

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Developing a Discipleship Training Guide at Greater Love Baptist Church for the Retention of
Young Adults**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The problem is that Greater Love Baptist is struggling to sustain young adults' attendance because the leadership lacks the necessary tools and training to disciple them. As a result, there is a mass exodus of young people from the church. Therefore, this research project's purpose is to develop a *Discipleship Training Guide* to equip the leadership of Greater Love Church to disciple young adults. The primary theme of the guide is "Knowing Jesus." The concept of the guide is based on the premise that no one can effectively train, teach or model the life of Christ without having a personal relationship with Him. The membership at Greater Love is multigenerational, which means that the membership is presently young enough to encounter future growth. The makeup consists primarily of young adults, ages eighteen to twenty-nine, and older adults fifty-five and beyond. The ages of the youth at Greater Love range from six to eighteen. Ten individuals participated in the research. They were divided into two groups: an experimental and a control group. Surveys and individual questionnaires were utilized to determine the validity and the authenticity of a *Discipleship Training Guide*. Outcomes indicate that if the leadership is trained with a discipleship tool tailored to the church's unique needs, they can disciple the current young adults.

Keywords: Discipleship tools, retention, young adults, young people and leadership

Dedication

To my late parents, Ernest and Celester Williams

You were the source of my beginning. You were the roots that gave me nutrients, strength and a desire to produce despite of hardships, obstacles, and oppositions.

Thank you.

To my late husband, Rev. Wendell M. Cox

You are the light of my life. Your strength gave me endurance. It was the source that kept me afloat; I shall never forget your voice of encouragement, love and affection.

Thank you

To my children, Angela, Crystal, and Wendell

Angela, you are my joy. Crystal, you are my rock. Wendell, you are my peace.

Thank you

To my grandchildren, Desean, Zyon, Kala, and Wendell III

You are the blessings in my life. You have added to my happiness and joy. You are truly loved.

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To my Lord and savior: Jesus Christ

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Abbreviations

COVID	<i>Coronavirus Disease</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
DTG	<i>Discipleship Training Guide</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
FDT	<i>Faith Development Theory</i>
GLMBC	<i>Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church</i>
Gen X	<i>Individuals born between the years of 1965 and 1980</i>
Gen Y	<i>Individuals born between the years of 1981 and 1996</i>
Gen Z	<i>Individuals born between the years of 1997 and 2012</i>

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The worldwide problem of young adults leaving the church is observed on Sunday morning in every sanctuary across America and beyond. Young adults are absent in the young adult ministries, choirs, and evangelistic outreach programs. No church is immune to the exodus of young adults. Every church has felt the effect in some form or another of the gradual movement of young adults leaving their sanctuaries. Young adults do not attend church, Sunday school, or mid-week service. They are not involved in any services contributing to their spiritual growth.

Austin Wofford, argues that the exodus of young adults from the church is a “major world-wide problem across the globe and that it is time to sound the alarm.” The alarm must be sounded because Christianity, as known in the United States is in for a precipitous drop in membership that may determine the state of the church for the next century.¹ Wofford understood the gravity of the exodus and called out the problem in hope that the church would rally around the problem to stop the exit. Some churches started discipleship programs, exposing youth to the rudiments of becoming a biblical disciple, while others ignored the problem, thinking that it would soon vanish; but it has not. It is obvious that the only way young adults will return, or the exodus will cease, is when young adults know Christ through the process of becoming a disciple.

Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor, and theologian, asserts through his teachings on discipleship, that a follower is a “disciple who imitates Christ, a peacemaker, avoiding conflict and confusion” in order to demonstrate the principle that it is “better to suffer than cause the

¹ Austin Wofford, *Forged: Young Adults and the Renewal of the Church* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Inc, 2022), 14.

suffering of others.”² Bonhoeffer’s fervent belief on discipleship strongly suggests that it is the inherent duty of the church leadership to train, model, and “imitate the characteristics of Jesus Christ to its membership.”³ Knowing Jesus is how this principle will be learned. The leadership of Greater Love must model an acquisition of this tool of discipleship to the young adult population so they will be equipped with the same tools of discipleship Christ faithfully modeled to His disciples.

A model for discipleship was demonstrated when Christ came into this world over two thousand years ago to establish a standard of redemption and salvation whereby humanity may return to the arms of the living God (John 3:16). God did not deliver Christ to the world for Him to convict humanity, but that humanity, through Him may receive salvation (John 3:17, English Standard Version). Jesus chose twelve followers, later called disciples, to carry the message of deliverance and atonement from man’s fallen state and separation from his creator.

Recognizing the Marks of a Biblical Disciple

The disciples chosen by God were not perfect men, but they had a desire to learn, be trained, and become followers of Christ. There are distinct and basic characteristic marks of a biblical disciple. A biblical disciple is one who has been called by God. These marks separate the average disciple appointed by man from those who are called by God and are spiritually committed to their duties. A disciple should walk in the same path of delivering truths, and peace, among the people in a similar path Jesus traveled. Jesus modeled the role of a leader, teacher, and a trainer to His disciples. He spent a total of three years mentoring and counseling His disciples. Just saying “I am a disciple” does not make the person a biblical disciple. Young

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship: Readers Edition* (Lanham, MD: 1517 Media, 2015, xiii-xiv. ProQuest Ebook Central.

³ Ibid.

adults must be willing to count the cost and make the choice to follow Christ with the same intensity and desire as the early disciples followed Him. Choosing to follow Christ with the same gravitas as His disciples followed Him is a show of the love and devotion of today's disciple emanating from them as it did when Christ walked the earth. Table 1.1 gives a list of the traits of a biblical disciple.

Marks of a disciple	Scripture	Outcomes
A disciple is called.	Luke 5:1-7	They leave all behind to follow Him.
A disciple is a follower.	Luke 7:11	Their direction is already known.
A disciple knows Jesus' truths.	Luke 8:9-10	They know secrets of the kingdom,
A disciple is taught about Jesus.	Luke 6:20-49	They become knowledgeable.
A disciple serves all people.	Luke 9:14-17	They learn humility toward all.
A disciple is sent into the world.	Luke 10:2	They carry the Word with them.
A disciple witnesses to others.	Luke 10:23-24	More people will know Jesus.
A disciple confesses Jesus as Lord.	Luke 9:18-20	More people will be saved
A disciple denies himself	Luke 9:23-27	They lose all that Christ may gain all.
A disciple carries his own cross.	Luke 9:23-27	Jesus carries the load.
A disciple praises God.	Luke 19: 33-40	God is exalted
A disciple spends time with his master.	Luke 22:39-40	They learn how to model, emulate, and imitate Him.

Table 1.1

A disciple must be saved, obedient to God, and fully committed if they are going to be effective in carrying the message of the cross. That message is salvation, resurrection, and eternal life in God, through Jesus Christ. Perpetuation of the message of Christ in the premature

church in the New Testament was practiced during the early years of training young adults to receive knowledge about Jesus Christ.

