplined believers. Spiritual maturity, in these

churches, happens if it happens. On the contrary, the structure facilitates the teaching of the Word by the pastor or other senior leader to the members who attend the Prayer and Bible Study. In that structure, there is always a spiritual dichotomy between the pastor and the members that manifest in the latter's lack of spiritual maturity, lack of understanding of the Word, lack of the ability to minister, and the continuous reliance on the pastor.

Questions 14-17 and 18-21 were designed to discover whether there were specific programs in the local churches that were designed to facilitate the training and equipping of members for practical ministry and to develop the spirituality of the members within the church respectively. These questions also had the secondary purpose of testing the participants' knowledge of the programs that exist in their local church. It is unfortunate that several of the participants failed to answer these questions. There is still, however, enough data that can be drawn from the responses. Out of the forty-four respondents who answered Question 14, 68.18% or thirty respondents stated that there are classes or groups at their church that are dedicated specifically to training and equipping members for practical ministry. In Question 15, seventeen respondents or 44.74% stated that they had attended such a class at their local church with the remaining 55.26% stating that they had not. Out of the seventeen respondents who attended, only 29.41% stated that they had completed the training and equipping class for practical ministry which represents five out of the total forty-five respondents. This means that only 1 out of 9 or less than 12% of the respondents completed the training and equipping class to prepare them for practical ministry. When the respondents were asked in Question 17 to describe their experience with the training and equipping class at their church, twenty-one as opposed to the seventeen participants, who answered the previous question gave a response. This discrepancy in the four additional answers either reveals that a few respondents did not properly read or understand the

question or that they changed their minds in relation to their previous answers regarding attendance to this class. The data from Questions 14-17 more clearly reveal the issues in the local churches when assessed individually. The results are presented on a graph below:



Figure 9: Responses to Question 14 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

Question 9: Have you implemented a ministerial program at your local church that is designed to prepare all your members for practical ministry and to equip them to fulfill their role in the Great Commission?				
Church One	Church Two	Church Three	Church Four	Church Five
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 6: Responses to Question 9 of the Senior Pastor Survey

This student’s preliminary analysis of these results revealed that the sharp divide in the participants’ responses to Question 14 either suggests that clear communication does not exist with respect to the offering of training and equipping ministry classes or that these classes are held at the church but the participants were unaware. The fact that senior pastors in Churches One and Two stated that they have not implemented training and equipping classes for ministry at their churches, while the majority of participants from their church stated that those classes are

held, suggests that the participants were totally uninformed or were unsure of what is meant by a training and equipping ministry class. In any event, the results show that even if there are practical ministry classes in Churches One, Two, and Three, the local churches have failed in their responsibility to communicate the existence of these classes clearly to the church and to intentionally advocate the importance of the class to the members of the church. Ed Stetzer writes that “Every church must have a strategy and a process to equip people for ministry and mission. Thus, they create an environment where people are empowered and enabled to do ministry.”¹¹³ The failure to be intentional about developing specified programs that are required for every believer would produce the results seen above.

It is unfortunate that the results obtained from Questions 18-21 were broadly identical to those derived from Questions 14-17. When the participants were asked in Question 18 whether there were classes or groups at their church that were dedicated specifically to discipling believers to become spiritually mature followers of Jesus Christ, their answers were divided, again betraying serious deficiencies either in the messaging and communication of their local churches to the members. This conclusion is further exacerbated by the fact that the senior pastors of two out of the five churches stated that they did not have discipleship classes or groups at their church.

¹¹³ Ed Stetzer, “Laypeople and the Mission of God, Part II – Reclaiming the Priesthood of All Believers” Christianity Today, accessed March 15, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/august/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-ii--reclaiming.html>.

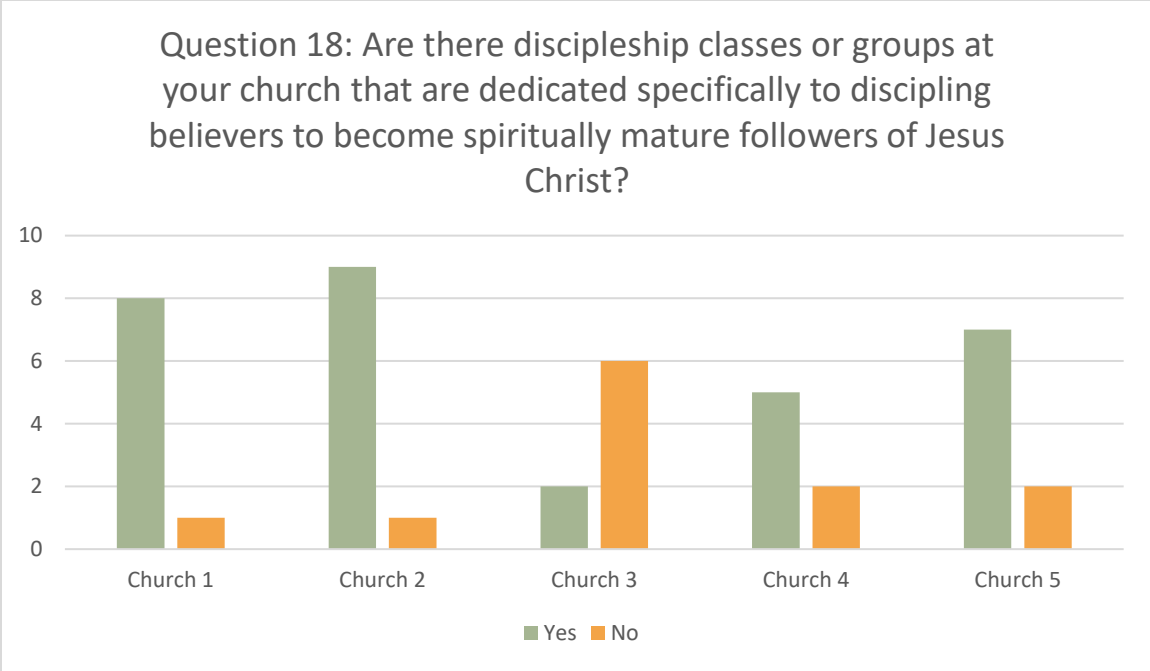


Figure 10: Responses to Question 18 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

Question 7: Have you implemented a ministerial program at your local church that is designed to prepare all your members for practical ministry and to equip them to fulfill their role in the Great Commission?				
Church One	Church Two	Church Three	Church Four	Church Five
No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Table 7: Responses to Question 7 of the Senior Pastor’s Survey

Out of the forty-five participants who were surveyed from the five churches, thirty-four of the respondents to Question 22 stated that they believed that they had an important role to play in the life of their local church, ten stated that they had never thought about it, while one stated that he did not believe he has a role to play. The participants generally stated in Question 24 that their senior pastor makes them feel that they are called to contribute to the life of the local church. This is reflected in the fact that 60% of the participants stated that they strongly agree, 28.89% stating that they agree, with only 11.11% of the respondents stating that they disagree.

It was not surprising to see that 93.33% or forty-three of the respondents to Question 23 believed that they had a role to play in winning the lost and making disciples of Jesus Christ. This high percentage may be accounted for by the fact that many Christians in Trinidad and Tobago are inundated by admonitions to engage in evangelism by local church leaders and are generally alive to the need to “win souls” for Christ as an active part of their Christian duty. The lack of spiritual activity always arises, however, when it comes to engaging in the process of discipleship. A similar number of respondents to Question 25 stated that their senior pastor has created a culture in the church that makes them feel that they are called to win the lost and make disciples for Christ with 57.78% or twenty-six respondents saying that they strongly agree, while 33.33% or fifteen respondents stated that they agree. The data here suggest that the spiritual culture that is engendered in the local church has a significant effect on the participants’ perception of their roles and responsibilities in the local church and in ministry generally. When pastors develop a spiritual culture in their church that makes members feel that they are called to contribute to the life of the local church or that they are called to win the lost and make disciples of Jesus Christ, believers will adopt that culture and manifest it in their personal lives.

When the respondents were asked whether sermons were regularly preached in their local church about the personal responsibility of members in fulfilling the Great Commission, 34.09% stated that sermons were either often or always regularly preached respectively, while fourteen respondents or 31.82% stated that sermons on the personal responsibility of members in fulfilling the Great Commission were preached sometimes. The fact that such a high percentage of the participants stated that sermons were regularly preached always, often or sometimes at their church, raises the question why so many of the participants did not include a reference to discipleship or making disciples in their definition of the Great Commission.

In Question 28, the participants were asked if any leader in their local church had ever spoken to them about their personal responsibility in the Great Commission as opposed to the topic being preached from the pulpit. 52.27% of the respondents said no, while 47.73% said yes. The fact that most of the respondents stated that no one in leadership had ever spoken to them about their personal role in the Great Commission is disconcerting. It is extremely important that the Great Commission be taught, explained, and manifested through interpersonal relationships with leaders in a group setting where members can learn from and mutually enrich the lives of each other. The operational structure of the churches surveyed is not conducive to the development of healthy discipleship practices. This researcher suggests that it is insufficient for pastors to merely preach or teach about the Great Commission from the pulpit. If disciples are to be made in the local church, group meetings should be established to increase the likelihood of believers being asked to consider their role in the Great Commission.

When the participants were asked in Question 27 whether their senior pastors preach and teach regularly about spiritual gifts, 31.11% of the respondents stated that their pastors always preach on the gifts, with the same percentage responding that their pastors teach on this topic often, and 35.56% of the respondents stated that the topic is preached sometimes by their senior pastor. One of the respondents stated that their senior pastor does not preach on spiritual gifts at all. Quite disconcerting is that in response to Question 29, 54.55% of the respondents stated that no one in leadership has ever asked them about their spiritual gifts. There is an inconsistency between what is preached from the pulpit on spiritual gifts and the practical engagement of members by their church leaders to prompt them about this topic. If more than half of the respondents have never been asked personally by anyone in leadership about their spiritual gifts for the purpose of determining how they may be assimilated into the life of the local church, it

can be extrapolated that very few members have been engaged by their church leaders to think about their spiritual gifts. This would affect the level of spirituality of the members and their readiness for ministry.

This student delved further into the participants' personal views regarding their spiritual gifts. All forty-five respondents stated that they believe that God had given His people spiritual gifts. Only thirty-five respondents, however, believed that God had given them spiritual gifts, while the other ten respondents were not sure that they had received spiritual gifts from God. The fact that ten of the forty-five respondents, after having been in church for at least three years or more, were not certain that God had given them spiritual gifts is an indictment on the operational structures of the church. The will of God, as revealed in Scripture, is that every member of the body of Christ will be trained and equipped to be used by Him for the expansion of His Kingdom (Eph. 2:10; 4:11-16). It is unacceptable, therefore, that ten of the participants were unsure, after having been in the church for at least three years, that God has given them spiritual gifts.

In answer to Question 32, only twenty-seven out of the thirty-five respondents who stated that God had given them spiritual gifts knew their gifts. It is the responsibility of believers to discover their spiritual gifts as they pursue the Lord, but it is also the responsibility of the senior pastor and his leadership to aid believers in that discovery. Some pastors use a preset gifts survey that can be found online. That may be helpful, but the best approach for a pastor to adopt is to communicate with his members individually to learn about what God is doing in their lives and to discover what passions are burning in their hearts. This level of intentional and relational dialogue will help the pastor and the believer to discern the calling of the Lord in the latter's life. Pastors ought to be intentional about either speaking to their members personally or about training and developing spiritually competent church members/staff to help believers discover

their spiritual gifts so that they can become more useful to the local church and ultimately be prepared to be engaged in the Great Commission. Before members are assigned to a ministry, however, it is critically important that they not only have gifts but that they are simultaneously developing the character and spirituality that they need to sustain the ministry.

After questions on the spiritual gifts, this student asked the participants personal questions to assess their historical background history prior to and after salvation in order to discover whether there were significant factors that contributed or detracted from the mindset and lifestyle required of a disciple. In Question 33, this student asked the participants to select all the responses that applied to them. Their responses were as follows:

I participated in Carnival before I was saved.	47.73% or 21 respondents
I currently participate in Carnival activities.	6.82% or 3 respondents
I was involved in a cohabiting relationship before I was saved.	18.18% or 8 respondents
I converted from Hinduism	22.73% or 10 respondents
I converted from Islam.	0.0% or 0 respondents
I converted from an African ancestral religion (Spiritual Baptist, Orisha, Ifa).	4.55% or 2 respondents
I participated in obeah (witchcraft) and/or spiritual rituals before I was saved.	2.27% or 1 respondent
I believe that Christians can participate in the spiritual rituals and practices of other religions.	4.55% or 2 respondents
I have close relatives (fathers, mothers, siblings, cousins, grandparents) who are adherents of other religions.	59.09% or 26 respondents
I have been ostracized by family members who are adherents of other religions.	11.36% or 5 respondents
I have surrendered my life completely to Jesus Christ. He is both Lord and Savior of my life.	93.18% or 41 respondents

Table 8: Responses to Question 33 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

The data set out above is instructive in the development of a discipleship plan. It is important for pastors to recognize that many of their members formally participated in different aspects of

entrenched national culture such as carnival or participated in the occultic practices of other religions. New believers who come to Christ from these backgrounds are more inclined to live a carnal or a half-hearted spiritual life if they are not intentionally and relationally disciplined into the Christian faith. Those believers who are ostracized by family members that are adherents of other religions ought to be given the love, care, and attention that they need to feel connected to their new spiritual family. This student suggests that the acculturation and assimilation process is best accomplished in the context of discipleship small groups and not in the Sunday morning service. Spiritual groups of no more than twelve members can act as a spiritual insulator from the hardship or chaotic environment in which new believers may live outside of the church. These groups also serve as a safe space in which new believers can discover their spiritual gifts and jointly pursue the Great Commission together.

This student asked the participants about their basic spiritual disciplines. Twenty-seven of respondents stated that they like to read books about ministry, only 48.72% or nineteen of the respondents stated that they read their bible every day, 15.3% or six of the respondents stated that they prefer to watch television or use social media, 23.08% or nine stated that they fast regularly, and 38.46% or fifteen respondents stated that they have a strong prayer life. These figures show that most of the participants are not spiritually mature in their understanding of the importance of spiritual disciplines. This student would advise that senior pastors encourage their members to develop the practice of spiritual disciplines in a group context.

When the participants were asked in Question 35 whether they knew their calling and whether they felt spiritually mature, the results obtained from forty-one of the forty-five respondents were as follows:

I feel that I know my calling.	58.54% or 24 respondents
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I feel that I am ready to fulfill my calling.	51.22% or 21 respondents
I feel spiritually mature.	31.71% or 13 respondents
I feel spiritually deficient and I would like to have spiritual guidance in my life.	68.29% or 28 respondents
I feel spiritually deficient, but I am fine. I do not want the help of anyone.	2.44% or 1 respondent

Table 9: Responses to Question 35 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

The compiled survey results revealed that although many of the participants felt that their pastor created a culture in the church that made them feel as though they were called to be contributors to the life of the local church, they nevertheless felt spiritually deficient and were desirous of having spiritual guidance in their life. The purpose of the discipleship groups is specifically to facilitate these members who wish to graduate from a place of spiritual deficiency to maturity. In the small group environment, in contrast to the mass public preaching on Sunday mornings, believers can not only be edified through the impartation of the Word and transformed through submission to Christ, but also be encouraged by their interactions with other saints, and equipped by their pastor or other leaders to help them realize, develop, and utilize their spiritual gifts in the local church and in the Great Commission.

The fact that only thirteen compared to twenty-eight of the respondents felt that they were spiritually mature is a troubling statistic. This student opines that this difference can be remedied if senior pastors intentionally create small group ministries in which the leaders of those groups are specifically mandated to impress in the mind of each believer the biblical truth that they have been given spiritual gifts, have been called to engage in the Great Commission, and are essential

contributors to the healthy and holistic function of the local church. For churches with a large congregation, it is impractical for the pastor to attend to the spiritual needs of each member. The pastor must, therefore, communicate to his leaders his heart for each member. It would be the responsibility of the leaders, thereafter, to communicate and replicate in each small group the heart of the pastor. This student believes that this will be an effective way to bridge the divide between the pastor's pulpit ministry and what is received by ordinary members.

The final question of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey was designed to gauge the attitude of the participants to the Great Commission. The results were as follows:

Q36: Please select the answers that apply to you:

Answered: 41 Skipped: 4

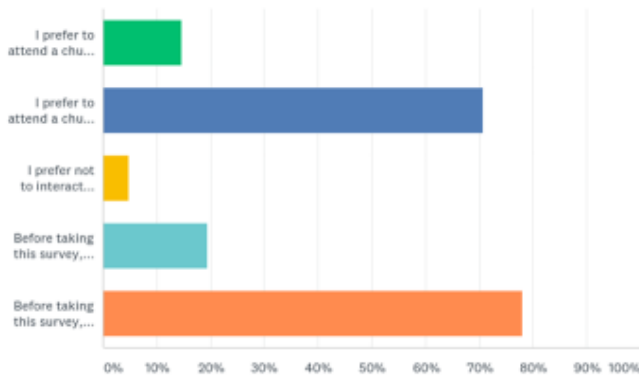


Figure 11: Responses to Question 36 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

Q36: Please select the answers that apply to you:

Answered: 41 Skipped: 4

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I prefer to attend a church where I can receive from anointed ministers, but I am not required, personally, to do anything.	14.63% 6
I prefer to attend a church where I can be trained and equipped to be active in ministry.	70.73% 29
I prefer not to interact with people in church.	4.88% 2
Before taking this survey, my only goal was to ensure that I made it to heaven.	19.51% 8
Before taking this survey, my goal was to discover how I can serve the Lord with my gifts and abilities in the local church, the community, or internationally to further the Great Commission until the Lord comes.	78.05% 32
Total Respondents: 41	

Table 10: Responses to Question 36 of the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

The chart reveals that there is a small percentage of members who would prefer not to be required to do anything in ministry, to not interact with members in church or whose goal was simply to make it to heaven. These types of members will also exist in the church. It is impossible for them not to exist. They, however, are in the minority. The most significant results from this question reveal that the participants were willing to be trained and equipped in active ministry and that if the opportunity was available to them that they would enroll to be trained to participate in active ministry until the Lord comes. As Stetzer pointed out, “people naturally want to be objects of the ministry, not partners in it. That's why the Bible says, ‘consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works’ (Hebrews 10:24, KJV).”¹¹⁴ The senior pastor and his leaders must take the necessary steps to harness the desire of his members to be active participants in the ministry of the church and the Great Commission.

¹¹⁴. Ed Stetzer, “Laypeople and the Mission of God: Part V- Essentials to Changing the Culture,” Christianity Today, accessed March 15, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/october/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-iii--customers-to-owners.html>.

The Senior Pastor Survey Results

After conducting the Senior Pastor Survey (Appendix C) within the NTCOG churches, this student has concluded that insufficient emphasis has been placed on the development of creating a healthy discipleship culture in local churches. The participants in this survey were senior pastors, 80% of whom have had over twenty-one years of experience in pastoral ministry. The survey was designed to discover the pastors' attitudes towards discipleship as revealed in their personal discipleship practices and the ministerial operational structure of their churches.

This student was also concerned about whether enough was being done to nurture newly saved believers into mature disciples and about the pastors' role in facilitating the spiritual development of their members. The results showed that only 60% or three out of the five pastors surveyed had implemented discipleship programs within their local church. What was striking was that in response to Questions 8 and 11, none of the senior pastors utilized members of their local church whom they have discipled to teach discipleship or practical ministerial groups respectively. To achieve effective discipleship in a local church, there are critical operational structures that must be implemented. First, programs must be implemented in local churches that are designed to develop the members' spirituality, their preparedness for ministry, and to prepare them to become disciple-makers in the future.



Figure 12: Three Core Themes of the Discipleship Process

Next, there must be an established discipleship relationship between pastors/leaders and their members that will facilitate the development of accountability structures that help believers to remain accountable for the current state of their spiritual growth. Finally, pastors must preach and teach continuously on the indispensability of discipleship to the believer's life and its significance in preparing believers to accomplish the will of God in order to create a new spiritual culture in the church. This culture is one that encourages members to be active for God and become dispensers of the Gospel, rather than mere lethargic consumers who sit on their gifts.

From the survey, it was clear that all pastors agree that making disciples of Jesus Christ is an important element or component of their ministry and that it is essential to the development of healthy spiritually mature disciples of Jesus Christ. Although they unanimously attested to its importance, not all have taken the necessary measures to ensure that this developmental process is implemented in their local church. Further, not all the pastors have implemented ministerial

programs that would prepare and equip their members for practical ministry to fulfill their role in the Great Commission.

Out of the five senior pastors surveyed, three of them stated that they have not implemented a system or program in their local church that is designed to integrate new believers into small groups. Senior pastors must develop this integration process to protect the fragile faith of the new believers who could find strength in the company of their new spiritual family. In the group setting, they can be empowered to make a safe transition from the carnal ways of their old life to a spiritual lifestyle of faith. The two senior pastors who responded that they have small group settings for new members stated that they personally lead those groups.

When the pastors were asked if there is a detailed process at their church that is followed to help members discover their spiritual gifts, 80% answered yes.

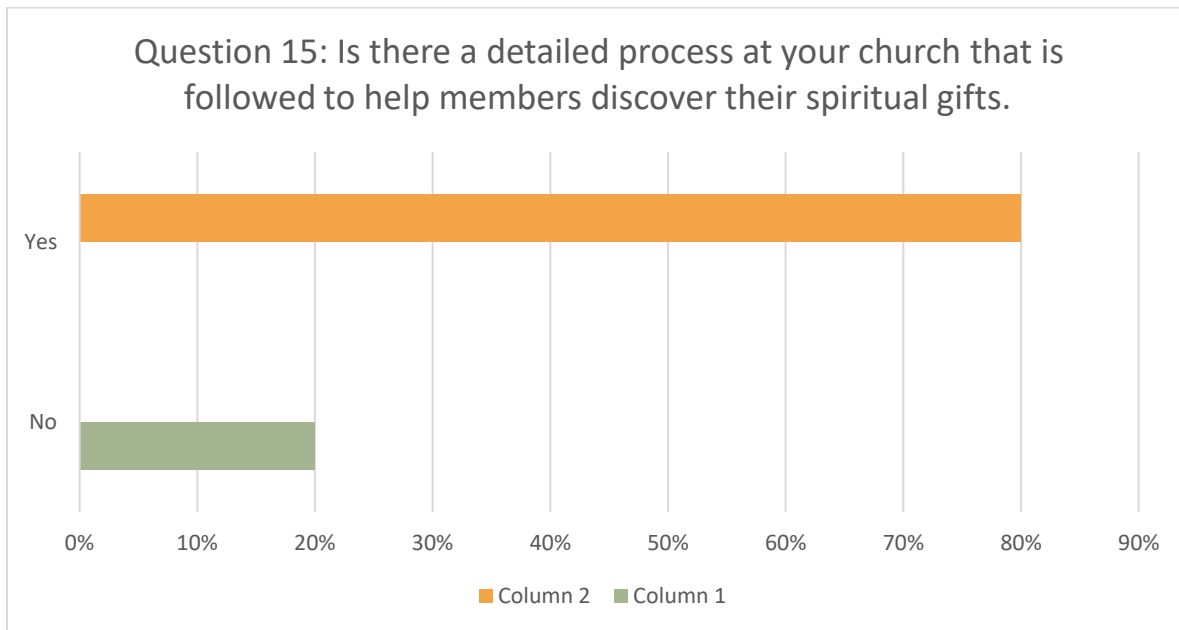


Figure 13: Responses to Question 15 of the Senior Pastor’s Survey

When these pastors were asked to briefly explain the process that they employed at their churches to help members discover their spiritual gifts, four out of the five respondents answered as follows:

Church One	Skipped the question
Church Two	Pulpit ministry and special services.
Church Three	Teaching on spiritual gifts, an assessment instrument used to identify gifts.
Church Four	Gift Mix Test, Practical Work.
Church Five	We have a formal survey/instrument. Members fill it out and are assessed.

Table 11: Responses to Question 15 of the Senior Pastor’s Survey

Out of the five senior pastors, four of them stated that they do not measure or verify how many people are saved compared to those who are being disciplined in any given year. This data suggests that the churches have no procedure implemented to verify the effectiveness of the discipleship program on new converts and existing believers. This statistic suggests that over time, new converts are lost in the crowd and become mere “churchgoers.” This occurs because neither records nor follow-ups are being done to measure the spiritual progress of church members. It is also possible that believers either become intimidated or disinterested in ministry because senior pastors or church leaders did not take the time to help them mature spiritually.

The data obtained from Questions 19 and 20 of the Senior Pastor Survey revealed that three out of the five pastors neither presently have an established discipleship relationship with any members in their church nor do they take members of their congregation on ministry trips with them as apprentices. These are statistics that essentially encapsulate the discipleship problem in Trinidad and Tobago. S. Lance Quinn stated that “any pastor who is not discipling others is abdicating a primary responsibility of his calling. The pastor’s calling is to preach, but

he cannot be merely an orator, talking at people but never really ministering to them on a personal level.”¹¹⁵ It is wholly unacceptable that churches, especially those with larger numbers, fail to disciple their members.

Church Five is a model of the way other churches ought to be structured to achieve the greatest effectiveness in making disciples. Eric Geiger et al. noted that “The need for a clear model to follow is required in the process of discipleship. A disciple is a “learner or student.”¹¹⁶ Throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus, He continuously interacted and trained His disciples to function in the Kingdom of God. Understanding that His time was limited, He equipped followers who were prepared to continue His mission after His ascension. Senior pastors must, therefore, pattern their ministry after that of Jesus if there will be longevity regarding their efforts. The results from Questions 19 and 20 are set out below:

Church	Church Membership	Answer to Question 19	Answer to Question 20
Church One	201 or more	No	No
Church Two	30-50	Yes	No
Church Three	101-150	No	No
Church Four	51-100	No	Yes
Church Five	201 or more	Yes	Yes

Table 12: Responses to Questions 19 and 20 of the Senior Pastor’s Survey

It may be possible that the results above can be linked to the fact that only two of the senior pastors were personally disciplined after they were saved. Those were the pastors from

¹¹⁵. S. Lance Quinn, “Discipling,” in *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 271.

¹¹⁶. Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, & Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2012), 7.

Churches Two and Four. This student suggests that senior pastors must disrobe themselves of their former past to embrace the heart of Christ for His church. Members who feel that their senior pastor and leaders take the time to edify them may be more inclined to develop an interest in ministry and to make the changes that are necessary to ensure that their lives come into conformity with the standard set by Christ.

When the pastors were asked how often they conducted ministry training seminars/meetings for their church staff to ensure that they were ministering effectively, two out of five stated that there is no set period, while the remainder stated that these sessions are conducted quarterly. Ed Stetzer notes that a pastor's schedule must "reflect a desire to engage all God's people in ministry and mission. So you need weekly or monthly meetings with leaders of leaders, who then meet with other leaders, who then develop new leaders."¹¹⁷ Pastors must not only hold ministry training meetings, but must conduct review sessions to evaluate the current state of the ministry in the church. It is impossible for the pastor to verify if the ministry is growing, if it is reaching its objectives, and if the current processes and procedures are effective or require change without conducting these pivotal meetings.

Finally, the survey results show that the senior pastors could spend more time preaching and teaching about the believers' role in the Great Commission or about the importance of becoming mature disciples of Jesus Christ. Some of the pastors stated that they preached on these topics within the past six months or between six months to a year with one pastor stating that the last time he preached on the Great Commission was one to two years ago. This contradicts their profession of belief in the Great Commission's importance. Pastors who desire to develop

¹¹⁷ Ed Stetzer, "Laypeople and the Mission of God: Part V- Essentials to Changing the Culture," Christianity Today, accessed March 15, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/november/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-v--essentials-to.html>.

spiritually mature disciples will focus on discipleship and relate their sermons to that topic in their preaching and teaching. Continuous repetition of these topics will help to create a culture that is conducive to the growth of the seeds of discipleship and ministerial preparedness for the Great Commission.

The Post-Discipleship Training Survey Results

The Post-Discipleship Training Survey (Appendix B) was completed solely by the participants from Church One. In Chapter Three of this thesis, this student explained that the rationale for conducting this survey after the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey and teaching the Discipleship Training Manual (Appendix D) was to conduct a comparative analysis between the results obtained before and after the discipleship training program. The same participants were used for both surveys. This student will now set out the results. When the participants were asked about the discipleship training program, they gave the following responses:

The sessions were insightful. I learned how to become a disciple of Jesus and gained practical knowledge about ministry.	100.00% or 10 respondents
I understand the importance of discipleship and what it means to participate in the Great Commission.	100.00% or 10 respondents
I felt motivated to do ministry and to fulfill my role in the Great Commission.	60.00% or 6 respondents
I think more seriously about my role as a minister before God.	60.00% or 6 respondents
I was encouraged to discover my spiritual gifts.	100.00% or 10 respondents
I discovered my spiritual gifts in the class.	40.00% or 4 respondents
I discovered my purpose in the class.	30.00% or 3 respondents

I utilized my spiritual gifts in the class.	20.00% or 2 respondents
I was given the opportunity to minister to other members of the class.	20.00% or 2 respondents

Table 13: Responses to Question 3 of the Post-Discipleship Training Survey

Out of the nine members who answered Question 3, seven of the members stated that they would like to lead a practical ministry class/group in the future whereas six stated that they would like to lead a discipleship class/group in the future. These are phenomenal figures that represent the heart of what discipleship is designed to achieve. Upon the completion of a discipleship program, believers must not only feel personally edified but must also feel equipped and prepared to lead their own group of disciples. This student believes that if there was more time available to teach the Discipleship Training Manual, the participants from this class would have grown phenomenally and the results would have been higher.

Out of the ten members who were asked if they believed that they had an important role to play in the life of their local church, 70% said yes. This is an increase compared to the results obtained from the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey where five respondents said yes and the other five stated that they had never thought about the question. When the participants were asked if they believed that they had an important role to play in the Great Commission, all ten participants replied yes contrasted to the 8 members who said yes in the prior survey.

As in the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey, the participants were asked to define both discipleship and the Great Commission, respectively. The responses were as follows:

Definitions of Discipleship

Pre-Discipleship Training Survey	Post-Discipleship Training Survey
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nine out of ten responses given	ten out of ten responses given
Discipleship is the process of becoming like Christ, learning about his Word and the Word so that we can be like Him to others.	Discipleship is becoming Christlike.
Following/Living by example what God has written in the Bible and ministering to others/spreading His word.	Discipleship is developing a relationship with God to have the ability to spread the knowledge of Him to other believers or non-believers who in turn will accept Him as the true God.
It means teaching the word and helping others to understand and develop	Simply put, it's following Christ just as Peter, Simon or others were called to follow. To do the work of our Father just as Christ who is our example. We are to heal, feed, teach as the Heavenly Father wills us to do
Discipleship is about doing the work of God.	Discipleship is to be like Christ and to be followers of Christ.
Discipleship is about being a follower of Christ	Discipleship is becoming a follower of Christ
I don't have a definition.	Discipleship is a man or woman in Christ ministering to both saved and unsaved, teaching them the way they ought to live each day, holy and pleasing and acceptable to God that they, in turn, can become disciples of God to help others.
Walking uprightly and following the teachings of Christ.	Discipleship is being able to follow the Word and pass on the word to my fellow brothers and sisters.
Being part of a team with the sole purpose of expanding the Kingdom of God.	Discipleship is being able to minister to someone so that they become a disciple.