John Goodrich, professor of Bible at Moody Bible College, and Mark Strauss university professor on the New Testament at Bethel Seminary, argue that the disciples of Jesus struggled to fully trust Jesus and to understand the reason God sent Him into the world. They identified with his desire to reach out to save humanity.⁴ Early followers of Christ were amazed and astonished at the words of wisdom evolving from His heart. His words of wisdom enlightened the people who followed Him. It gave them encouragement, strength, healing, and empowerment. Church leaders must model and imitate this message of unrequited love to young adults, so that they will remain faithful to Christ and the church they serve.⁵

The Purpose for the Great Commission

Jesus exemplified the messages of spiritual authority, humility, love, redemption, and salvation throughout the cities of Jerusalem, Galilee and beyond. His disciples, although they did not understand why He was sent by God, were willing to throw down their nets, receipt book, and other articles of their trades to follow Him. Young adults at Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church (GLMBC) need to see similar commitment in the leadership pertaining to the works of the Great Commission. The leadership needs a training guide that will give them the necessary tools to effectively teach biblical discipleship to themselves as well as to young adult members of the church. They need a guide that will demonstrate and model discipleship through examples, role play and memorization of key Scriptures. Such a guide will define discipleship and relate its definition to salvation, righteousness and atonement.

⁴ John K. Goodrich and Mark L. Strauss, *Following Jesus Christ: The New Testament Message of Discipleship for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2019), 13.

⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, xiii-xiv.

The word “disciple” is an invitation to follow Christ, it is found in the New Testament (Matt 9:14). The command they received on Jesus’ Ascension was a declaration to His disciples to go into the world and make disciples; baptize them in the name of the Godhead, teach them to observe all that He commanded them, and He promised He would always be with them to the end of the world (Matt 28:19-20, ESV). The Great Commission is a task Jesus assigned to His disciples to make disciples. The purpose for the church is to make disciples and perpetuate the cycle of evangelism in surrounding communities and throughout the world until Jesus comes again. The Great Commission is a command of action, vitality, and enthusiasm that was merged with an energetic spirit of vigor and emotional gravitas. This Great Commission is a directive for churches across the world to go, teach, baptize, and make disciples. The Great Commission is the guiding force that compels churches to leave the protective walls of their edifices and, declare, proclaim, defend, and evangelize to the world that Jesus Christ is alive.

The command uses an emphatic declaration emphasizing one word “all.” Christ says “all power, all nations and all things” (Matt 28: 18-20). The word “all” signifies authority, ultimate control and yet is a word that signifies everything, everyone and everybody. No other word has that much control over inclusiveness. The word “all” is what defines and separates discipleship from any other form of following. It means giving up material gains in this world to follow Christ. The Great Commission demands that the church sends disciples; people who are willing to give all, into the community; compelling those who do not know Him to learn of Him; to taste and see that He is good (Ps 34:8). The purpose of the Christian church is to make disciples and the purpose of this research project is to design a discipleship training guide to train and equip the leadership of Greater Love church to disciple young adults. The belief is that the retention of young adults will increase if young and old adults are taught the rudiments of biblical

discipleship, along with the opportunity to know Christ and allowed to openly practice their training in the church and surrounding community. Therefore, this chapter will introduce the background of discipleship and the reasons for developing a discipleship training guide. The guide will include the ministry context or surroundings of the environment in which this project seeks to answer the question concerning the problem of the exodus of young adults from GLMBC. It will investigate the purpose and how to correct the exit. The Basic assumptions of the research, definitions, limitation and delimitations will be defined, and finally the thesis statement will substantiate the problem and the purpose. Furthermore, the introduction sets the stage for the development of a Bible-based *Discipleship Training Guide* that emphasizes the ministry of Christ to determine its effects on retaining young adults at GLMBC.

Ministry Context

The exit of young adults from the church is a dilemma that is affecting every ministry in America and beyond this country. The basic question asked by church leaders, pastors and members alike is “Why are they leaving?” Jonathan Pokluda suggests that this problem is a product of misguided leadership failing to be “authentic and transparent” in their ministries.⁶ He further suggests that young adults expect their leaders to be open and honest about matters affecting their spiritual growth as well as the spiritual growth of their leaders.⁷ Therefore, young adults and millennials are looking for truth, spiritual disciplines, and guidance from their leaders to lead them to the acquisition of increased faith, service and a sense of belonging.⁸

⁶ Jonathan Pokluda, *Welcoming the Future Church: How to Reach, Teach, and Engage Young Adults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2020), 16.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Richard Dunn argues that young adults are looking for faith, someone to identify with, and a sense of belonging.⁹ This statement reflects the basic spiritual needs of all young people according to the surveys generated by Beth Seversen who argues that there is a young group of people who stand out in public because they have made commitments to Christ and are growing their faith. They are forming new relationships with Christ and walking in faith.¹⁰ Churches that reach out to young adults are preparing the way for their faith to take root and grow. This new found faith is the motivating factor that carries young people to church, causes them to grow in faith, reevaluate their lives and start learning the traits of Christ.¹¹ Faith leaders, because of their calling, need to have a vested interest in the church to grow the surrounding community so young people may imitate Christ.¹²

The exit of young adults from the churches prompted an era of declining and missing demography in the church.¹³ This decline has created problems in the strategic planning program at GLMBC. There are very few young adults in attendance to carry on the future operation and existence of the ministry. Furthermore, a significant number of the present older adult leadership lacks the necessary tools of discipleship to disciple the present generation of young adults. The church has hopes of maintaining the former standing of its parent church, First Corinth, in the

⁹ Richard R Dunn, and Jana L Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 17.

¹⁰ Beth Seversen, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults* (Downers: Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2020), 9, ProQuest Central.

¹¹ Ibid., 77.

¹² Katherine Marshall and Marisa Van Saanen, *Development and Faith: Where Mind, Heart, and Soul Work Together* (Herndon, VA: World Bank Publications, 2007), 106.

¹³ Douglas Jacobs, et al. "Adventist Millennials: Measuring Emerging Adults' Connection to Church," *Review of Religious Research* 61, no. 1 (2019): 39–56.

local Baptist Association, but at this stage, it is unable to do so until the membership has fully developed an understanding and application of biblical discipleship according to the life and ministry of Christ.

The Background of Greater Love Church

Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church grew out of the dissolution of First Corinth, its parent church some years after the death of its pastor, Rev. W. M. Cox. This researcher was the pastor's wife and assistant pastor. She was voted in as the new pastor of First Corinth Baptist immediately after the death of the former pastor. The church thrived for several years and made landmark accomplishments in the church community, but later dissolved due to a chronic illness of this researcher. Some years later, this researcher was miraculously healed. The remaining ten members of the former church decided to change the name of First Corinth to Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church because of the greater love of God in granting healing to this researcher's body.

GLMBC is approximately five years of age and is in Anderson, SC. Although its establishment is credited to the dissolution of an older church, GLMBC is still growing and learning the tools of survival in a community of megachurches which are attracting young adults in large numbers. After the dissolution of First Corinth, GLMBC experienced a decline in its young adult membership. The leadership attributed the decline to the fact that the old church did not have a discipleship format or a training program in effect where young adults could learn the tools of evangelism, how to share Jesus, to recognize their leadership responsibilities and began to implement directives to personally adopt the commands of the Commission (Matt 28:18-20). The church decided to set up directives to follow the instructions of the Great Commission that will teach the purpose, cause and doctrine for biblical discipleship in the Christian church to its

present old and young adult members and potential members entering the church through the new convert classes. The teaching of the Great Commission has become a general part of the constitution of GLMBC. The belief was that once young adults realize their duty to be spiritually bound to Jesus Christ, the church ministry, and its cultural ties, they will stay with the church. Training and teaching the ministry of Jesus Christ was the priority of the church.