I have heard of it. I cannot answer this because I do not know.	It is the step after being saved that brings spiritual growth by engaging and encouraging others in the faith and exercising spiritual gifts.
	Discipleship is about building your relationship with God and being able to share the Word of God to others.

Table 14: Responses to Question 6 of the Post-Discipleship Training Survey

Definitions of the Great Commission

Pre-Discipleship Training Survey five out of ten responses given	Post-Discipleship Training Survey eight out of ten responses given
The Great Commission is to go into all the nations of the world and preach the Gospel (good news) of Jesus.	The Great Commission is going into all the world and preaching/teaching/sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.
We as Christians are called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christians throughout the world	The Great Commission is being part of the Christian body in the development of encouraging others to accept and Know God/ Jesus Christ.
The Great Commission is to spread the Gospel to all nations.	We have to go out into all the world spreading the Gospel, winning souls for the Kingdom.
To go forth and spread the Gospel of the Lord/the teachings of God.	The Great Commission is to go to all the world and preach the Gospel
To go out into the world and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ as stated for all believers in the Bible	The Great Commission represents baptism.

	The Great Commission is to spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
	It is the order given by Christ to spread the Gospel and make disciples.
	The Great Commission is to share the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with the World.

Table 15: Responses to Question 7 of the Post-Discipleship Training Survey

Out of the ten respondents, nine stated that the discipleship training course gave them a desire to do ministry within and outside of the local church. The same percentage stated that they felt more prepared to exercise their spiritual gifts and to advance the Kingdom of God. When asked whether they would like to start a small group in their church or their homes, six of the nine respondents said yes. Nevertheless, all ten participants stated that they wanted to encourage others to be discipled, with nine of them also stating that they personally desired to disciple other believers.

When the participants were asked to give details of any impactful aspect of the discipleship training, nine of the ten responded as follows:

I finally started my relationship with God. It has been beautiful and trying. I feel better. I am better. 10/10. I love everything about this class.
The impactfulness [<i>sic</i>] of the trainer, his ability to connect through examples and scriptures. The materials learned about the Apostle Paul and Peter on the anointing overflow.
Getting to know that God had a true purpose for my life and being able to fulfill that purpose.

The knowledge and wisdom gained. I felt a state of readiness to help others and encourage others to be consistent in the Word and apply it to their daily life.
Learning about being a disciple.
How everything was explained in detail so that everyone understood, and questions were answered.
I gathered that knowing God's Word is critical; praying and fasting are necessary for our spiritual development. Living our daily lives as Christ would have us to. It also means that we are to SHARE the gifts: Salvation, deliverance, healing or speaking a word of encouragement
I was able to appreciate the practicality of incorporating discipleship into everyday acts to appreciate the simplicity of discipleship and taking the step to encourage/help each other.
Learning/reading/gaining deeper insight into the Word of God; getting healed during the class of a terrible headache that I had before the class, and being able to share that with my discipleship mates

Table 16: Responses to Question 17 of the Post-Discipleship Training Survey

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to demonstrate the indispensability of discipleship as a core function of the local church in developing the appetite of the saints for ministry. The absence of a discipleship program in NTCOG churches is a significant factor that has contributed to the spiritual deficiency of believers in the local church. After several years of observation from the positions of laity and leadership, this student has concluded that preaching the Gospel, without contextualizing it in a way that is relevant to the lives of the hearers will not engage or confront their prevailing worldviews. Contextualization, however, should not be done solely from the pulpit; the senior pastor’s message must be intentionally and relationally transmitted to the believer through the pastor, himself, and through ministers who are assigned to serve groups

of people in the church. The best environment in which this transmission is accomplished is the small group.

The Pre-Discipleship Training Survey revealed that there is no clear consensus among the forty-five participants that there is a detailed discipleship plan in place. The data reveals that the church participants have not grasped the full implication of discipleship as the spiritual methodology by which people are not only saved but are matured in an intentional and relational covenantal environment. This result correlates with the thesis of this project which is that many churches tend to focus only on making converts and are not intentionally engaged in making disciples. It further validates the thesis that the absence of an intentional and relational program that is specifically dedicated to discipleship has resulted in the incidence of high levels of spiritual lethargy. The results obtained from the Post-Discipleship Training Survey were largely encouraging. There was a clear improvement in the responses of the participants, accompanied by a desire to learn more about discipleship and to be involved in the process of making disciples. From this student's observation, the discipleship training course was a success. This student only regrets the unfortunate time-restraints and the late starting time that impinged on this student's ability to explore the fascinating depth of the Scriptures and to apply that information to the lives of the participants.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The ministry of discipleship is a consistent thematic element throughout the Synoptic Gospels. The intentionality of Jesus to train and develop mature disciples was evident from the moment He spoke to Peter and Andrew on the seashore of Galilee, to the moment He commissioned them in the vicinity of Bethany before His ascension. Jesus was a disciple-maker with a vision. He assembled twelve ordinary men of no repute to transform them through the process of discipleship into a company of radical ambassadors for the Kingdom of God. These disciples were tasked with the directive to bring the rule and reign of God to earth through the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel. Jesus, understanding the significance and magnitude of His earthly mission, knew that He could only entrust the continuation of His work and message to those who were obedient to His commandments, who were dedicated to His mission, and who were devoted to Him. For Jesus, it was never about the size of the numbers, but about the spirituality and consecration of His disciples, their submission to the pattern of the Kingdom that He modeled for them, and their readiness to reproduce the nature of Christ in new believers as they promulgated the Gospel according to the Great Commission.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gave His disciples the commandment to make disciples of all nations. He further directed the Twelve to baptize their disciples and to teach them everything He had taught during His time on earth (v.20). From this command, it can be reasonably inferred that, quite apart from His divine mandate to reveal the Kingdom of God on earth, Jesus intended His earthly discipleship ministry to be the indispensable framework for the development of a progressive spiritual momentum that would increase from one generation to the next.¹¹⁸ Dallas

¹¹⁸ This is also demonstrated in Isaiah 9:7.

Willard has observed that “The assumption of Jesus’ program for his people on earth was that they would live their lives as his students and co-laborers. They would find him so admirable in every respect—wise, beautiful, powerful, and good—that they would constantly seek to be in his presence and be guided, instructed, and helped by him in every aspect of their lives.”¹¹⁹ Pastors and church leaders have been entrusted with a momentous legacy of Christian discipleship that must be discharged faithfully in this present generation. It would be completely remiss of a pastor or church leader, therefore, to conclude that their function as a minister of the Gospel is restricted solely to the preaching and teaching of the Bible as they await the Second Coming of the Lord.

While preaching and teaching are critical functions of every minister, these are only the means to an end. Greg Ogden has observed that “The first cause of the low estate of discipleship is that pastors have been diverted from their primary calling to “equip the saints for the work of ministry.”¹²⁰ From the standpoint of discipleship, the purpose of the ministry of preaching and teaching is (1) the salvation of souls, (2) the spiritual formation and transformation of new believers into mature saints whose lives are mirrored after the life of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, and (3) the reintegration of those mature disciples into the ecosystem of the discipleship process to make disciples of new believers. All three aspects of this process will function simultaneously in a healthy and thriving church. In the same way, therefore, that Jesus was purposeful, intentional, and relational about His commitment to make mature disciples who could continue His divine mission on earth, equally pastors and church leaders ought to be engaged in making disciples who are prepared to assume the mantle of being the face and voice

¹¹⁹. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 299.

¹²⁰. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 523. Kindle Edition.

of the Gospel through the manifestation of the gifts Christ has given them and the anointed ministry of the Word (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 4:11-16).

Discipleship is the spiritual mechanism that develops the human resources that are required for the effective operation of the other spiritual activities in the local church. Quite distinct from other ministry programs and activities in the church, discipleship is the foundational ministry that develops new converts and existing consumeristic church members into mature believers and strong leaders who will faithfully pursue the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The percentage of congregation involvement in activities such as worship, teaching, preaching, prayer, fasting, fellowship, and evangelism hinges on the priority that the senior pastor and church leaders give to the pursuit of developing the spiritual maturity of the saints and to training and equipping them for practical ministry in the local church. The practicality of discipleship ministry, therefore, is not difficult to comprehend. The development of worshippers who worship in spirit and truth, of intercessors who pray without ceasing, of believers who know their giftings and callings, and of disciples who faithfully carry out the Great Commission is dependent on the implementation of a discipleship plan in the local church.

This student's research project has revealed that when pastors create a culture of discipleship in the local church, believers begin to feel that they have a role to play in the life of their church and the Great Commission. The survey results also revealed that even though a senior pastor helps to create and maintain the culture of discipleship by his sermons, believers need the intervention of a more relational setting to deconstruct the sermons into sizeable portions that they can digest and assimilate. Bobby Harrington noted that "Effective disciples of Jesus must have an unshakable conviction that relational discipleship is the smartest and most

biblical way to reach the world.”¹²¹ This is the purpose of the small group environment. A discipleship plan must be designed to foster the process of spiritual maturation which biblically occurs in a relational environment that emphasizes community, spirituality, ministry, and a faithful commitment to the message and mission of Jesus Christ.

A church that follows a detailed and coherent plan for discipleship that involves the training and equipping of the saints is on the path of creating a disciplined people who can fulfill the divine purpose of God for their lives. Putman, Harrington and Coleman note that “the solution to our ineffectiveness as churches is to train people to become spiritually mature and fully devoted followers of Christ, and then in turn to have them make more disciples.”¹²² Such a plan must be birthed in the heart of the senior pastor, assimilated by the leadership, and adopted by the church member who will ultimately give birth to the vision.

It is possible to discern a practical discipleship plan in the ministry of Jesus. He called people to discipleship (Matt. 4:19; Matt. 9:9; Luke 5:27-28), taught them the ways of the kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 13), spent time alone with them to care for their own physical and spiritual needs (Mark 6:30-31), equipped and commissioned them for ministry under His watch (Matt. 10:1-42), evaluated their efforts (Luke 11:18-20), and before His ascension, He commissioned them to continue what He had begun (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-8). It has been this student’s main argument that the four biblical principles of discipleship are derived from the scriptural record of the activities outlined above. When Jesus employed the consecration, culture-shift, apprenticeship, and reproduction principles during the three and a half years of His ministry, His disciples developed into spiritually mature leaders who were connected to God,

¹²¹. Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship that Fits*, 573. Kindle Edition.

¹²². Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 264. Kindle Edition.

connected to other believers, and were ready to undertake the Great Commission. Conversely, in church contexts where believers are not being disciplined by their leaders, there is a corresponding lack of spiritual maturity that is antithetical to the purpose of God for His people. The consequence of the absence of discipleship is that believers become unproductive consumers of the ministry of others, instead of becoming dispensers of the supernatural power of Jesus Christ and effective communicators of the Word of God.

Recommendations to Senior Pastors

This student has concluded that the rationale for senior pastors to return to the biblical practice of discipleship is founded on the premise that discipleship prepares members to actively engage in the last commission that Christ gave the church. The justification for this call is premised on the belief that the theological basis for the Great Commission is to make disciples and not merely to make converts who are devoid of any real sense of purpose, calling, or ministry. The activities and programs of churches must revolve around making mature disciples of Jesus Christ who can continue the mission He assigned to the church. The quote, “Methods are many principles are few, methods may change but principles never do”¹²³ is a timeless truth that pastors must remember. While it is true that the methodology of discipleship employed by the apostles in the Book of Acts must be updated to be relevant in our times, the biblical principles of consecration, the culture shift, apprenticeship, and reproduction that are found in the life and ministry of Jesus cannot change.

The senior pastor must perceive his role to the body of Christ as an equipper of the saints so that they become leaders and dispensers of the power of God, not merely consumers on

¹²³. Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, *Eleven Innovations in the Local Church: How Today's Leaders Can Learn, Discern, and Move into the Future* (Ventura, CA: Regel, 2007) 15.

Sunday mornings of the ministry of a few diligent members. To achieve this goal, pastors and their leaders must develop an operational structure that supports the implementation of a practical discipleship ministry. Unfortunately, the results of the surveys have shown that while the pastors focus heavily on winning the loss, they have not been faithful to implement the spiritual programs that are required to make disciples of either the new or existing members. The results further showed that even though the participants found their senior pastors spoke regularly about spiritual gifts, the Great Commission, and discipleship, many believers still felt spiritually deficient. These results reveal that the effectiveness of the pulpit ministry does not translate to the assimilation and outworking of the message. It has been this student's thesis that the implementation of the small group discipleship program could effectively bridge the spiritual gap between pastor and member. The vision for the fulfillment of this new dynamic ecclesiastical framework must flow from the senior pastor, through the leadership, and then down to the members of the local congregation so that there is a spiritual and ideological uniformity of purpose and worldview in the structure of the church. Albert Mohler notes that "a God-centered worldview brings every issue, question, and cultural concern into submission to all that the Bible reveals, and frames all understanding within the ultimate purpose of bringing greater glory to God."¹²⁴ The development of a local church that is uniform in its thinking about God, the Bible, and the active participatory role of the saints in the mission of God is the product of this student's convictions.

¹²⁴. Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 544. Kindle Edition.

Returning to the Small Group Discipleship Model of Jesus

The relational small group is the prime soil in which the nutrients of honor, integrity, wholeness, authenticity, and accountability thrive in an atmosphere of godly love to develop spiritually mature disciples. The early church understood this to be true; they had learned it from the apostles who, in turn, learned this from the Chief Disciple-Maker. Jesus would often take his small band of twelve world-changers aside to teach them or to rest (Mark 6:31-32; Luke 9:10). Jesus knew that genuine development in a believer occurs in two ways: (1) practical ministry in which either He was involved or the disciples were commissioned for a specific task; and (2) resting with Jesus, which is the essence of developing spiritual intimacy with the Lord.

At the most basic level, disciples are made in the context of relationships. Bill Hull describes the process as “the intentional training of disciples, with accountability, on the basis of loving relationship.”¹²⁵ This is explained in the first command Jesus gave His disciples which was to come and follow Him. They were required to imitate His actions, teaching, thinking, and heart so that they could accurately represent Him after His death and resurrection. In the context of small groups, each leader is required to live in a manner that allows him to say like Paul, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). The leader of a small group must possess vision and the group’s purpose must be “defined as encouraging discipleship –not primarily fellowship or counseling or even outreach (although these may be vital components of the process).”¹²⁶ Pastors and leaders are required to nurture the greatness and destiny that is within every disciple. This requires training and equipping them to realize their giftings and God-given purpose. Howard Snyder has written, “Essentially, the pastor’s first priority is to so invest himself or

¹²⁵ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 502. Kindle Edition.

¹²⁶ Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 185. Kindle Edition.

herself in a few other persons that they also become disciplers and ministers of Jesus Christ. It is to so give oneself to others and to the work of discipling that the New Testament norm of plural leadership or eldership becomes a reality in the local congregation. In other words, it is to bring the ministry of all of God's people to functioning practical reality."¹²⁷ It is also necessary to spend meaningful time interacting with the members of the group in non-ministry settings. Leighton Ford stated that "Jesus' leadership development of his under-shepherds was not so much a course or a curriculum as it was a shared life."¹²⁸ The relational aspect of discipleship is the key to the development of a healthy relational bond of trust that promotes accountability.

Each member of the body of Christ has a unique calling and function, and each part is necessary "for the health of the whole. For the body to thrive, every part must operate according to its design."¹²⁹ This type of one-on-one interaction is only possible in the context of a small group. As Earley and Dempsey have stated, "Our goal as Christian leaders is to help *every* individual stand before the King of kings and hear from Him: 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' The purpose of discipleship, therefore, is to make committed followers of Jesus Christ who are dedicated to His service. This necessitates that we create intimate, disciple-making contexts where personal attention can be given to the individual. The best place for this to occur is in the context of a small group."¹³⁰ A senior pastor, therefore, who implements small groups in the operational schematic of the church that is rooted in the biblical principles of love and the Great Commission, is on the path to creating the kind of church and disciples that Jesus envisioned for the Kingdom.

¹²⁷. Howard Snyder, *Liberating the Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 248.

¹²⁸. Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership* (Downers Grove, Ill. InterVarsity Press, 1991), 200.

¹²⁹. Ogden, *Unfinished Business*, 581. Kindle Edition.

¹³⁰. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 4723. Kindle Edition.

The development of small groups will also have long term benefits in relation to the numerical growth of the church. Rather than simply winning souls in small numbers through the work of the evangelism team, a senior pastor that alters his organizational and operational structure to create a church “of” small groups or a church that “is” small groups will more quickly develop a greater number of mature believers who can join or assist the designated evangelism team. Theoretically, a church of 200 members that is committed to the development of healthy, growing small groups will quickly grow to the point of saturation which will produce two effects: (1) the production of new small group leaders; and (2) the multiplication of new groups as those disciplined members go out on the mission to win the lost for Christ. This is the vision and dream of God that every Christian leader should carry in his or her heart for the believers over whom they were appointed as overseer.

Synergizing the Mass Teaching and Small Group Environments

The most effective way to ensure that members in a local church are functioning efficiently and healthily is for pastors and church leaders is to create a church structure that facilitates the development of spiritual maturity through intentional and relational discipleship. Jim Putman commented that “Most of the time when discipleship is intentional, spiritual growth happens quickly.”¹³¹ He further stated that “an intentional leader + relational environment + reproducible process = infinite number of disciples.”¹³² Thus, spiritual growth is best realized in the context of relational small groups. The senior pastor must, therefore, make the necessary organizational transitions and administrative changes that will permit believers to be trained and nurtured in groups that are “intentionally developed for mission, and leaders trained to lead those

¹³¹. Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 376. Kindle Edition.

¹³². Ibid.

groups. The senior pastor should speak often about the importance of getting involved in a group, and staff leaders should be encouraged to participate in and lead those groups.”¹³³ In a large meeting such as the Sunday morning service, the senior pastor must incorporate into his sermon the spiritual significance and practical utility of small groups as a means of facilitating the spiritual development of disciples. The weekend service should be used to instruct the congregation, whereas the small group setting should be utilized to reinforce the key themes and vision of the senior pastor and to engage members individually on a level where personal spiritual development can be taught, assessed, and verified.

This synergy between mass teaching and one-on-one instruction is seen in the New Testament. In Acts 2:14-41, Peter addressed a massive crowd in Jerusalem that resulted in the salvation of 3000 people. No one would suggest, however, that Peter’s sermon was sufficient to ensure that each person who had accepted Jesus Christ would pursue a consistent and deepening relationship with the Lord based on the conviction of that initial experience alone. In verses 42-46, there are at least six references to communal and relational Christian discipleship in small groups: (1) they *devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship*; (2) they devoted themselves to the *breaking of bread and to prayer*; (3) all the believers were *together and had everything in common*; (4) they sold property and possessions to *give to anyone who had need* (5) every day *they continued to meet together* in the temple courts; and (6) they *broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts*. The addition of new believers and disciples to the growing movement that exploded after the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost was the physical and spiritual consequence of the love that the disciples expressed to each other in their small group environments. The upshot of the disciples’ obedience to the

¹³³. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...*, 4744. Kindle Edition.

command of the Lord to fulfill the Great Commission was that Jesus was with all His disciples, old and new and that He “added to their number daily those who were being saved” (v. 47).

There is, therefore, a monumental role for small group ministry to play in the organizational and operational structure of the church, especially in the area of discipleship.

Bridging the Gap Between Converts and Disciples

Discipleship is an intentional and relational ministry in which converts are trained to become mature followers of Jesus Christ. This student has observed that while every believer is a convert, not every believer is a disciple. A true believer is a maturing disciple who seeks to embody the nature of Christ in every aspect of life. Such a person is always in a cyclical process of ‘following and becoming’ like Jesus Christ. David Watson makes the point that with Jesus, “Everything centers on him, his person. Discipleship means knowing him, loving him, believing in him, being committed to him.”¹³⁴ A true disciple is actively engaged in and committed to the process of shedding all attitudes and behaviors that are remnants of the flesh. The old carnal nature must die (2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:5), while the nature of Christ calls the church upwards to establish a relationship of intimacy with God. Pastors must engender in their believers a desire for more than the simple security of the knowledge of salvation by faith and the hope of eternal life. While these beliefs are the bedrock principles of the Christian life, they were intended to be the foundation upon which Christians are motivated to work in the Kingdom of God.

There is a great distinction between knowledge and practice, education and relationship, information and direction, belief, and applied faith. The focus of discipleship is not to increase the intellect of a believer; rather discipleship “training is the spiritual work of developing

¹³⁴. David Watson, *Called and Committed* (Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1982), 9.

spiritual maturity and spiritual reproductiveness [*sic*] in the life of a Christian.”¹³⁵ Throughout the New Testament, there are multiple examples of the relational interaction between disciple and disciple-maker, teacher and rabbi, spiritual son and spiritual father, which typify the kind of ministry approach that the church is required to adopt. The greatest of these examples is found in no other place than the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus first invited His disciples to follow Him, before He educated them. This is manifested in the calling of Peter and Andrew when Jesus said in Matthew 4:19, “Come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” The structure of Jesus’ words, this student opines, is not accidental, but very intentional. Alicia Britt Chole correctly observes that “Jesus prioritized shoulder-to-shoulder mentoring because His prize was much larger than information; it was integration.”¹³⁶ Jesus demonstrated that spiritual knowledge and personal transformation come after following Him passionately and intentionally.

In the discipleship process, therefore, it is not enough to merely educate those who have converted to Christianity about the Bible, theology or church doctrine. Indeed, Willard notes, “What this most recent version of evangelicalism lacks is *a theology of discipleship*. Specifically, it lacks a clear teaching on how what happens at conversion continues on without break into an ever-fuller life in the Kingdom of God.”¹³⁷ The pastor of the church must intentionally seek to integrate the intended disciple into the life of the church, connecting them to God in a personal and intimate way, connecting them to other believers in a meaningful and honest manner, and to the mission of God as revealed in Scripture. Bobby Harrington comments that “we are reminded that we don’t do discipleship flying solo—we will always be connected to other people so that

¹³⁵. Gary Khune “Follow-up—An Overview,” in *Discipleship: The Best Writing from the Most Experienced Disciple Makers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1981), 117.

¹³⁶. Alicia Britt Chole, “Purposeful Proximity – Jesus’ Model of Mentoring,” *Enrichment Journal: A Journal of Pentecostal Ministry* (Spring 2001) <https://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/Issues/2001/Spring-2001>.

¹³⁷. Willard, “Discipleship,” *Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, 245.

we can both imitate and be imitated as we go through life, pointing people to maturity in Christ.”¹³⁸ The disciple must not just believe the truth, therefore, but must be a living demonstration of Christ in his character and relationships.

The senior pastor must develop an apprenticeship ministry setting in which disciples can grow in a healthy family of believers who are connected to each other and are connected to Jesus Christ. Robert Coleman comments that “one must decide where he wants his ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition (program splash) or in the reproduction of his life in a few chosen ones who will carry on his work after he has gone. Really, it is a question of which generation we are living for.”¹³⁹ The work of helping future leaders achieve their potential is, says J. Oswald Chambers, “the most strategic and fruitful work.”¹⁴⁰ He adds that it is a task that requires “careful thought, wise planning, endless patience, and genuine Christian love.”¹⁴¹ Pastors, therefore, must find their delight in preparing the generation to follow to achieve the spiritual excellence that God has ordained for them. John MacArthur notes that “pastors are to set the example of what it means to disciple men for spiritual leadership.”¹⁴² The faithful execution of this responsibility requires the pastor to seek out the potential that lies in his members and apprentice those who are willing to make the costly journey of discipleship.

Discipleship happens when believers in the church are rightly related to God and each other. Dave Earley and Rodney Dempsey note that “the Christianity practiced by the first

¹³⁸ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship that Fits*, 388. Kindle Edition.

¹³⁹ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1963), 37.

¹⁴⁰ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Publishers, 2007), 150.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² S. Lance Quinn, “Discipling,” in *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 263.

Christians was more than following a religion, ritual, creed, or doctrinal statement. It was a vibrant relationship with God and with each other. Discipleship was not a program; it was a communal relationship.”¹⁴³ The senior leadership team must adopt verification procedures. The survey results reveal that 80% of the senior pastors do not measure or verify how many people are saved compared to those who are being disciplined in any given year. It will be detrimental to the church if the senior pastor fails to verify or validate whether the preaching and teaching ministries of the church are effective, whether the organizational or operational structures of the church are antiquated, whether the staff are meeting the spiritual and theological standards to continue as ministers, or whether the members are faithfully assimilating the spiritual food they are fed to produce the nature of Christ in their lives. Spiritual disciplines will play an extremely important role in the discipleship plan because it is impossible to develop spiritually mature believers without this level of commitment. Donald Whitney defines spiritual disciplines as those “personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth.”¹⁴⁴ Requiring the practice of spiritual disciplines is a good start for verifying the fruit of discipleship.

When disciples have begun to prove themselves faithful in the practice of spiritual disciplines, they will be allowed to engage in practical ministry within the church and will be encouraged to do so outside the four walls. This is the divine environment in which disciple-making occurs when it is pursued intentionally and relationally. As Earley and Dempsey have stated, “Our goal as Christian leaders is to help *every* individual stand before the King of kings and hear from Him: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ This necessitates that we create intimate disciple-making contexts where personal attention can be given to the individual. The

¹⁴³. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 1271. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴⁴. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 25.

best place for this to occur is in the context of a small group.”¹⁴⁵ If the church will be known as a company of people who are pursuing Christlikeness, then those who wish to commit to such a journey must count the cost (Luke 14:28). David Watson comments, “Every Christian is called to a clear and dedicated discipleship, whatever the personal cost may be.”¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the life of the disciple is naturally one that requires sacrifice (Phil. 3:7-11; 1 Pet. 2:21) to walk in the power of God as they seek to accomplish His will. J. Dwight Pentecost states, “The cross in the life of Christ was the test of His obedience to the will of the Father. It was also the sign of His rejection by the nation. One must be willing to identify with the rejected One and be willing to assume what is involved in that identification in order to be Christ’s disciples.”¹⁴⁷ Jesus was the faithful example of the cost of obedience to God. His disciples can undoubtedly expect to face tests of faith, all of which are designed to perfect the nature of Christ in them.

Developing Healthy Core Values for the Church

Core values are the principles, standards, and virtues that form the nucleus of a person’s behavior, attitudes, and thinking. A disciple will allow these values to circumscribe the available options of his conduct for the sake of accomplishing the vision and purpose of God for his life. When core values are firmly implemented by the leadership and are adhered to by the members of the church, they will begin to course through every organ of the church’s organizational and operational structures and will affect how believers live on the earth as they await the return of the Lord. The ultimate purpose of retaining a sense of core values is to recalibrate the ministries, activities, and other functions of the church toward the goal of creating a disciplined congregation

¹⁴⁵. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...*, 4723. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴⁶. Watson, *Discipleship*, 19.

¹⁴⁷. J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1891), 332.

that is equipped with knowledge and is spiritually ready to undertake its role in the Great Commission.

In the discipleship plan, it is essential that pastors clearly articulate a common language of core values that will help to define the vision of the church as it relates to the discipleship of its members. Mike Breen has noted that “if you’re going to create a community where leaders can flourish, you’re going to have to create a certain kind of culture. It’s the only way that can happen. And whenever you talk about creating culture, you’ve got to start with language.”¹⁴⁸ Language is a key component of the culture of any nation, organization, or community. The church is the body of Christ and it goes without saying that the language of the church must be commensurate or synonymous with the language of the Word of God. Breen adds that “once you start to use a language of a particular kind, language that’s simple, portable and repeatable, it really does start to shape and form a culture.”¹⁴⁹ When pastoral leaders begin to think and speak to their members in terms of God’s purpose for their lives as defined in Scripture, a common culture will be created in the church that encourages believers to pursue continuous advancement in their spiritual lives. Michael Wilkins states, “Our choice of terminology determines the kind of expectations that we communicate to people.”¹⁵⁰ The language of the senior pastor, therefore, must be precise and unambiguous. It will be important that the pastor stresses the significance of the intentional and relational aspect of the intended discipleship culture he wishes to create. This culture will naturally restrict the incidence of spiritual lethargy in the church as the leaders continue to emphasize the core values that define the church. In Amos 3:3 the question is asked,

¹⁴⁸. Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders*, 2010. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴⁹. Mike Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements* (3DM Publishing, 2013), 962. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵⁰. Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 44.

“Can two walk together except they agree?” This is a timeless principle that is operative even in the creation of a new church culture. The language of the church must be the same otherwise there will be confusion. The following is a list of the core values that are pertinent to the development of a discipleship culture: (1) the imperative of discipling all believers to participate in the Great Commission, (2) the priesthood of all believers, (3) the interconnectivity of the saints as the body of Christ and the family of God, (4) the importance of love, honor, and forgiveness, (5) the dual importance of spirituality and ministry, (6) the fact that each believer is called to have an impact within their sphere of influence in the world, and (7) the recognition that nothing is impossible with God (Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; Luke 18:27; Mark 9:23; Matt 17:20).

Final Thoughts

The practice of discipleship has been well-documented over the centuries. From the time of Jesus to the present day, teachers have invited those whom they deemed worthy enough to follow and learn from them with the purpose and intention of carrying on their legacy. In the secular world, discipleship, usually referred to as mentorship or apprenticeship, is reserved for those who are the best and the brightest; those whom the world would consider wise and intelligent. Worthiness is measured by intelligence or ability. With Jesus, however, it was different. He did not choose the best, the brightest, or the most capable. He chose the faithful. Jesus rejected the Pharisees and Sadducees, the intelligentsia of His day in Judea, and invited twelve men of little or no repute to become world changers if they would leave behind the natural things to behold the spiritual. Indeed, the Kingdom of God had come, and the King entrusted the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom to them.