GLMBC received its articles of incorporation in 2018. The mission of Greater Love is based upon Matthew 28: 18-19. The church has vowed to show love, and to welcome and embrace the practices of discipleship within the home, church, and the surrounding community. The core values of Greater love are based on growing the inner heart, mind and soul of the members through daily meditations in individual prayer, weekly and weekend devotion in corporate prayer, and to have an open heart for God and the people they communicate with. The core values of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church include

1. Love: We wear our love for all mankind on our hearts. The diagram of the red heart symbolizes our love for all mankind.
2. Communication: We strive to teach others the love of Christ and His unconditional love for all people, regardless of color, station in life or place of residence.
3. Stewardship: We desire to engage in the upkeep of God's house by faithfully contributing of our tithes and offerings toward the financial obligations of this building we have assessed ourselves to maintain.
4. Inclusive Community: We wish to share Christ with our neighbors, in adjoining homes, the local and communities.

5. Bible Study: We have opened our homes up to weekly Bible-study for anyone in the community who is searching for faith and the love of God.
6. Gatherings: Our gatherings are simple and inclusive where Christ is first and last in all our meetings and gatherings.

The composition of the church consists primarily of African-American members whose culture and family history is rooted and grounded in the rituals of collaborative oriented activities centered on love, faith, trust, commitment, fellowship, and family reunions. Its vision is based upon a mission church without walls, where the Holy Spirit moves its members to evangelize outside the church, to engage in the principles of discipleship, and lead unbelievers to Christ. Greater Love seeks to send its disciples into the community as God sent Jesus, and Jesus sent His disciples. Its mission is to go, teach, baptize and train present and future disciples to imitate and emulate the ministry of Jesus Christ. These traits are like tributaries of faith that flow into an abundance of respect and admiration toward the leadership of this small place of worship. The church is in the city suburbs and has multiplied from ten members who met in the pastor's home in 2018 to approximately one hundred and twenty-five devoted members today.

Demographics of Greater Love Church

The demographics of the church consist of 50 percent female members from thirteen to eighty-two to years of age. The male population consists of 37 percent of men from thirteen to sixty-three years of age. The remaining 13 percent of youth are under the age of twelve. Young adults are individuals between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine. GLMBC considers a combination of millennials and Gen Zers as young people working to accomplish the church ministries.

The culture of these members highly believes in unity and Christian education which is instrumental in shaping their future goals and aspirations. Approximately 95 percent of the congregants have some formal education from an associate degree to a doctorate. Others plan to graduate from middle and high school and will attend high school or college this year. The demography of the population ranges from youth to preteens, young adults, and senior citizens. An increase in these population does not prevent young adults from an intense desire to leave this “cradle of love” seeking something more inviting beyond these walls. A noticeable number of young adults from GLMBC have been attending local megachurches. Some have left the church, while a few have chosen to follow paths not associated with a church or Christian ministry. Yet, there are those who have not left the church, but remain faithful to their Christian heritage and responsibilities.

The symbol that best describes GLMBC is the red hearts embossed on announcements and other instruments used in and outside the church. The symbolism attracted to these items will always overflow with love for their friends and neighbors if essential future strategies are developed to keep and attract young adults in the church. These red hearts, which signify the greater love of the church is the object that links the members together as a unit. The routine practice of love, fellowship, Bible study, prayer meetings, singing Christian songs, family and church anniversaries, visiting the sick and feeding the hungry are practices that the congregation values most. The elements of praise and worship are deeply seated in the ancestral roots of the member’s history. Therefore, teaching Christ and passing the torch of discipleship to the younger generation is important for the survival of this church. These biblical rituals are engrained in the hearts and minds of the older generation. They expect to witness the change of command as it leaves the hands of the older leaders and is taken up by the younger adults.

The Impact of COVID-19 Greater Love Church

Interferences such as the unexpected challenges of the impact of COVID-19 virus shook the foundations of the church and created several changes in the organizational structure of the church. The doors of the church were shut for approximately a year. The COVID-19 pandemic taught the church a lot about unconditional love, forgiveness and letting go of frivolous conflicts that will destroy lives and the church community. According to Lamkin, “COVID-19 has shown the world that there should be cooperation between church communities to exhibit love, care, courage and hope to emulate the early church in their response to families in need.”¹⁴ This rebound of COVID-19 has created concerns in the GLMBC community.

Therefore, strategic plans will be included in the church’s bylaws for intervention and recovery tactics if a cataclysmic event like COVID-19 should occur again in the future. The layoff for businesses, corporations, municipalities and churches, crippled the ministry at GLMBC. Now, the atmosphere in the community is hesitant, withdrawn and weary of additional strands of COVID-19 that has placed a wet blanket on the young adult ministry at GLMBC and has become difficult to remove. The fear of the return of COVID-19 has caused some of the members and church leaders to override their duties to train and exhibit the traits and characteristics of discipleship to the members.

GLMBC lost several young adults during the transition period when municipalities, churches, and businesses were closed for several months. The church vowed to learn how to adapt to new challenges, differences, new programs, and is determined to overcome the divide and conquer forms of conflict that the enemy has used in the past to stifle GLMBC’s resolve.

¹⁴ Margaret Lamkin, “Faith, Hope, and Love in the Time of COVID,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 77, no. 3 (July 2023): 259–64.

Jesus emphasized the pitfalls of conflict and modeled how to deal with it by loving those who are haters and praying for those who are abusers (Luke 6:27-29, ESV). The church believes in modeling this verse in all event of evangelism. Evangelism will bridge the need of a sense of belonging experienced by young adults. An event called “The Word in the park” is a format GLMBC used for evangelism. This activity is a strategy to expose old and young adults to the stages of recruitment, evangelism, mentoring, witnessing, and sharing Jesus. Several young and older adults from the church who have recently joined will take part in future trainings. This event brought gratification to all participants because the individuals felt that they were needed and enjoyed sharing Jesus with the people living in the community.

Another activity that bridges the sense of belonging for the old and young is the Tuesday evening Bible study class. This class has brought gratification to young adults in the church and community who meet at this researcher’s house to connect the Bible to discipleship and the ministry of Jesus Christ. This researcher believes that these proactive activities that have prevented young adults from engaging in open dialogue with the homeless, witnessing and sharing Jesus will fill the void they have endured throughout these months of closure away from the public.

Description of the Social Characteristics of a Member

A practicing member of GLMBC is one who believes in the ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ. He/she is committed to the constitution and by-laws adopted by the church and believe that all members are disciples and should be trained in a similar manner Jesus trained His disciples. Training the old and young adults will enable them to observe, follow, and practice the Great Commission Christ left for His disciples: to go, teach, and make disciples. Previous young adults were slow to form relationship with older church members and did not feel comfortable

worshipping together with them. They felt no attraction or biblical relationship to the church. Some of them have discontinued their membership and have joined local churches in the community where they feel free to engage in electronic taught activities. The active members are loyal to the mission and core values of the church. They attend all church functions and are good stewards with their finances.

The social characteristics of a disciple at GLMBC will become one who exemplifies humility, prayer, and servanthood. He/she will illustrate leadership qualities of honesty, self-control and love for all people. These traits are indicative of a congregational and corporate style social structure directly connected with the ministry context of Jesus Christ. The members are bonded through family ties, friends and close neighbors living in the church community. This researcher's relationship with the group is that she is the senior pastor and co-founder of the church and has a monumental stake in arriving at solutions to prevent the exit of young adults from Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church. As pastor, she will continue to devote her life to working with the young and old adults in the church and the community.