Jesus called to Himself a small group of twelve ordinary men of no repute or standing to undertake a ministry that they could never have achieved without Him. A. B. Bruce comments,

“They were poor men of humble birth, low station, mean occupations, who had never felt the stimulating influence of a liberal education, or of social intercourse with persons of cultivated minds.”¹⁵¹ They were the men that Jesus disciplined and transformed into a company of radical ambassadors who promulgated the Gospel of the Kingdom, the effects of which are still felt 2,000 years later. There is presently, however, an unfortunate spiritual lethargy in Trinidad and Tobago, which is due in great measure, to the consumeristic ideology that has gripped the church. Consequently, the church has made spiritual lambs out of members who are waiting to be led and fed, rather than developing passionate and disciplined believers who are ready to confront the kingdom of darkness in pursuit of the Great Commission. The results from the Pre-Discipleship Training Survey, however, have revealed that 78% of the participants were ready to discover how they can faithfully serve the Lord with their gifts and abilities in the local church and their community to further the Great Commission. Further, 70% of the respondents stated that they preferred to be in a church where they can be trained and equipped to operate in active ministry. In a time when the church is under severe attack, pastors must ensure that their members are not merely faithful attendees but are also committed disciples of Jesus Christ who are being matured in a relational environment that emphasizes community, spirituality, and ministry.

Underlying the vision for discipleship is the belief that Jesus did not die simply to ensure that believers would get to heaven. When all the saints are participating in the ministry of the church and everyone is living in the tension of anticipating the future of the return of Christ, while manifesting the reality of the Kingdom of God through love, power, faith, and authority, then and only then will the church be on the path to fulfilling the Great Commission as Jesus

¹⁵¹ A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1971), p. 14.

desired. This student believes that this idea will mark a true return to the understanding of the priesthood of believers. Justo L. Gonzalez explains that “to be priests does not mean primarily that we are our own individual priests, but rather that as part of the priestly people of God we are priests for the entire community of belief, and that they are priests for us as well – while all of us, as the believing community, are priests for the world.”¹⁵² Ultimately, the success of a discipleship plan in a Caribbean context will be reflected in the consecration of new and old believers to the person of Jesus Christ over personal comfort, the re-education and acculturation of the disciples to understand and manifest the principles and nature of the Kingdom, the apprenticeship of believers as they work alongside mature Christians, and the eventual release of mature disciplined believers to reproduce the nature of Christ in others. In short, “Our evangelism has to be focused on making disciples who become disciple-makers, and our discipleship has to be mission-driven, leading those disciplined to share Christ.”¹⁵³ In this paradigm, there is a healthy ecclesial ecosystem that results “in growing disciples, emerging leaders, and new churches planted for the kingdom and glory of God.”¹⁵⁴ Below is a pictorial display of the discipleship plan.

¹⁵². Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to Present Day* vol. 2, rev. ed., (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), 923. Kindle edition.

¹⁵³. Ed Stetzer, “Disciplemaking: How Do Evangelism and Discipleship Go Together,” Christianity Today, accessed March 18, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2019/december/how-do-evangelism-and-discipleship-go-together.html>.

¹⁵⁴. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 4627. Kindle Edition.

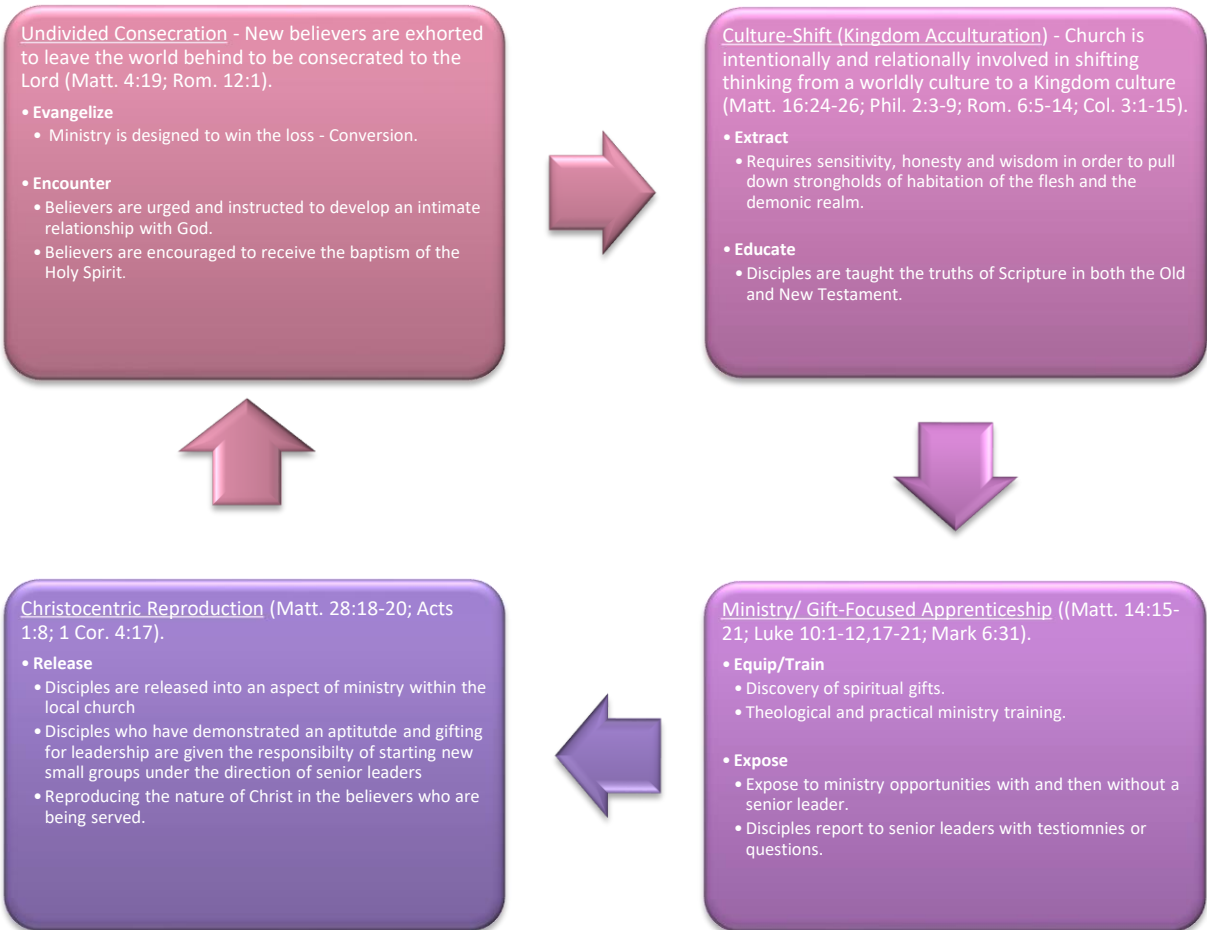


Figure 14. Application of the Four Principles Discipleship after Evangelism

This student has contended that pastors and church leaders must reinstate discipleship to the place of primacy and authority that it occupied in the New Testament church. The desire of every pastor should be to develop spiritually mature Christians who accurately radiate the presence of Jesus Christ to the world. The biblical passages in Matthew 28:18-20 and Eph. 4:11-16 demonstrate that the revelation of Jesus Christ through His bride, the church, is the central focus or reason for engaging in discipleship. The pastor must possess this vision and only then can it be transferred to his leaders and the congregation. On the importance of leading with intentionality and carrying the vision, J. Oswald Chambers has stated that “the spiritual leader

must know where he or she is going before presuming to lead others. The Chief Shepherd gave us this pattern.”¹⁵⁵ The ministry must be one that exemplifies excellence, one that focuses on the preaching and teaching of the kingdom of God where disciples are not just thought what to think, but how to think, one that develops powerful people and mature disciples who are full of faith, hope, trust and love, and one that develops the whole man (body, soul, and spirit). In this vision, the members of the congregation will be invited to grow up into maturity and to participate in the unfolding and fulfillment of the Great Commission.

The core conviction that underlies the discipleship plan that will be developed from this research project is that every member of the body of Christ has a unique calling and set of gifts that make them significant contributors to “the health of the whole. For the body to thrive, every part must operate according to its design.”¹⁵⁶ This spiritual development can only be achieved when believers are encouraged by their leaders to pursue a dynamic and intimate relationship with the Lord. Elmer Towns, writing on the necessity of intimacy in the discipleship process, states, “When our relationship with God deepens and becomes a part of our everyday life, we begin to be transformed by God and become more like His Son, Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁷ This transformation requires the practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reading the Word of God, biblical meditation, fasting, and fellowship. It involves being obedient to the commandments of Jesus Christ and remaining in the true vine so that the nature of Christ could be formed in the disciple. It involves the intentional pursuit of spiritual maturity so that the disciples grow into spiritual adults who contribute to the life of the church by the operation of their spiritual gifts in the body and by giving their time to disciple others. Finally, the paradigm

¹⁵⁵. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 127.

¹⁵⁶. Ogden, *Unfinished Business*, 581. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵⁷. Elmer Towns, *How to Pray: When You Don't Know What to Say* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006), 235.

that Jesus has for discipleship involves going on mission along with the rest of the body of believers to pursue the lost and bring them into the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the pursuit of the Great Commission must be an unswerving and unrelenting purpose of the church for two reasons. First, Jesus gave us the command and He is God. Second, the last words recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew are so encouraging, exciting, and challenging that they require every leader to pursue the Great Commission with intentionality, sobriety, and the conviction that it deserves. At the end of that Commission, Jesus said, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (v.20). This is monumental because the implication is clear. When the church fulfills the Great Commission to make disciples according to the divine mandate of Jesus, He promises that His supernatural presence, authority, and power will abide with the church. The church of Jesus Christ must never forget that its only source of legitimacy is the Word of God, validated by the presence of God in the church. Since the church of Jesus Christ is His divine Body, it behooves the church to do exactly what the head (Eph. 1:22-23) has instructed it to do until His return. Christ can live without the church, but the church cannot live without Christ. Moreover, His authority is only available to the church when it remains on mission. Dempsey and Earley express the church’s responsibility to respond to the Lordship of Christ in this way: “The clearest argument for leading small groups is because Jesus gave us an example and we should follow His example.”¹⁵⁸ Jim Putman, emphasizing the practicality of discipleship, states that “when Jesus told His disciples, ‘Go and make disciples,’ He didn’t mean for them to do it any way they wanted. He had just made disciples, and He said,

¹⁵⁸ Dempsey and Earley, *Leading Healthy, Growing, Multiplying, Small Groups*, 302. Kindle Edition.

‘What I’ve done with you, now you go do the same.’ And they did that! And it worked! Because Jesus’ ways met the needs of real people.”¹⁵⁹ Christ is the foundation for discipleship.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study sought to develop an understanding of the theological, spiritual, personal, and cultural factors that lead to the development of consumeristic and lethargic believers who do not contribute to the life of the local church or the pursuit of the Great Commission. This student suggests that further research can be done within the Caribbean setting that may disclose other factors that are relevant to this most pertinent issue. The following are recommendations to this end:

- 1) Research should be executed in Caribbean churches to assess the extent to which the experiences of people of African and Indian descent in the historical slave trade have shaped their view of living a life of full submission to Jesus Christ. It is not unusual to hear Caribbean people remark that Christianity is a “white man’s religion” and that it has been used by Europeans to enslave black people. The idea of surrendering their lives to God entirely and being discipled by church leaders may inspire feelings of suppression to which they are opposed. Such ideas would be inimical to the development of a discipleship culture in a Caribbean church context.
- 2) Research should be conducted to examine how Caribbean church congregants in highly liturgical denominations such as Anglicanism and Catholicism respond to the intervention of a discipleship plan that is introduced in a small group setting. It would be interesting to discover whether these members continue to hide behind the shield of their

¹⁵⁹ Jim Putman, “A Better Way to Make Disciples,” Accessed March 15, 2020.
<http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/4838-jim-putman-needed-shifts-in-making-disciples.html>.

ecclesiastical forms and precedents or whether they progressively developed a personal sense of responsibility towards the body of Christ over individualism and active involvement in ministry instead of divesting that responsibility to the clergy.

- 3) Research should be done to examine the degree to which postmodern social reconstructionist views such as self-discovery, self-expression, rebellion against authority, the discussion of sexual orientation, and the increasing entitlement to rights over personal responsibility have infiltrated the church and whether these ideologies are factors that negatively impinge on the development of discipleship in the church among millennials. These are movements that have rapidly spread across the globe in the past 10 years that are designed to deconstruct traditionalist movements such as Christianity. These are issues that the church presently faces in North America, and which are on the doorstep of the Caribbean.
- 4) It would be an interesting to assess the effect that discipleship has in a non-Christian community such as Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad and Tobago compared to Evangelical or Pentecostal churches in the production of spiritually minded and ministry active disciples. This student has observed that adherents to occultic religions tend to focus heavily on teaching and helping their converts to access spiritual power that allows them to successfully engage in divination, sorcery, and other practices. On the other hand, Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians who have access to the legitimate power of God tend to focus solely on the imminent return of Jesus Christ and fail to prepare their members for practical involvement in ministry.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-Discipleship Training Survey

This survey is a part of the research required for Reynold Price's Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project, "Four Scriptural Principles: Creating A Discipleship Culture in a Caribbean Church Context". Please answer carefully the questions below to the best of your ability.

1. How old are you? _____
 - a. 18-30 years
 - b. 31-40 years
 - c. 41-50 years
 - d. 51-65 years

2. What is the name of your church? _____

3. How many years have you been saved?
 - a. 3-5 years
 - b. 6-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. 16-20 years
 - e. 21 or more years

4. How many years have you attended the church at which you are currently a member?
 - a. 3-5 years
 - b. 6-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. 16-20 years
 - e. 21 or more years

5. Approximately how many members are there in your church?
 - a. 30-50
 - b. 51-100
 - c. 101-150
 - d. 151-200
 - e. 201 or more

6. Have you ever heard about the Great Commission?

- a. Yes
- b. No

7. If yes, please briefly define the Great Commission in your own words.

8. Have you ever heard about discipleship?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9. If yes, please briefly define discipleship in your own words.

10. Have you ever heard about small/cell/peer/home groups?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. If yes, please briefly explain the purpose of small group meetings in your own words.

12. Please select the services, groups or classes that you attend at your church, apart from the

Sunday morning service:

- _____ Sunday Evening Service
- _____ Prayer and Bible study
- _____ Discipleship Class/Group

- Convert's Class
- Small Group (cell, peer or home group)
- Men's or Women's Group
- Youth Ministry
- Other. _____
- I do not attend any.

13. If your church has small group meetings (cell, peer or home groups) as a part of its structure, please describe the frequency of your attendance at these meetings.

- a. Sometimes
- b. Often
- c. Always
- d. My church does not have small group meetings.

14. Are there classes or groups at your church that are dedicated specifically to training and equipping members for practical ministry?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. If yes to question 14, have you ever attended that training and equipping class or group for practical ministry?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. If yes to question 15, how many sessions did you attend?

- a. 1-3 sessions
- b. 4-6 sessions
- c. 7-9 sessions
- d. 10 or more sessions
- e. I completed the class or group.

17. If you attended a training and equipping class at your church, please describe your experience by selecting all that apply:

- The sessions were insightful. I gained practical knowledge about ministry.
- The leaders in the church practically demonstrated how to minister to the lost and to the sick.
- I was given the opportunity to minister alongside other believers and leaders outside of the class.
- I utilized my spiritual gifts in the class/group.
- After attending the class/group, I do not feel interested in engaging in practical ministry.
- I was unable to complete the class due to work or family demands.
- I quit the class/group because I no longer felt like attending.
- I would like to lead a practical ministry class/group in the future.

18. Are there discipleship classes or groups at your church that are dedicated specifically to discipling believers to become spiritually mature followers of Jesus Christ?

- a. Yes
- b. No

19. If yes to question 18, have you ever attended that discipleship class or group?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. If yes to question 19, how many sessions did you attend?

- a. 1-3 sessions
- b. 4-6 sessions
- c. 7-9 sessions
- d. 10 or more sessions
- e. I completed the class or group.