The pastor desires to develop programs within the church and the community that will increase their capacity to grow and implement their spiritual gifts and professional skills within their church communities. Personal involvement is the general reason why the congregants are well versed in Christian education. Dedication to the pursuit of Christian education is the reason why there are a many members attending the church with college degrees.

The Need to Restore GLMBC to its Glory Days

There is an essential need to restore GLMBC to its previous state of praise, evangelism, service and worship before the COVID-19 pandemic created a void in the young adult membership. It is essential that the call to discipleship must continue to exist regardless of the

many struggles encountered by the church community. It is the belief of the members that GLMBC has a desire to answer the call of the church of the future and wants to train and equip its younger adults with the rudiments of discipleship so they will be ready to serve. Scholars like John D. Basie have indicated that the church is drastically changing its ministries toward a worldview belief of worship where the Bible will become obsolete in the lives of the church and young adults will no longer take an active part in leadership because they will not even be in the church.¹⁵ Therefore, GLMBC need to prepare itself for the times ahead by teaching and modeling love, humility, and faith among its young and old adults.

There is a call for the church to return to its glory days when the Spirit of God was ushered into the church; lives were changed, members' faith was increased, and they praised and worshipped God openly without fear of reprisal or opposition from the leadership. The church was cooperative and ready to involve itself in social events in the church and the community. The church, because of its social connections in the community, will readily defray the cost of this research project. GLMBC is committed to and will assist with all financial obligations. Several members own businesses that will faithfully contribute food, transportation, technical equipment and other commodities that attribute to regaining access to the young adult population. Hopefully the proactive research of a *Discipleship Training Guide* will provide solutions that will support the thesis statement and successfully stop the exit of young adults from leaving GLMBC in the future.

Problem Presented

The Discipleship Program at Greater Love Baptist Church is in dire need of a revival of renewed formation of faith and intellectual growth within its leaders and membership. The

¹⁵ John D. Basie, ed., *Know. Be. Live. A 360 Degree Approach to Discipleship in a Post-Christian Era* (New York, NY: Forefront Books, 2021), 7-8. ProQuest Ebook Central.

leadership is struggling to maintain the attendance of its young adult population because they lack the tools and training to disciple them. Therefore, the church leadership needs to understand the principles and definition of discipleship so its young adult population will understand their duties and responsibilities toward Jesus Christ, the leadership, and the church. Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church grew out of the dissolution of an older church that was very active in the local Baptist association. The former leadership was involved in the administrative segments of the State and National Baptist Associations and held an office in both. Very little attention was given to discipleship, evangelism, or proselytizing for new converts in the local community. As a result, the new leadership at Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church struggled with implementing a standard format for the implementation of discipleship in the church. The new leadership began to implement programs that attracted young adults, such as action-packed Bible study in the home and sharing Jesus in the neighborhood. The attendance of young adults began to steadily increase and they were involved in activities in the community and encouraged other unchurched young adults to join them at Greater Love for praise and worship services. Questions that needed immediate answers include “When, where, and how do we get young adults back on the scene, into the church and practicing evangelism in the community.” Several strategies and discussions have produced no plausible actions or results.

One common thread of agreement has developed from known facts associated with the old church is that it did not have a formal program of discipleship in practice where young adults could learn the purpose, rudiments and their responsibilities toward the church and the community. As a result, a small number of the leadership team at GLMBC where some of the young adults left, have become complacent and believe that times have changed and that young adults should look for greater opportunities beyond the church walls of Greater Love.

The practice of developing a *Discipleship Training Guide* is aligned with the problem of why scholarly authors have researched the exit of young adults from the local church.

There has not been an effective strategy to this day that has eliminated the problem of retention in churches across America. Some curricula programs on retention have worked for certain demographic groups in other countries abroad, but have failed to produce the same results in other demographic areas. Richard R. Dunn, senior pastor at Fellowship Evangelical Free Church in Knoxville, Tennessee and leader of a congregation consisting primarily of emerging adults, argues that emerging young adults are faced with several challenges in becoming effective disciples.

These challenges are disappointments and obstacles related to finances, personal relationships, and finding suitable employment. He suggests that young adults must recognize these challenges as gifts rather than threats to their spiritual development.¹⁶ The sample curricula visited by this researcher, though many were promising, pose more challenges than would be created by developing a guide strictly for the demography of the old and young adults presently at Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church.

Dereliction of Duty by the Leadership

The present young adults, through no dereliction of duty of their own, have been placed in a position where they are not qualified to teach other young people or evangelize and compel the lost to come to Christ. The leadership of the Church will have to admit to themselves their faults and set about correcting them. Admitting faults openly, especially those dealing with the leadership of the ministry of young people, is not always an elaborate process to confess; but if the ministry of teaching and training of young adults is to be effective, it must be done to gain

¹⁶ Dunn and Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults*: 117.

their trust. Lyle Dorsett, the Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, argues that young adults need Christian leaders who are honest, rooted and grounded in the Scriptures, mature, wise and devoted, to teach, train and disciple them.¹⁷ This is a pure definition and a biblical description of a Christian leader who train and disciple young adults. In other words, people who are placed over young adults should be righteous and truly committed to teaching and training those members in their charge to give them the proper spiritual instructions that will strengthen and grow their faith.

Equipping the Leadership in Disciplining Young Adults

Biblical discipleship training gives the church a reason to attract and develop action-filled leaders who will go forth, imitating the love of Christ, while also pointing unbelievers to His grace and mercy. Paul eloquently taught this principle to Timothy, while mentoring him from the stance of discipleship and said, “God breathed all Scripture that is profitable for teaching, for rebuke, for rectification, and for instruction in virtuousness, that the man of God may be complete and prepared for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17, ESV).

Training that is complete and equipped with spiritual disciplines and biblical directives is an essential need for young adults attending GLMBC. The practice of discipleship has become a constant need in the church and the community that was once served by the church. The leadership must create a discipleship tool that will touch all areas of Christian formation and the intellectual growth of the individual to increase their faith capacity. The present needs of these young adults at Greater Love are not addressed spiritually, emotionally, or mentally. Therefore, without proper training, young adults at Greater Love will not be able to fulfill their

¹⁷ Lyle W Dorsett and Ajith C. Fernando, *Fulfilling the Great Commission in the Twenty-First Century: Essays on Revival, Evangelism, and Discipleship in Honor of Dr. Robert E. Coleman* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2015), 177.

responsibilities toward the church, the community and to God. The leadership must be vigilant and persistent in their plight to perpetuate the Great Commission because they are responsible for ensuring that the torch of leadership is properly passed down to qualified disciples who have been trained according to the ministry of Jesus Christ when He trained His disciples. Several obstacles have prevented the leadership from performing their duties. The fear of the return of COVID-19 has caused some of the members and church leaders to override their duties to train and exhibit the traits and characteristics of discipleship to the church members. As a result, Gen Zers feel no attraction or biblical relationship to the church. Some of them have discontinued their membership and have joined other local churches in the community. The exodus of young adults from the church has placed the church in a difficult situation. Gen Zers who have remained are being taunted and recruited by individuals between the ages of eighteen to twenty-two, to join them at local megachurches.

The Traits of a Christian Leader

Therefore, the characteristics and traits of Church leaders should be church members who have been baptized and have confessed Christ as their Lord and Savior. They should believe in the Trinity, and walk in the manifold wisdom of God. They should live an exemplar life where others will want to emulate and follow them because they are imitators of Jesus Christ. Then, they are worthy to be a part of the leadership. Their character should be representatives of the following ten Scriptures of encouragement:

1. Love God with the heart and soul (Mark 12:30-31).
2. Ask in prayer, believing you will receive it and it will be yours (Mark 11:24).
3. Wait upon the Lord to renew your strength (Isa 40:31).
4. Be not dismayed, for God will strengthen and help you (Isa 41:10).

5. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God (Luke 18:27).
6. Do not grow weary while doing well, for in due season you shall reap if you do not lose heart (Gal 6:9).
7. Be anxious for nothing. Let your request be known to God through prayer, and supplication with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6).
8. God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7).
9. Humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up (Jas 4:10).
10. I must decrease so He may increase (John 3:30).

However, the leadership at GLMBC has been slack in modeling these traits because they lack the proper tools of discipleship such as Bible usage, individual prayer, evangelism, personal testimonies, fellowship, reciprocation, confession, corporate prayer, and active faith. These tools are essential for the work of kingdom building, retaining young adults, and growing the church to meet the basic spiritual necessities of its members and the surrounding community. Therefore, the problem is that GLMBC is struggling to retain young adults because the leadership lacks the necessary tools to train and disciple them.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action project is to develop a *Discipleship Training Guide* to equip the leadership of Greater Love to disciple young adults. The purpose is directly related to the problem through the ministry context for the following reasons: Reason number one is the resilience of GLMBC during trying times. The church has always weathered the storms. Reason number two is GLMBC has encountered changes in its amendments and constitution; therefore, the church is still standing. Reason number three is the flexibility of the recent coordination and

cooperation of its young adults with older adults. Number three is the change in the mindset of the leadership that will present an enduring challenge for the perpetuity of the church. Reason number four is the implementation of foundational principles and doctrines that emphasize the teachings and the ministry of Jesus Christ. The process will be manageable because both groups have meaningful goals and tasks that need to be merged to form a single focus toward meeting the unique needs of the church. The educational levels of all groups complement each other and allow for space to grow spiritually, mentally and emotionally, and finally, the willingness of young and old adults to work together is promising and will result in future progress for GLMBC. These attributes will bind and heal old wounds where the body may develop a model of discipleship that will reach out to others, declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Reasons for Developing a Discipleship Training Guide

The development of a *Discipleship Training Guide* will give church leaders who are in ministry training positions at GLMBC a reason to reassess their salvation, righteousness, and obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28: 18-19). It will allow them to search their hearts to determine if they have been faithful to the offices to which they have been called. They will have opportunities to reaffirm their commitment to imitate the love of Christ, while pointing unbelievers to His grace and mercy. Paul eloquently taught this principle to Timothy, while mentoring him from the stance of discipleship and said, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17, ESV). Training that is complete and equipped with spiritual disciplines and biblical directives is an essential need for old and young adults attending the church. A *Discipleship Training Guide* (DTG) at GLMBC is an essential strategy for ensuring that the foundational principle of the ministry of

Jesus Christ is perpetuated and that the theological doctrines and theoretical foundations adopted by the leadership and membership of the church will flow into the surrounding communities. Therefore, to ensure that the present needs of these young adults are met spiritually, mentally, and physically, the leadership must create a discipleship tool that is tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults. Biblical foundational training, commitment to God, self, other people, and the local community are basic elements that a discipleship training guide will instill in the journey and governance of the members of GLMBC. It will alleviate the problem and validate the purpose of the research.

The problem and purpose are entwined to be complimentary partners in arriving at sound theological and theoretical solutions for the growth and retention of young adults. Therefore, the solution to the problem suggests that the purpose for retaining young adults should be associated with the strategic training, modeling, and mentoring of Christian principles that a biblical discipleship training guide will produce. It should also provide the necessary tools to train the leadership on discipleship so they will be able to maintain the retention of young adults at GLMBC. Young adults will no longer feel the effects of the lack of a discipleship tool as a reason for a decrease in their faith. These strategies are the building blocks for the apprehension of biblical-based authority to supports the thesis statement.

Bill Hull, a prolific Christian writer and discipleship evangelist argues that “discipleship is not an event or a program; it is a way of life. It is not just for beginners, but was designed by Christ for the inclusion of all believers.”¹⁸ Therefore, the entire membership of the church needs to be trained on the purpose, rudiments, skills, and design of discipleship. No one is exempt from its teaching; lessons, guidance, or practical knowledge that will be gained from its exposure to

¹⁸ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship : On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO : NavPress, 2014), 15.

the members of the congregation.

The guide will include strategies for the implementation of discipleship tools tailored for the leadership segment of the church. Discipleship and evangelism were never stressed in the organizational structure of the old church, nor was it a requirement for a new convert entering the church body for the first time. Therefore, young adults at the church received very little exposure to discipleship and evangelism. They were taught the basics that most young children learn in their Sunday school classes.

The guide further suggests that the people who participate in the research should be members of the church for at least five years and should be aware of the times when the church had an ample number of young adults in membership. Participants should also recall the struggles the church encountered after the state implemented the lockdown of businesses, municipalities, and religious facilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher will randomly select two groups of volunteers from the church to engage in six to eight weeks of study sessions to test the viability and authenticity of the guide. The question presented because of the problem will be answered and a solution to the retention of young adults at Greater Love will hopefully be resolved through a complete analysis of the outcomes of the purpose.

The purpose of the research is aligned with the problem of why scholarly authors have researched the exit of young adults from the local church and have connected the exit to a problem associated with not knowing Christ. A few discipleship curricula examined by this researcher pose more challenges in the implementation process at GLMBC. These challenges would be eliminated if this researcher developed a strict guide for the old and young adults who are presently members at Greater Love Church to direct the retention level of young people. The retention level is a problem with Gen Zers and millennials because most of these demographic

groups are high school graduates, college seniors, and young people not fully stable or grounded in faith and spiritual disciplines. Furthermore, the general makeup of the body of the church consists of a constituency of old and young adults. These individuals need to hear that they are needed and loved in the church community. Church leaders need to model this love more often and do so openly without remorse, envy, or animosity toward the advantage of their youth. The leadership should take time during the morning services to recognize them for their Christianity and physical growth in the school, church, and community. GLMBC is concerned that these Gen Zers who have exited the church will penetrate the resolve of remaining Gen Zers who are not fully rooted and grounded in their faith and the directives of discipleship and the Great Commission. Abandoning Gen Zers have the propensity to sway the love and devotion of remaining Gen Zers away from the call of discipleship. If this matter is not contained, it will jeopardize the future, stability, and growth of this demographic group at GLMBC. Therefore, the plan of this researcher is to develop a biblical *Discipleship Training Guide* that will model and teach young adults already present in the church how to recognize their responsibilities and duties as a disciple. The development of a *Discipleship Training Guide* will place Greater Love in a position to adequately train its leadership and prepare them to be proficient disciples, ready to imitate the ministry, and marks of a biblical disciple.

Furthermore, they will demonstrate the authenticity of their faithful works and the authority given to them through the Holy Spirit that will place them in accordance with the Word of God. Now, they are in a biblical position to train and empower young adults with the same tools of discipleship that will enable them to know Jesus and imitate His ministry in the home, church, and community. Hopefully young adults will see how much they are needed to bridge the gap between accepting the challenge of discipleship in their own community rather than

exiting the scene and shirking their biblical responsibilities. Young adults recognize the deficit in their biblical and leadership training and are feeling the effects of a decrease in their faith from the lack of adequate training. They also realize that they missed so much in not knowing Jesus and experiencing His power to transform their lives. However, the problem is that Greater Love church is struggling to sustain young adults' attendance because the leadership lacks the tools and training to disciple them.