21. If you attended a discipleship class or group at your church, please describe your experience by selecting all that apply:

- The sessions were insightful. I learned how to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- I felt motivated to do ministry and to fulfill my role in the Great Commission.
- I discovered my spiritual purpose in the class.
- I felt like the session was simply a Bible study.
- I experienced spiritual development in my life.
- I was encouraged by a leader to discover my spiritual gifts.
- I was encouraged by leaders to do ministry and to discover my role in the Great Commission.
- I was unable to complete the class due to work or family demands.
- I quit the class/group because I no longer felt like attending.
- After attending the class/group, I am not interested in being discipled.
- I would like to lead a discipleship class/group in the future.

22. Do you believe that you have an important role to play in the life of your local church?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I have never thought about it

23. Do you believe that you have an important role to play in winning the lost and making disciples for Jesus Christ?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I have never thought about it

24. My pastor has created a culture in the church that makes me feel that I am called to contribute to the spiritual life of the local church.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree

25. My pastor has created a culture in the church that makes me feel that I am called to win the lost and make disciples for Christ.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree

26. Sermons are regularly preached or taught at my church about the personal responsibility of members in fulfilling the Great Commission.

- a. Not at all
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Always

27. The pastor and other leaders in the church preach and teach regularly about spiritual gifts.

- a. Not at all
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Always

28. Has anyone in the leadership at your church ever spoken to you about your personal responsibility in the Great Commission?

- a. Yes
- b. No

29. Has anyone in leadership ever asked you what your spiritual gifts are?

- a. Yes
- b. No

30. I believe that God has given His people spiritual gifts.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

31. I believe that God has given me spiritual gifts.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

32. I know what my spiritual gifts are.

- a. Yes
- b. No

33. Please select the answers that apply to you:

_____ I participated in Carnival before I was saved.

_____ I currently participate in Carnival activities.

_____ I was involved in a cohabiting relationship before I was saved.

_____ I converted from Hinduism

_____ I converted from Islam.

_____ I converted from an African ancestral religion (Spiritual Baptist, Orisha, Ifa).

_____ I participated in obeah (witchcraft) and/or spiritual rituals before I was saved.

_____ I believe that Christians can participate in the spiritual rituals and practices of other religions.

_____ I have close relatives (fathers, mothers, siblings, grandparents) who are adherents of other religions.

_____ I have been ostracized by family members who are adherents of other religions.

_____ I have surrendered my life completely to Jesus Christ. He is both Lord and Savior of my life.

34. Please select all that apply to you:

_____ I like to read books about ministry.

_____ I read and study the Bible every day.

_____ I prefer to read secular books more than the Bible.

_____ I have a strong prayer life.

_____ I fast regularly.

_____ I prefer to watch television or use social media instead of doing spiritual things.

35. Please select all that apply:

_____ I feel that I know my calling.

_____ I feel that I am ready to fulfil my calling.

_____ I feel spiritually mature.

_____ I feel spiritually deficient and I would like to have spiritual guidance in my life.

_____ I feel spiritually deficient, but I am fine. I do not want the help of anyone.

36. Please select the answers that apply to you:

_____ I prefer to attend a church where I can receive from anointed ministers, but I am not required, personally, to do anything.

_____ I prefer to attend a church where I can be trained and equipped to be active in ministry.

_____ I prefer not to interact with people in church.

_____ Before taking this survey, my only goal was to ensure that I made it to heaven.

_____ Before taking this survey, my goal was to discover how I could serve the Lord with my gifts and abilities in the local church, the community, or internationally to further the Great Commission until the Lord comes.

APPENDIX B

Post-Discipleship Training Survey

This survey is a part of the research required for Reynold Price's Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project, "Four Scriptural Principles: Creating A Discipleship Culture in a Caribbean Church Context". Please carefully answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

1. Did you attend the four discipleship and ministerial training sessions?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. After having completed the discipleship training course, please select all that apply:
 - The sessions were insightful. I learned how to become a disciple of Jesus and gained practical knowledge about ministry.
 - I understand the importance of discipleship and what it means to participate in the Great Commission.
 - I felt motivated to do ministry and to fulfill my role in the Great Commission
 - I think more seriously about my role as a minister before God
 - I was encouraged to discover my spiritual gifts
 - I discovered my spiritual gifts in the class
 - I discovered my purpose in the class
 - I utilized my spiritual gifts in the class
 - I was given the opportunity to minister to other members in the class.

3. After having completed the discipleship training course, please select all that apply:
 - I felt like the sessions were simply a Bible study
 - I did not experience any spiritual development in my life
 - After attending the class, I do not feel interested in engaging in practical ministry.
 - After attending the class, I am not interested in being discipled.
 - I would like to lead a practical ministry class/group in the future.
 - I would like to lead a discipleship class/group in the future.

4. Do you believe that you have an important role to play in the life of your local church?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. Do you believe that you have an important role to play in the Great Commission?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. Define discipleship in your own words.

7. Define the Great Commission in your own words.

8. Explain the purpose of small group meetings in your own words.

9. The discipleship training course was my first introduction to discipleship ministry.

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. This discipleship and practical ministry training course have given me a desire to do ministry within and outside the local church.

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. I was able to discover the true importance of discipleship ministry through this training course.

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. I will recommend and endorse discipleship ministry training in my local church.

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. After exposure to this discipleship training, I feel more prepared and ready to exercise my spiritual gifts and to advance the Kingdom of God.

- a. Yes
- b. No

14. I would like to start a small group at church or in my home.

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. I want to encourage others to be discipled.

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. I want to become a person who helps to disciple other believers.

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. Give details of the most impactful aspect of this discipleship training.

18. Do you have suggestions as to how this discipleship training manual can be improved?
Please explain.

19. I would like to further my knowledge on discipleship and would be willing to access
further training in this area.

- a. Yes
- b. No

APPENDIX C

Senior Pastor Survey

This survey is a part of the research required for Reynold Price's Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project, "Four Scriptural Principles: Creating A Discipleship Culture in a Caribbean Church Context". Please answer the questions below carefully and accurately to the best of your ability.

1. What is the name of your church? _____
2. How old are you?
 - a. 18-24 years
 - b. 25-40 years
 - c. 41-50 years
 - d. 51-60 years
 - e. 61 or more
3. How many years have you been a pastor?
 - a. 5-10 years
 - b. 11-15 years
 - c. 16-20 years
 - d. 21 or more years
4. How many members attend your church?
 - a. 30-50
 - b. 51-100
 - c. 101-150
 - d. 151-200
 - e. 201-250
 - f. 251 or more
5. Making disciples of Jesus Christ is an important priority of my church.
 - a. Not at all Important
 - b. Somewhat Important
 - c. Important
 - d. Very Important

6. Have you implemented a discipleship program at your local church that is designed to develop the spirituality of all your members by integrating them into a discipleship class or group?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

7. If yes to question 6, please state the way that your church develops the spirituality of its members through discipleship.

8. If yes to question 6, who oversees the discipleship class/group? Please select all that apply.

_____ Senior Pastor

_____ Church leaders

_____ Discipled church members who were trained to lead a discipleship class/group

_____ A Christian minister outside of your local church

9. Have you implemented a ministerial program at your local church that is designed to prepare all your members for practical ministry and to equip them to fulfill their role in the Great Commission?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

10. If yes to question 9, please state the way that your church prepares the general membership for practical ministry and for participation in the Great Commission.

11. If yes to question 9, who oversees the practical ministry class/group? Please select all that apply.

- Senior Pastor
- Church leaders
- Discipled church members who were trained to lead a discipleship class/group
- A Christian minister outside of your local church

12. When people are saved at your church, is there a detailed process that is followed to integrate them into a small (cell, peer or home) group?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. If yes to question 12, how many designated small (cell, peer or home) group do you have in your church?

- a. None
- b. 1-3
- c. 4-6
- d. 7-9
- e. 10 or more

14. If yes to question 12, who leads the small (cell, peer or home) group? Please select all that apply:

- Senior Pastor
- Church leadership
- Discipled church members who were trained to lead a small group
- A Christian minister outside of your local church

15. Is there a detailed process at your church that is followed to help members discover their spiritual gifts?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. If yes to question 15, please briefly explain the process employed at your church to help members discover their spiritual

17. Does your church measure or verify how many people are saved compared to those who are being discipled in any given year?

- a. Yes
- b. No

18. If yes to question 17 on a yearly average, what is the percentage of people who are saved compared to those who are being discipled?

- a. 0-20%
- b. 21-40%
- c. 41-60%
- d. 61-80%
- e. 81-100%

19. Are there members in your church with whom you are presently in an established discipleship relationship?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
20. Do you take members of your congregation on ministry trips with you as apprentices?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
21. Were you disciplined after you were saved?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
22. How often do you hold church leadership/staff review meetings to evaluate the current state of the ministry?
- a. Not at all
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Fortnightly
 - d. Monthly
 - e. Quarterly
 - f. There is no set period
23. How often do you host ministry training seminars/meetings for your church leadership/staff to ensure that they are ministering effectively?
- a. Not at all
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Fortnightly
 - d. Monthly
 - e. Quarterly
 - f. There is no set period

24. When last have you preached or taught on the importance of discipleship in the lives of believers?

- a. Never
- b. Within the past 6 months
- c. 6 months to 1 year ago
- d. 1-2 years ago
- e. 3-5 years ago

25. When last have you preached or taught on the importance of your members discovering their spiritual gifts?

- a. Never
- b. Within the past 6 months
- c. 6 months to 1 year ago
- d. 1-2 years ago
- e. 3-5 years ago

26. When last have you preached or taught on the importance of members preparing themselves to become involved in the Great Commission?

- a. Never
- b. Within the past 6 months
- c. 6 months to 1 year ago
- d. 1-2 years ago
- e. 3-5 years ago

27. What percentage of your Sunday morning congregation is engaged presently in local church or international ministerial work?

- a. 0-10%
- b. 11-20%
- c. 21-30%
- d. 31-40%
- e. Other. Please state _____

For the next three questions, please select all that apply.

28. When I preach, I focus on accomplishing the following:

- Winning the lost
- Preaching and teaching clearly and effectively
- Helping members to make a deeper commitment to Jesus Christ
- Making disciples of Jesus Christ
- Shifting the way people think from a worldly perspective to a spiritual one

29. What are some of the reasons you believe that members in your church are not participating in ministry?

- They are not interested in ministry
- They do not attend services where they can be trained for ministry
- Congregation members do not need to be trained for ministry
- The present ministers in the church are functioning effectively already
- My denomination does not permit local churches to train members for ministry
- I have attempted to encourage my members to participate in ministry, but they are unwilling

30. Generally, the focus of my church is on:

- Preaching and teaching the Gospel
- Preparing all believers for ministry
- Helping believers discover, utilize and develop their spiritual gifts
- Having a well-organized Sunday morning service
- Helping believers fulfill their roles in the Great Commission
- Making spiritually mature disciples
- Saving the lost

31. Please define discipleship and briefly state the general purpose of this ministry in the local church.

32. Please give your definition of small groups ministry. Briefly state its purpose.

APPENDIX D

Discipleship Training Plan

Discipleship Implications – Redefinition of Church Systems

Senior pastors and church leaders must transition their church from a traditional organizational and operational structure that focuses predominantly on the pastor's responsibility to feed the flock while omitting to prepare the latter to undertake their responsibility to do the work of the ministry. These spiritual leaders must develop or undertake a fundamental revision of the definition of essential biblical terms that may otherwise be misunderstood due to their casual and repetitive use over time. When pastors, church leaders, and the congregation are acculturated to the language of discipleship, a transformation will occur that will result in a heightened sense of awareness of the role that each member of the church is responsible to fulfill.

Putman, Harrington, and Coleman have suggested that a common language be created for the church to develop unity of speech and an understanding of key terms that will drive the church forward in its discipleship journey.¹⁶⁰ When the language of the church becomes the language of the Word, then the church moves out of the realm of the ordinary to apprehend the realm of the supernatural. In this new environment, the addition of converts by the evangelism of the few becomes the multiplication of believers by the ministry of the majority, those who are believers consecrate themselves to the Lord to become His disciples, and the idea of ministry as being reserved for the clergy has vanished so that every believer now views themselves as a priesthood of believers who are called to minister before the Lord and serve the world through their unique gifting and calling as they pursue the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; John

¹⁶⁰. Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 3266-3286. Kindle Edition.

17:18; John 20:21; Acts 1:1-8). This is the radical transformation that occurs when a discipleship culture has taken root in a church that is devoted to the Word of God and is clearly articulated in the vision of the pastor.

This student has endeavored to develop a list of critical terms that are indispensable to the operation of a healthy church that is based on the principles of discipleship. The definitions are set out below:

Definition of the Church: The church is the body of Jesus Christ that is comprised of believers who are actively on the journey of spiritual maturity in order to attain to the “whole measure of the fullness of Jesus Christ” (Eph. 4:13). Under the command of the Head, who is Jesus Christ, the church is commissioned to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-219), to be effective witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8), and to continue the ministry which Jesus began while on earth (Acts 1:1-2).

Definition of Pastor: The office of “pastor” is one of the governmental offices given to the church in order to train, equip, and develop the saints until they “all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13). The pastor’s function is to train and develop his congregation to become competent and effective leaders who possess and implement the vision given to him by the Holy Spirit, while developing their own uniqueness, giftings, calling as given to them by the Lord. The pastor oversees the general spiritual life of the church as the shepherd of God’s people.

Definition of Leadership: Dave Earley and Rodney Dempsey define leadership as “the process of influencing individuals to follow God’s plan for their lives and become all

they can be for Christ and His mission.”¹⁶¹ J. Oswald Sanders has simplified this definition by defining leadership as “influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead.”¹⁶² During his bodily incarnation, Jesus perfectly modeled every stage of leadership in the discipleship process (exercising influence, casting vision and facilitating development). His leadership culminated in the reproduction of mature disciples who were empowered and mandated to make disciples of their own according to the Lord’s commands. Leadership must always be done with a servant-like heart and with the intention of calling people into their destiny in Christ.

Definition of a Leader: Leaders in the church are first servants of Christ and then servants of the body of Christ. They are indispensable to the preparation and maturation of believers for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Dave Kraft has noted that “Today the crying need is for more leaders. To grow by addition, you recruit more followers. To grow by multiplication, you add more leaders.”¹⁶³ Their primary purpose is to coach, train and inspire those whom they disciple to a greater commitment and actual transformation into Christlikeness. They are to be spiritually mature parents who help individual disciples to find their role in the body of Christ and to equip them so that they can effectively function in their purpose for the glory of God.¹⁶⁴ Ultimately, they will disseminate the vision that has been implemented by the senior pastor.

Definition of Saints: Every genuine believer in Christ who has repented of their sins and has made Jesus Christ Lord and Savior of his or her life is a saint (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2;

¹⁶¹. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 3457-3466. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶². Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 27.

¹⁶³. Dave Kraft, *Leaders Who Last* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 138.

¹⁶⁴. Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 157.

Eph. 1:1; Jude 1:3). This is not a special or superior category of believers. There is a legal transaction that occurred on the cross of Calvary and the apostle Paul effectively articulated it when He said, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Every saint has access to God and is called to be a minister of the Gospel to the world.

Definition of the Gospel: The Gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ with which the Church has been entrusted as faithful stewards to share with the world. In its simplest form, the message of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ came to earth to die for the sins of the humanity so that grace, forgiveness, and redemption may be extended to everyone who puts their faith in Him (John 1:12; John 3:16; Rom. 6:23-24). The message of the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who would believe (Rom. 1:16).