Basic Assumptions

This researcher makes four basic assumptions regarding this research project. The first assumption is that the data gathering research tools used in this project will show viable results for developing a discipleship training guide. The second assumption is the researcher believes that all participants are trustworthy, dependable, and reliable. They have not given this researcher any reason to question their integrity. Assumption number three is that the researcher assumes that participants are able to read and understand the meaning of gathering data tools. The final assumption of this researcher is that the leadership of GLMBC will attend all sessions of the research project where appropriate to ensure participants that they are supportive and are concerned about the welfare of their Christian journey and the apprehension of standards of biblical discipleship that will not only increase the faith of young adults attending the church, but will overflow into the surrounding church community. Jesus has always and forever will be the “common denominator” that will increase the faith of individuals whereby they will go outside the church walls; “uniting a culturally diverse community.”¹⁹

¹⁹ James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, eds., *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 18. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Definitions

This researcher included the following terms for this project to ensure clarity and basic understanding of their usage. Some terms may be used interchangeably to exemplify varying degrees of their usage in a sentence. The primary goal is to ensure that the general concept and context of the words are understood.

Bible-based Training Guide. A Bible-based training guide defined by Iriani, Natalia, Sulasmono, is a tool to guide students in developing strategies of seeing the realities of life and the world around them from a Christian perspective.²⁰ These types of guides present a true narrative of discipleship.

Christian Worldview. Anderson, Clark and Naugle define Christian worldview as an overarching story, statement, and belief that is common to all Christians at all times and all places regardless of religious affiliations, denominations, and diversity.²¹ According to Knoetz, discipleship takes on characteristics related to the gospel that aligns itself with practices that are not only found at the local church, but in religious institutions and ministries worldwide. He suggests that millennials are motivated by their personal relationships and human connections influenced by outside forces and group pressures.²²

²⁰ Ade Iriani, Maria Natalia and Bambang Suteng SULASMONO, "Development of Mentoring Supervision of Bible Based-Integration Curriculum at the Kalam Kudus Primary Christian School in Surakarta," *International Journal of Educational Research Review* 6, no. 1 (2021): 14-29.

²¹ Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 24. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²² Johannes J. Knoetze, "Who are the Disciples? Identity Perceptions about Millennials and the Church," *Verbum Et Ecclesia*, 38, no. 1 (2017): 1-7.

Anderson, Clark, and Naugle argue that Christian worldview centers on Jesus Christ, the God-man, born over two thousand years ago and all worldviews must include His existence when referring to Christian worldview.²³

Disciple. A disciple, for the sake of this research, is a person who is committed to serve God and follows the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ. He/she is devoted to the church, its mission statement and observes the ordinances of the church. The responsibility of every church is to “disciple its ministry.” This duty requires the church to determine who it wants to reach and develop the strategies it will need to nurture and retain that group.²⁴

Discipleship. Hays and Chery write that discipleship is the act of following Jesus and individuals modeling their lives after Him. It is not doctrinally led but reflects a deep desire for holiness coupled with a longing for personal authenticity, activism and enthusiasm.²⁵ If the church’s discipleship program is at a level of immaturity, then, the disciples will be on an immature level and will not be effective in perpetuating the message Christ left His disciples.²⁶

Evangelism. Earley and Wheeler say Evangelism is telling the good news of the rising of Jesus Christ from the grave.²⁷ Evangelism is effective because there is a story to tell. They further say that “It is like one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.”²⁸

²³ Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 42-43.

²⁴ James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 108. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁵ Andrew Hayes, Stephen Cherry, Eds., *The Meanings of Discipleship: Being Disciples Then and Now* (La Vergne, TN: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2021), 194. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁶ J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 3f. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁷ Dave, Earley, and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is* (Nashville, TNN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 56. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁸ Ibid.

Faith. Faith is the belief in something someone cannot see or touch.²⁹

Gen Zers. Generation Z, are individuals between the ages of 18 -29 who are entering domains of belief, value, economic, and work systems. They are tasked with developing religious beliefs and values independent from their parents.³⁰ Their exit from the church is a worldwide issue.

Millennials. Millennials, also known as Gen Y, were born between the years of 1981 and 1996. They are described as being resourceful, independent and maintaining a working lifestyle. Millennials, according to Scheling and Richter, tend not to accept facts and question facts and opinions that are obvious. They are independent in their behavior and believe in individualism.³¹ Millennials are good workers, have a sense of purpose, are socially responsible, ambitious, and prefer to communicate through text messages rather than face.³²

Perpetuation. Perpetuation is used in this research to exemplify a lasting policy for establishing discipleship in the local church. Anderson, states that the divine purpose of perpetuation, since the beginning of Genesis, is tied up with the protection, the promise, and the people of the promise.³³ Perpetuation is used in this research to indicate the longevity of the ministry of Jesus Christ and the precepts He handed down to His disciples. His disciples

²⁹ Michael Todd, (Pastor), *Crazy Faith: It's Only Crazy Until it Happens*. First ed (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2021), 14-15.

³⁰ Anthony B. Walker, "An Exploration of Family Factors Related to Emerging Adults' Religious Self-Identification," *Religions* 10, no. 3. (2019): 172.

³¹ Louisa Scheling and David Richter, "Generation Y: Do Millennials Need a Partner to be Happy," *Journal of Adolescence, London, England*, 90, no. 1 (2021): 23-31.

³² Dheeraj Sharma, *How to Recruit, Incentivize and Retain Millennials* (New Delhi, India: SAGE Publications India Pvt., Ltd., 2020), 6. ProQuest Ebook Central.

³³ John E. Anderson, *Jacob and the Divine Trickster: A Theology of Deception and YHWH's Fidelity to the Ancestral Promise in the Jacob Cycle* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 185. ProQuest Ebook Central.

reciprocated this form of discipleship to the Christian world. This term is used intermittingly with perpetuity and perpetual to reference degrees of perpetuation.

Retention. Retention, according to Megan Brown is related to the attendance rates of young adults who are engaged in a practice of regularly going to church or school. She believes that understanding why the retention rates of young adults attending church are declining will aid in finding a helpful solution to the problem.³⁴ Retention of Gen Zers is a worldwide problem.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this research project. The first constraint for this project is the time element. Time is essential in all aspects of research. Choosing appropriate days of the week where all participants will be available to attend sessions are necessary for the success and basic outcomes of the project. A second limitation is the time factor in which this investigator will be able to sort, analyze, and synthesize data. The time may be longer because this researcher will not use computer operated programs to determine codes, bits, and pieces of information that form categories or themes. This work will be assessed by hand.

Determining this information in this manner will give this researcher an in depth understanding of codes. It will eliminate a process of depending on software to determine the themes. Calculating these results will give this researcher ample knowledge of the research where she will feel connected to the results. Furthermore time is a measure of change over time which may be affected by the type of outcome derived from the research. Therefore, it allows the researcher to give an explanation if time constraints negatively impact the results of the research. Acknowledging the negative results allows this researcher to mention the call for

³⁴ Megan G. Brown, "Relationships Matter: The Impact of Relationships upon Emerging Adult Retention," *Christian Education Journal* 13, no. 1 (2016): 7-23.

future research in the results section of this paper. A third limitation is the possibility of an insufficient sampling size which may jeopardize the results of the research project.

Delimitations

Delimitations determine what parts of the research will not hold as much weight as other parts of the research study. The first delimitation is this research project will not include youth under age eighteen. The second delimitation will allow participants to use open-ended response type surveys and close-ended surveys for other parts of the research because of flexibility in usage. The third delimitation assumes that all data collection instruments are valid and aligned with the researcher's problem, purpose and thesis statement to resolve the retention rate and perpetuate discipleship at GLMBC.

Thesis Statement

Presently, GLMBC is struggling to sustain young adults' attendance because the leadership lacks the tools and training to disciple them. Therefore, the problem suggests that young adults left because they believed that they were not receiving spiritual food that would nourish them throughout the week or increase their satiability for future years while in membership at the church. These present young adults need biblical training and modeling that will increase their faith, in a similar method Christ taught His disciples.

Steven Kozak, the Executive Director of Awana YM, and a scholarly author of religious texts, argues that the greatest challenge for churches is implementing a strategy that will not only challenge, but increase the faith of young adults attending these churches. He asserts that church leaders believed that the "fear of challenging young adults to think about their faith would drive them away from Christ: therefore, they approached the challenge through memorizing and

locating Scriptures.”³⁵ This same approach of memorizing and locating Scriptures is used in churches today to introduce the life of Jesus to young adults.

Rev. Fr. Jeffery Kirby a Papal Missionary of Mercy, and the Pastor of Our Lady of Grace Parish in the Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina, does not agree with the same challenge to young adults. He argues that the “biggest challenge for young adults is returning to the purpose of prayer which is to develop a relationship with God.”³⁶ Therefore, the leadership must be biblically trained and have a relationship with God. The leadership at GLMBC recognizes their inadequacies and the lack of essential tools to properly train, attract, and retain young adults. They have resolved to equip themselves with the tools needed to stop the exodus by developing a *Discipleship Training Guide* that includes the necessary tools of discipleship tailored to the unique needs of the church. The *Discipleship Training Guide* will rejuvenate and increase the faith of old and young adults in the church. Reading the words of Christ, reliving His suffering and pain, and allowing the Holy Spirit to remove any impurities from their hearts will give them proof that God is alive. The enthusiasm emanating from them will flow into the church, homes, and the surrounding community. The implementation of a Bible-based *Discipleship Training Guide* that emphasizes the teachings of Christ will have a tremendous effect on the character and responsibilities of young and older adults.

They will personally know Jesus, the power in calling His name, and understand why Paul says, “It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20, ESV). They will understand and appreciate their duties to perpetuate discipleship in the church and will imitate

³⁵ Steven Kozak, *Beyond the Edge of the Water: Reclaiming Biblical Discipleship for a Rising Generation* (Ashland, OR: BMH Books, 2020), 79. ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁶ Rev. Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, *Lord Teach Us to Pray: A Guide to the Spiritual Life and Christian Discipleship* (Charlotte, NC: St. Benedict Press LLC, 2014), 83. ProQuest Ebook Central.

the life and ministry of Christ in their homes and their communities. Therefore, if the leadership is trained with discipleship tools tailored to the needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

Paul Moser argues that if an individual wants to know Christ, he must take a broader way, rather than a narrow way. The apostle Paul calls this broader way, “The most exceptional way”³⁷ (1 Cor 12:31) Paul clarifies “The most excellent way” by indicating that the most excellent way is one of the choicest ways, which is unselfish love.

³⁷ Paul Moser, *The Divine Goodness of Jesus: Impact and Response* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 16.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The framework for this research is derived from Christian-based doctrines that rest upon a solid foundation whose builder is Jesus Christ. The focus lies in locating the essential pillars of support that will define the problem and resolve the purpose within the frameworks of the theoretical and theological concepts of scholarly literature. The literature that is listed gives evidence of the substance of the problem. It suggests solutions that will resolve the basic question to validate and authenticate the thesis of the project proposal. This DMIN action research project will introduce primary evidence suggested by experts in their fields of study that will pose answers to the problem of when, where and how young adults will return to GLMBC, and will provide solutions for their retention through knowing Jesus Christ. This researcher will address the problem that Greater Love Missionary Baptist church is struggling to sustain young adults' attendance because the leadership lack the tools and training to disciple them.

Theological Foundations

The exit has caused the dismemberment of the young adult ministry and has created a deficit in the church's leadership and operational phases. The solution to the problem will be ascertained by introducing young and older adults to biblical training to increase their spiritual formation, intellectual growth, and faith through the application of a *Discipleship Training Guide*. Such a guide will teach them to know Christ and to follow the same mandate He gave His disciples. A discipleship training program will give young adults a reason to know and serve God through the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. When member learn to be bearers of the cross of Jesus Christ, they will learn to pick up their cross and face their struggles with Christ at their side. They will learn to take Christ's yoke upon them because His load is easy and the weight He carries is light (Matt 11:29-30).

Biblical disciples nourish their communities. They provide a source of nutrients that helps the inhabitants grow. Nourishing the community gives young adults a mandate to follow the message Paul gave the Ephesians, “The apostles and prophets are the foundation of the Christian church, but Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone” (Eph 2:20, ESV). Therefore, it is essential that young adults know Jesus and His position as the chief cornerstone in their lives. The most pressing difficulty encountered by members at GLMBC is that they do not know Jesus. Somewhere during the younger years of Sunday school training and adult Bible classes, they were not taught how to have a personal relationship with Christ.

Knowing Christ, the humility shown toward His enemies, and the sacrifices He made are character traits young and old adults need to know so they will become witnesses to nonbelievers. The application of a discipleship guide will model the importance of knowing Christ. It will show potential disciples at GLMBC the importance of serving a resurrected Christ who sacrificed His life so they may have a chance for eternal life. Exposing old and young adult members to biblical tools that are tailored for their unique needs will close a learning gap at GLMBC that has been open for a long time.

With the aid of a *Discipleship Training Guide*, potential disciples will be equipped to enter the church community and beyond to emulate the life and ministry of Christ. The fear, doubt and inconsistencies they once felt will no longer be a part of their vocabulary or enter their thoughts. Presumably they will be equipped to minister the Word to others, emulate and imitate the ministry of Jesus Christ, and be a soaring example to other young people in the community

Literature Review

Knowing Jesus

Jonathan Dodson, a pastor in Austin, Texas, and the founder of Gospel-Centered Discipleship, once said that “Discipleship is a lifetime of returning to the arms of God and waking up in Christ.”³⁸ Dodson, no doubt, had a personal connection with God to speak adamantly about his relationship of discipleship and how it relates to Christ. This connection and the works of the Spirit of God is what keeps pastors, leaders and disciples on track and capable of carrying out the commission that Christ commanded His disciples over two thousand years ago.

Developing a personal relationship is how Christians truly learn about the personal life and teachings of Christ. Michael Hardin argues that knowing Jesus is a direct connection to knowing God because God is Jesus and Jesus is God.³⁹ Christians cannot know Jesus unless they follow Him and imitate Him in their daily lives. Christians are given a choice when He asks them to follow Him. They must be sure of the call as Peter said, “We have left all behind to follow you (Matt 19:27 ESV). Peter’s statement is evident when Christ said, “Anyone wanting to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and come after me” (Matt 16:24 ESV). Therefore, knowing Jesus is no simple task. One must weigh the cost to follow Him and decide if He/she is willing, able, and ready to make the sacrifice. Making the right choice will require the individual to build a lasting relationship with Christ that includes trust, faith and love.