Definition of Evangelism: Evangelism is the spiritual vehicle by which the lost are saved and become citizens of the Kingdom of God. Importantly, vibrant and effective evangelism is the natural overflow of a well-functioning discipleship ministry. While reaching the lost is critically important because the harvest fields are ripe (John 4:23), the actual commission of the Church is to make disciples. This is accomplished by the institution of a clear and detailed discipleship plan for believers in the church to be trained to become mature disciples who will develop, in time, a God-given desire to win the lost for Christ. Due to the confluence between discipleship and evangelism, the personnel in the evangelism and discipleship departments must develop a detailed plan that allows for the smooth transition of new converts into an established discipleship process.

Definition of Discipleship: Discipleship is the process by which new and old believers are trained, developed and equipped in an intentional and relational environment until they become spiritually mature adults who are discipling others in order to reproduce the nature of Christ in them. Putman et al. observe that “The ideal life is focused on Jesus. It is not just trusting him but also truly following him...To be conformed into Jesus’ likeness is the goal (Rom 8:29). The word for this is *discipleship*.”¹⁶⁵ Every church must be focused on the maturation of its members and this can only take place in the context of relational discipleship environments. Michael Wilkins tells us that “Since all true Christians are disciples, the ministry of the church may be seen in its broadest sense as ‘discipleship.’”¹⁶⁶ A discipleship ministry, therefore, is not an additional ministry in the church, but it is the ministry of the church.

Definition of Disciple: In a Christian context, a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. Dallas Willard noted that “As disciples (literally students) of Jesus, our goal is to learn to be like him. We begin by trusting him to receive us as we are. But our confidence in him leads us toward the same kind of faith he had, a faith that made it possible for him to act as he did.”¹⁶⁷ A disciple, therefore, is a person who observes everything which Jesus commanded, particularly the requirement to “love your neighbor as I have loved you”(John 13:34) and “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). In a real sense, disciples have so died to self for the cause of Christ (Mark 8:34-35; Rom. 6:11) that they consider themselves dead to sin (Rom. 6:13) so that they now live their life in Christ and Christ lives His life in them (Gal

¹⁶⁵. Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 31.

¹⁶⁶. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 42.

¹⁶⁷. Willard, *The Great Omission*, 464. Kindle Edition

2:20). Bonhoeffer defined a disciple as nothing “other than being bound to Christ alone.”¹⁶⁸ This idea of being bound comports to Paul’s concept of being a “doulos” or a “slave” of Christ.

Debilitating Cultural Beliefs that Hinder the Creation of a Discipleship Culture

Ultimately, the desire of every Christian leader should be to create a culture where the ideals, virtues, and values of the Kingdom take pre-eminence in the lives of the members they serve. The creation of a new culture requires the design and implementation of a spiritual re-acculturation process that this student has referred to as the culture-shift principle. When new believers come to the Lord, they enter the church with the ideologies, beliefs and, core values that they adopted while in the world. Some of these worldviews are acutely dangerous and decidedly antithetical to the Scriptures and inimical to the convert’s spiritual growth in Christ. The purpose of the implementation of the culture-shift principle, then, is to facilitate the indispensable process of the spiritual reformation of new and existing believers. The process of re-acculturation is a time-consuming but ultimately rewarding endeavor, the benefit of which cannot be overstated.

¹⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, 56.

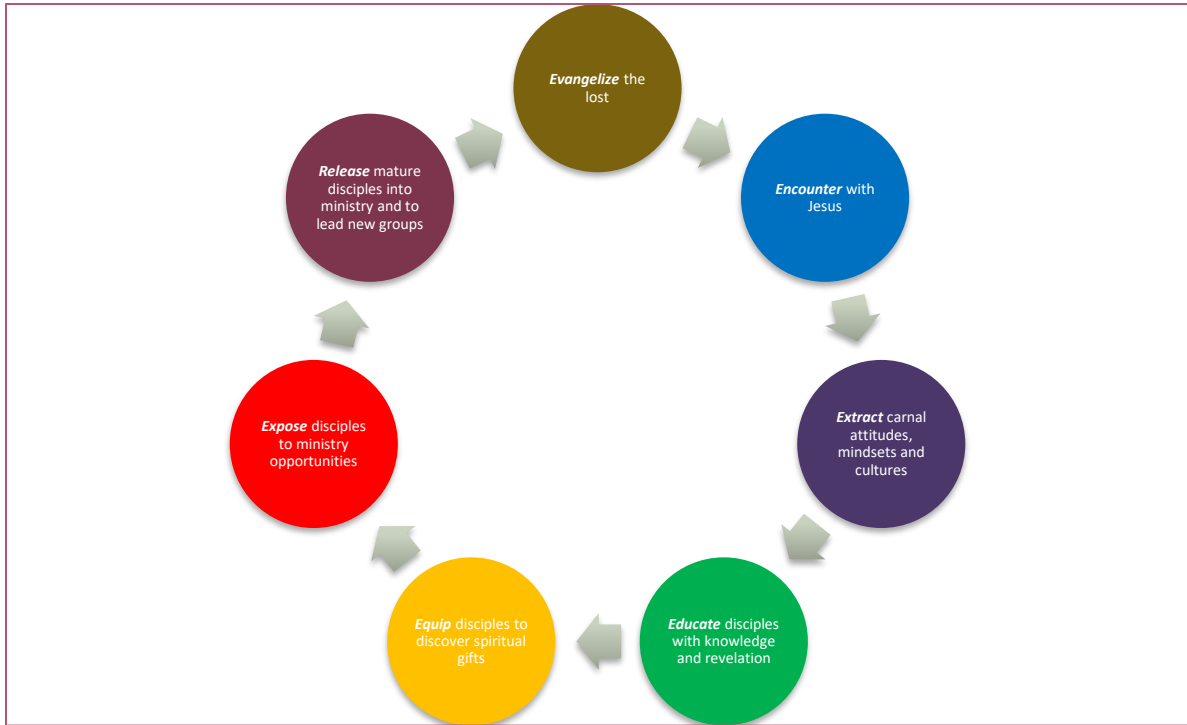


Figure 15: The Evangelism-Discipleship Ecosystem

After conversion, believers must submit themselves to the process of spiritual acculturation, learning, as Jesus’ disciples did, the principles, core values, and operation of the Kingdom of God. Gary L. McIntosh stated that “The elements of discipleship include evangelization (go), assimilation (baptize), and education (teach). At its root, the word disciple means “learner,” and learning is to be a continual process—a lifelong process of learning all that Jesus taught (Matt. 28:20).”¹⁶⁹ Senior pastors and church leaders must endeavor to instruct their members, not merely in accordance with the doctrine of salvation but also regarding the richness of the surrendered life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. If a church is dedicated to the goal of creating a healthy and thriving discipleship culture, it must intentionally and relationally shift the minds

¹⁶⁹. Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 1147. Kindle Edition.

of their members from operating by the culture of the world to the culture of the Kingdom of God.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul writes that “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Here, Paul invites the believer to reassess his or her life in the light of their new estate as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The believer must divest him or herself of the old vesture of the carnal man to be robed in the righteousness of Christ so that the spiritual life of God may flow without inhibition to transform the world. This is the culture-shift/principle and it is the locus of true spiritual transformation. Disciple-makers must encourage their members to be imitators of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). The church must resist the temptation to accommodate the practices, principles, and cultures of the world for the sake of being relevant. In a diverse social and religious context such as Trinidad and Tobago, senior pastors and church leaders may encounter the following issues that are discussed below.

Carnival Culture

There are many adherents to the Christian faith, predominantly in the Anglican and Catholic denominations, who believe that the participation of Christians in carnival festivities is a spiritually harmless practice. The common justification is that Carnival is an inseparable aspect of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago in which they have been immersed since childhood. While there is much truth to this response, the issue that arises is that Christians who hold to this view have not realized or have not been taught that at the point of salvation, a convert is immediately translated into the Kingdom of God that is governed by an entirely different set of rules and spiritual culture. The attempt to hold onto the culturally accepted paradigms of the world, while

yet professing Jesus Christ as Savior is not only a spiritual deception, but it is, in fact, detrimental to one's growth as a disciple of Jesus.

The New Testament abounds with Scriptures that exhort both new and old believers to renew their minds (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8; Eph.4:23), to consecrate themselves to God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rom. 6:13,19), and to leave the world and its practices in order to pursue the manifestation of the nature of Christ in their lives (Eph. 2:3-5). This student, again, notes the spiritual and emotional inoculation that occurs from childhood in Trinidad and Tobago regarding Carnival. Pastors and church leaders have the responsibility to accurately teach the principles of spiritual consecration. They ought not to be guided by the prevailing cultural mores, but by the truth of the Word of God.

Cohabiting Relationships Dilemma

There are Christians who profess faith in Jesus Christ and attend church but are living in cohabiting relationships. In some of these situations, the cohabiting couple is living together with a child. That is ungodly, unscriptural, is not conducive to the advancement of the kingdom of God and is inimical to the development of healthy discipleship in the local church. A church that is dedicated to making true disciples must be invested in molding the spirituality of their members by continuous interaction with the Word of God so that they lay aside their carnality.

Senior pastors and church leaders must become more involved in the personal lives of their members, especially new believers, to ensure that they are lovingly guided out of the cultural practices that are inimical to their spiritual growth. Senior pastors must ensure that the necessary help is available to ensure they grow closer to God instead of apart from Him. Pastors must never appear to be distant from the lives of their members. Many members are struggling and need the spiritual influence of mature Christians who can strengthen and encourage them.

Senior pastors must be patient and intentional about training and instructing the present members of their church to be compassionate towards new believers and to be attentive to their spiritual, financial, and emotional needs. Again, the most practical that way this can be accomplished is the development of small groups in the local church. In the case of cohabiting couples, the pastor or church leaders should dedicate their time to lovingly lead them out of their sinful condition to a place of developing a covenantal relationship with God and, where possible, covenantal love in marriage, especially where children are involved.

Witchcraft/Occultic Practices

The island of Trinidad and Tobago is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society. Many spiritual groups of African origin and tradition exist in that country and other Caribbean islands. When one speaks of witchcraft and the occult in Trinidad, the idea that is evoked is any cultural practice that is usually associated with demonic activities or orisha practices. The local name for these practices is “obeah”. Often, these religious practices would be syncretized with Christian theological principles, or theological figures in order to give the occultic practices more legitimacy in the eyes of certain interested persons who are seeking to know more about their religion. For example, in the Spiritual Baptist faith, which is one of the religions in Trinidad and Tobago that practice occultic and witchcraft practices, the orishas that are venerated are given the names of famous saints in the Catholic religion of centuries past. For example, *Shango* is referred to as St. John, *Oshun* is called St. Elizabeth and *Yemoya/Yemonja* is known as St. Ann.

Due to the prevalence of these religions in Trinidad and Tobago, one finds that when unbelievers who have come to the Lord who were involved with these practices they tend to bring their former beliefs and practices into the church or they incorporate Christ with some of

their occultic beliefs and practices. Very rarely do new believers who convert from these occultic religions make a clear separation between their old way of life and their newfound faith in Jesus Christ. New believers who continue to live in a home or a community that is reminiscent of former religious practices or who, as a result of their conversion, have been ostracized by family members must be intentionally and relationally disciplined to follow after Christ and to develop their knowledge in the Word of God. Discipleship is, therefore, critical to ensure that these believers do not renege on their commitment to the Lord. Pastors and church leaders must take special notice of their members who claim to have faith in Christ to guide them out of the beliefs and practices that are associated with their former religion. As a minister in the New Testament Church of God in Trinidad and Tobago, this student encountered believers who converted from these religions. Many of them retained the belief that they could exercise power over their “spiritual enemies” using items or by their actions. For example, some of them wore peculiar jewelry for protection that they referred to as “guards”. These guards usually took the form of jewels, chains, or beads that are shaped in the form of religious symbols. Another example is that upon the birth of a child, the parents must place a *jet* (a black and gold beaded bracelet) on the child’s forearm to protect him or her from evil spirits or from “*maljoe*” or “evil eye” caused by the envy and jealousy of others. Some women also wore jewelry in their undergarments to protect them against “sexual spirits”. Other examples of such practices are the refusal to walk into a house with their shoes after attending a funeral and the practice of entering a house backward at night to prevent evil spirits from entering the house as well.

Frequently, new believers who have left those religions still cleave to these practices even though they generally would not venerate the spirits of the respective religion. This is still unacceptable, however, because to the extent that the mind, actions, or attitudes of a believer are

unrenewed, they will be ineffective and unproductive in their spiritual development and their work for the Lord. The church must be invested in teaching new believers who have converted from other religions that prescribe to ungodly or occultic practices about the real spiritual danger that exists, how demons operate, and how to become and remain free. An important practical component of this teaching will require new believers to first undergo deliverance and inner healing to be set free from demonic strongholds and spirits which would have entered their lives while they were unsaved. Apart from this, the church must be intentionally invested in training and developing believers to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and to show that Jesus Christ alone requires their faithful commitment as they attempt to live a holy and righteous life in Christ. The type of spiritual reformation that must occur in the lives of new believers is more appropriately and effectively accomplished in a small group environment, rather than from the pulpit.

Members who converted from other religions must undergo spiritual re-acculturation by being trained and disciplined in the Word of God so that they can understand their identity in Christ. Hinduism and Christianity, for example, are diametrically opposed to each other. The practices are mutually inconsistent. To facilitate the process of helping members to make a clean break from their former way of life, senior pastors must create a small group culture in their church. The ability to ask questions and to be involved in the lives of each other helps to develop disciples.

Selfish Salvation Ideology

Several of the participants in the study preferred to attend a church in which they could receive ministry but where they were not personally required to become active in ministry. This student refers to that spiritual disposition as “selfish salvation theology”. Apart from its

incompatibility with discipleship, the perspective is primarily an unbiblical one. God has called the saints to be representatives or ambassadors of Jesus Christ on earth (2 Cor. 5:20). The life of a disciple is a spiritual portal or conduit of the power of God. When training Christians in the discipleship process, senior pastors or church leaders will be prudent to convey to the disciples that the purpose of their instruction is not restricted to their edification, but is designed to develop spiritual maturation so that, in time, they will disciple others.

The Pastor Can Do Everything for Me Syndrome

In a largely anti-discipleship culture in the Caribbean, some senior pastors have fostered the unscriptural belief that it is his or her responsibility to cater to the spiritual, emotional, psychological, and even financial needs of the entire congregation. Ed Stetzer observes that “Many pastoral leaders enjoy (and take their identity from) doing the work of the ministry more than training and equipping all God's people to do that ministry – that hurts the pastors and the people. Some pastors are concerned about their employment, wondering.”¹⁷⁰ In this culture, the members are not taught to develop an attitude of responsibility and maturity in dealing with their spiritual problems, or that of their fellow believers for that matter. Seen as the most spiritually anointed person in the church, the pastor, and in some cases, the select handful of persons connected to him, act as the sole source of grace and strength for the members, resulting in a stultification of the spiritual maturity of the members. While it is true that the senior pastor has the responsibility of feeding his flock and particularly feeding new members of the congregation with the spiritual milk of the Word of God, Jesus had a different perspective.

¹⁷⁰ Ed Stetzer, “Laypeople and the Mission of God, Part II – Reclaiming the Priesthood of All Believers” Christianity Today, accessed March 15, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/august/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-ii--reclaiming.html>.

The present state of spiritual infancy in local churches in Trinidad must be an issue that is intentionally addressed by pastors and other church leaders. It is critically important that believers recognize that they are not called to remain spiritual babes or infants all their lives. The natural progression of growth for a human being is to mature from a babe to an adult. Similarly, in the spiritual realm, believers have the responsibility to grow in their most holy faith (Jude 1:20) from a spiritual babe in Christ who is fed spiritually by the digested and assimilated Word of God from their leaders to become spiritual adolescents, and then spiritual adults. As spiritual adults, they can receive and digest the spiritual meat of the Word for others to receive. At this mature stage of their discipleship journey, they should be competent and effective in their ministry to both junior and senior believers in Christ. The senior pastor must recognize that it is his responsibility to create a spiritual environment that facilitates the growth of every believer through the process of discipleship. Stetzer states that “Churches must have a plan to empower lay people through a leadership development strategy. If you are a pastor, that will change how you do ministry-- spending more time developing leaders so that a broad engagement of lay leaders is a church-wide function.”¹⁷¹ The pastor must never give the impression that the church is healthy provided that he, or a select number of leaders, can satisfy the needs of the members. On the contrary, the senior pastor must acculturate his or her congregation to the concept of each member contributing to the health of the church as different parts of the body of Christ. The true ability of a pastor to develop his/her church is not determined by their effectiveness in preaching in or teaching, but in their ability, after having done those duties, to prepare another generation of ministers to become strong mature disciples who will follow after him.

¹⁷¹ Ed Stetzer, “Laypeople and the Mission of God: Part V- Essentials to Changing the Culture,” Christianity Today, accessed March 15, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/november/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-v--essentials-to.html>.

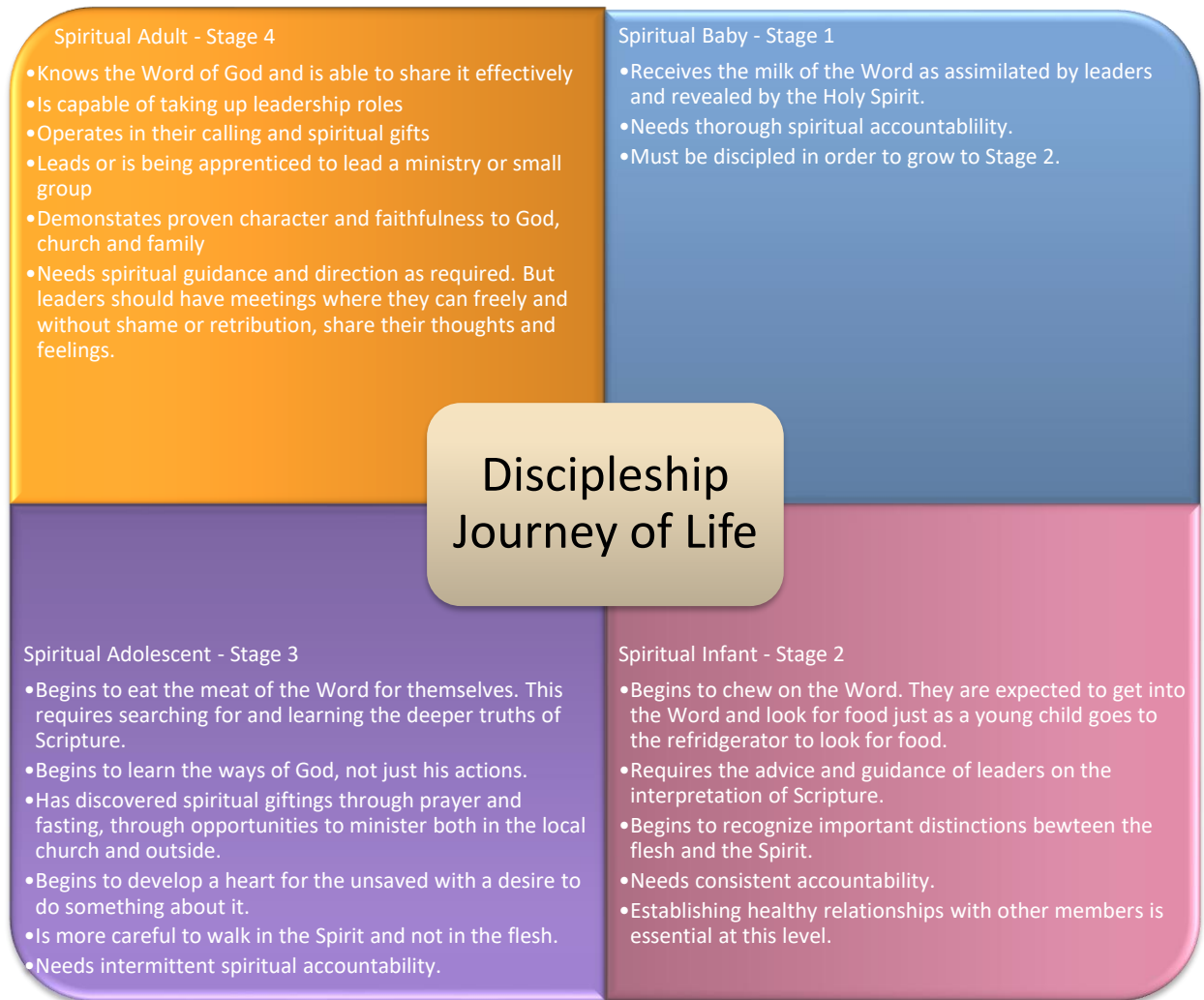


Figure 16. The Discipleship Journey of Life – Adapted from *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013* by Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman.¹⁷²

Denominational Theology Over the Person of Jesus Christ

Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, assembled a cohort of spiritually untrained men by inviting them to follow Him. The definitive purpose in choosing individuals who were the antithesis of the Jewish spiritual elite was to consecrate followers unto Himself who were not

¹⁷² Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *DiscipleShift*, 848. Kindle Edition.

beholden to a theological, political, or philosophical worldview, but to Him. One of the unfortunate realities in Trinidad and Tobago is the numerical abundance of Christian denominations that preach their denominational theology but fail to emphasize and insist upon the necessity of personal transformation for each believer. Almost in a tribalistic manner, believers have become so magnetized to a particular theology and/or teaching that they have forgotten that the highest goal of the Christian faith is the pursuit of a relationship with Jesus Christ where the disciple is transformed into His image and likeness (2 Cor. 3:17-18). The upshot of this reality is that there are many believers who grow intellectually but are wilting spiritually as they struggle to deal with issues of sin and are hopeless in discovering their spiritual identity in Christ, calling, and purpose. The Bible is clear, however, that we ought to pursue holiness without which it is impossible to see God (Heb. 12:14).

Conclusion

From a biblical perspective, discipleship was not meant simply to be a ministry in the church, but the ministry of the church. In the New Testament church, there was a heavy emphasis on the discipleship of believers that resulted in the propulsion of the Gospel and the expansion of the church throughout the known world. Indeed, the apostles executed the commands of Jesus with sobriety and diligence as they began discipling others and teaching them to observe all that He had taught them (Matt. 28:20a). They equally believed that Jesus would be with them as they carried out this mission (v. 20b). During this time, discipleship was very relational as it was originally conceptualized to be. The church focused on fellowship, service to others, teaching, preaching, and was intensely missional in its orientation.

The church was also under heavy persecution due to the Roman occupation of Israel and other surrounding territories. The attacks of the Romans against the Church caused believers to

spread Christianity to other countries as they sought refuge from the Roman Empire. Still yet, in these early years after the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the believers were dedicated to the fundamental principles of discipleship as they sought to follow the Lord and become like Him as they had been instructed by the apostles. Dallas Willard observed that “this practice of discipleship in the communities of Christ followers—being with Christ learning to be like him, in part by being with those who are further along on that same path—is what lends realism and hope to the glowing pictures of his people that stand out from the pages of the New Testament.”¹⁷³ These spiritual communities were the fires that caused the name of Jesus Christ to burn through the Empire resulting in the salvation of souls. Joseph Hellerman noted that “The Christian message was a liberating one for people oppressed by the darkness of a pagan pantheon of gods and goddesses.”¹⁷⁴ During this time, the disciples were multiplying at an exponential rate because they were living as the embodiment of Christ on the earth and were manifesting the nature of Jesus Christ as He intended. They ate together and learned together as they sat at the feet of the apostles (Acts 2:41-42). They prayed and fellowshiped with one another and were distinctly concerned about preparing to send ministers about to preach the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of those who accepted Jesus as Lord (Acts 13:3-4). Ultimately, Christianity was spread successfully throughout Asia Minor and Rome because the disciples shared a pure and powerful message of salvation by faith in Christ and their lives were a demonstration of their message. Since the ascension of Jesus Christ, 2000 years have passed and the discipleship plan of Jesus Christ that originally started with the Twelve has touched the lives

¹⁷³. Dallas Willard, “Discipleship,” *Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, edited by Gerald McDermott, 2010, 9, accessed August 30, 2018, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=134>.

¹⁷⁴. Hellerman, *When the Church Was A Family*, 102.

of millions, with churches being planted all over the world in pursuance of the Great Commission.

The church in Trinidad and Tobago today must return to the example that Jesus, the Chief Disciple-Maker, has set. No longer can the church be an organization that maximizes and, to some extent, glorifies the distinction between the professional clergy and ordinary laypeople. As Dempsey argues, the church needs a new operating system that embraces the characteristics of “a return to the family/body operating system where every person is important to the health of the church.”¹⁷⁵ The return to the first principles of love and togetherness characteristic of the 1.0 model must now embrace the upgrade to “Scripture knowledge, technology and leadership development.”¹⁷⁶ Neil Cole winsomely calls this upgraded operating system the Church 3.0.¹⁷⁷

The message of the Gospel must be preached by a person who not only carries the Word of God but who also understands the deep concerns that lie at the core of the human heart. The preacher must be ready to reveal the superiority of the culture of the Kingdom of God to confront the physical, social, and spiritual realities that present stumbling blocks in the mind of the hearers. Timothy Keller noted that “contextualizing the gospel in a culture must account for all these aspects. It does not mean merely changing someone’s behavior, but someone’s worldview.”¹⁷⁸ This does not mean that the Gospel loses its authority as a book that is authoritative over all centuries or periods of time, but that if the message of Jesus Christ is to be understood and received today, the message must be relatable, relevant, unadulterated, and truthful. This perspective accepts the theological and spiritual responsibility of ministers but also

¹⁷⁵. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 4686. Kindle Edition.

¹⁷⁶. *Ibid.*, 4700.

¹⁷⁷. Neil Cole, *Church 3.0* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 383. Kindle Edition.

¹⁷⁸. Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 90. Kindle Edition.

takes notice of the social and cultural realities that exist in each country, thereby increasing the possibility of more meaningful and effective ministry.

Discipleship Training Manual

Method – The disciple-leader is required to do the following for new believers: train believers in the Word of God, challenge them to purity, and equip them for ministry. This is a serious interactive session between the disciple-leader and disciples. Having received from Jesus, the leader's essential role is to share portions of his or her life (time, revelation, experience, insight, wisdom, and knowledge) in order to disciple the believers and lead them on the journey of spiritual maturation and conforming into the image and likeness of Christ.

Vision – That disciples trained in this course will find their passion in ministry and consecrate themselves to the Lord so that they may be used in the advancement of His Kingdom.

Mission – To reproduce disciples who can become leaders to others.

Duration – 10 sessions, two hours each, once a week. The first 10 minutes of each session will be used for prayer.

Format – Multiple topics will be covered in a session.

Notes – On each page space is provided for notes.

2) How we are to live

The lifestyle of righteousness is possible only by the grace of God. We don't strive for righteousness; we are the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus. In effect, our growth in righteousness is the result of choosing to die to the world system, which in its current state, is devoid of the influence of God, so that we may grow up into maturity. As we mature in Christ, we will learn how to mirror the heart of God on earth through our relationship with Him. This is necessary because we are the agents of change as our assignment from Jesus is to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28) on the earth by stewarding God's Kingdom on the earth through faith and love for each other and for Him. The Kingdom of God functions differently from the natural world and national culture in which we live. Every believer must learn how the Kingdom of God works and pattern his or her life after that model, always remembering that we are in a spiritual battle with the powers of darkness and that we overcome through Christ, the Solid Rock.

- 1) Righteousness is the Standard of Life – Ezekiel 11:19; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6
- 2) Managing the Soul - Mind, Will and Emotions – Isa. 26:3; Phil. 4:6-8; James 4:7
- 3) Transformed to Transform - Carrying God's Heart into the World – Matthew 28:18-20
- 4) Developing a Renewed Mind – Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 17:1-5; Philippians 2:1-11
- 5) Presenting our Lives as a Living Sacrifice Rom. 12:1-2; Rom. 6: 15:18; 1 Cor. 6:19-20
- 6) Living with Eternity in Mind – Matthew 16:26-27; Colossians 3:2; John 14:1-4

3) Spirituality in Ministry

Jesus not only spoke the word, but demonstrated the Gospel with miracles, signs, and wonders. Signs were not the focus of His ministry, but His ministry was not complete without them. Jesus came to reveal the Father who, in revealing Himself to the world, chose to demonstrate His presence, power and authority through miracles, signs and wonders. Why did God choose to reveal Himself in this manner? One simple answer is that He is a supernatural God who does supernatural things in the lives of His people. God's glory upon us is best displayed when we can reveal Jesus to the world and mirror His heart here to people. While the greatest and most important miracle is the gift of salvation, healing is part of our inheritance that was made available to us through the atoning work of Christ's death on the Cross. Today, we live in a world that has begun to gravitate towards witchcraft and the occult in search of illegitimate power and control. The Church needs to demonstrate to the world that God is the source of true power and authority and by so doing provide a testimony that God is real, and the kingdom of Satan has been defeated.

- 1) Spirituality before Ministry Acts 19:11-19
 - 2) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Power and Authority) Acts 2; Acts 3
 - 3) Fasting – An Act of Humility and of Preparation for Ministry – Matt. 6:17-18; Acts 13:2
 - 4) Spiritual Governmental Offices – Gifts to the Church – Ephesians 4:11-17
 - 5) The Gifts of the Spirit - 1 Cor. 12
 - 6) Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts and Ministry
 - 7) The Triumph of Jesus over the Powers of Darkness - Acts 10:38; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:13-15
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4) Spiritual Warfare

Every person who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has enlisted into the Kingdom of God which is at war with the Kingdom of Satan. This is a war which was won spiritually when Jesus Christ died on the Cross and arose from the grave, thereby defeating, death, hell, the grave and all powers of darkness. Christians are called to outwork the fruit of that victory into their lives and the lives of others so that they can live free from the grip of the devil and his demons. In addition, a large part of the ministry of Jesus involved the expelling of evil spirits from people who attended the synagogues and those who were previously irreligious but desired to know God. Christians ought to be aware of the plans and schemes of the enemy and know how to fight in spiritual warfare successfully for their sake and the sake of others.

- 1) The Priority of Intimacy with God in Deliverance Ministry – Zech. 4:6; Acts 16:16-18; 19:15
- 2) How to Fight Against the Powers of Darkness Part (1) – Worship Isa. 61:3-4; 2 Chron. 20:21
- 3) How to Fight Against the Powers of Darkness Part (2) – Spiritual Armor Eph. 6:10-18
- 4) Barriers to Healing and Deliverance – Unbelief and Unrepentance

IRB APPROVAL

January 2, 2020

Reynold D. Price

IRB Exemption 3997.010220: Four Scriptural Principles: Creating a Discipleship Culture in a Caribbean Church Context

Dear Reynold D. Price,

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 that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;
- (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number. If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Liberty University