³⁸ Jonathan K Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship: Revised and Expanded* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 28. ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁹ Michael Hardin, *Knowing God? Consumer Christianity and the Gospel of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2020), 71.

Building relationships is the approach Christ used in training His disciples. The leadership's primary purpose in developing disciples who will be biblically committed to each other and the church is through relationships that include Christ. When Christ is invited into a relationship, He will bring God, the Father, and God, the Holy Spirit. The relationship will be holistic, sound, and lasting. All the biblical leaders who made a difference in the lives of their followers had a genuine relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Such a relationship will ensure that there is unity, love and respect for every person who is a part of the group of believers. This is the type of relationship Jesus built with His disciples while He walked the earth with them. He requires church leaders to develop the same relationship with the disciples in their church community regardless of race, culture or denomination.

Knowing Jesus is one of the basic requirements of discipleship. How can a disciple adequately defend Jesus Christ, when he/she does not have a personal relationship with Him? It is not an easy thing to attempt, even though a person may have ample literature to describe and discuss His lineage. Having a personal relationship with Christ is the best method of knowing Him. To know Him is to love Him.

Christopher Wright, an Anglican clergyman, and Old Testament scholar who is currently the International Ministries Director of Langham Partnership International, argues that “the history of the Old Testament makes a difference to know that it leads to Jesus and that He gives meaning to it.”⁴⁰ Knowing Jesus from the Old Testament gives the reader a vivid understanding of His place in the Bible from the beginning to his entrance in the New Testament. When young adults are taught how to bridge the connection between Jesus' mission in the Old and New Testaments, they will have a greater appreciation for His life, teachings and purpose for coming

⁴⁰ Christopher J. H Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 12. ProQuest Ebook Central.

into the world. They will desire to emulate and imitate the message He came to present to the world.

Identifying Jesus Christ in the Old and New Testaments

The Old Testament identifies the presence of Jesus Christ when God declared “Let us make man in our own image” (Gen 1:26, ESV). The “us” refer to God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament has a number of references to Christ that are confirmed in the New Testament. According to Ian Duguid, professor of Old Testament Studies at Westminster Theological Seminary, the entirety of the Old Testament is about Jesus Christ. He contends that Christ is on every page, every storyline and has appeared in physical and spiritual forms. He further discusses the view that Christ’s sufferings and the eternal glories that He will receive is shared throughout the pages of the Old Testament.⁴¹ The Old Testament contains numerous sources of prophecies and predictions concerning the death burial and resurrection of Christ (Zech 12:10; Ps 22:7-8; Isa 53:10). The Old Testament validates Jesus Christ’s presence in the New Testament, and the New Testament introduces Christ through the messages given by the four Gospels who separately present Christ in a different character.

Jesus Christ’s appearance in the New Testament uses several metaphors to say who he is. He says, “Unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24 ESV). He is called the light of the world (John 8:12). He is called “the Bread of Life” (John 6:35). Unless the leadership at Greater Love are able to say to young adults as Peter said, when identifying Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16 ESV), They will miss a great opportunity to help young adults find and grow a relationship with Christ that will change their lives forever. The Gospel of Matthew presents Christ through a lineage that spans forty-two

⁴¹ Iain Duguid, *Matthew-Luke, vol. 8, ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 100. ProQuest Ebook Central.

generations from Abraham to the Virgin Mary and His earthly father, Joseph. This lineage included kings, queens, prophets, common workers, and a woman of questionable character (Matt 1:1-17).

The Gospel of Mark presents Christ as a teacher, healer, a person of human characteristics and a savior (Mark 1:22-24; 8:22; 16:31; 10:35). Mark emphasizes the human qualities of Christ and His love and commitment to His disciples. The book wants the reader to visualize the mentorship and group arrangements of how Christ was able to effectively train His disciples through the method of teaching.

Helen Bond, a British Professor of Christian Origins and New Testament argues that Christ engaged in very little teaching in the first few chapters of Mark, but devoted much time to the elements of public teaching of parables and a discussion of purity (Mark 4:1-34; 7:1-33). He later converted to private teaching where they received instructions on the difficulties of being a disciple, the struggles, demands, and constant challenges required of a disciple.⁴² A disciple had to be efficient, a good listener, and willing to go anywhere and anytime the call came forth. They had to be ready to follow, no matter where the path carried them.

Sandra Huebenthal, Professor at the University of Passau in Germany argue that Christ taught His disciples the meaning of bread as it relates to the disciples leaving home unprepared, with no food during the feeding of the five thousand and the “unleavened bread” of the Pharisees, as connections to the themes of discipleship and following Christ.⁴³ The main lessons to be learned from these cases are obedience to the call and listening to sound instructions will

⁴² Helen K Bond, *The First Biography of Jesus: Genre and Meaning in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 151. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁴³ Sandra Huebenthal, *Reading Mark's Gospel as a Text from Collective Memory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 314. ProQuest Ebook Central.

place disciples in positions to be satisfied when filled with spiritual food and cautious when receiving words from the enemy

Luke's Gospel presents Christ arriving from the roots of Adam, the first man, and coming into the world through a virgin named Mary (Luke 1: 26-33). Luke shows the human side of Christ: a compassionate man, full of grace, love and humility. J.C. Ryle, former author, pastor and evangelical preacher, argued that the disciples were eyewitness to Christ's humanity and ministry. They could describe what they had seen, heard, and experienced by being in His presence. Therefore they had a first-hand advantage over the other followers of Christ. They ate with Him, formed focus groups with Him and took part in His ministering journeys.⁴⁴ These qualifications are exactly what today's disciples need to be doing in the church and communities with their church leadership.

Leadership plays an important role in assuring that the membership receives adequate training and teaching that will give them proper tools of discipleship to go, teach, and baptize. When the leadership at Greater Love is able to give young adults a definitive reason to follow and serve Christ, they will be obedient and heed the call to discipleship. Therefore, if the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

Age should not be the deciding factor for church leadership. Moses was in his eighties when God called him to lead His people out of Egypt (Exod 3). Abraham was ninety-nine years of age when God appeared to him (Gen17). Job says that wisdom belongs to the old in age and understanding is in longevity (Job 12:12). Jeremiah was called from the womb of his mother and started his ministry when he was in his early twenties (Jer 1:4-10). Joseph was a young man when

⁴⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Bible Commentary - the Gospel of Luke* (Balneário Rincão, BRA: Grupo Oxigênio Ltda-ME, 2015), 4. ProQuest Ebook Central.

God called him from the land of Egypt to change history (Gen 41:14-24). David was a young shepherd boy when God called him to serve (1 Sam 16). Age has no bearing on the task, position or job, the person called must be willing to serve.

Luke was keen on focusing on the leadership skills of the master teacher. Matthew Henry, former British Nonconformist minister and author, argued that Christ was very protective of His disciples: as any leader should be protective of their followers. Henry also concluded that because He called His disciples out of the world, He was very strict and austere to keep them away from the wiles of the world, lest they would exit His training and go back into the world.⁴⁵ The National Study of Youth and Religion, in its longitudinal study of millennials, concludes that in transitioning to emerging adulthood, Christian teenagers tended to decline much more in their practice of attending church than in their belief in the existence of God.⁴⁶ This statement suggests that churches across America have done well in defining the purpose and existence of God, but have done an ineffective job in training and showing its young adults the connection between the triune God and His relationship to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. As a result, several young adults do not know the identity of Jesus Christ; they fail to know Him as the Son of God, the savior of their lives, and the lover of their souls.

A preliminary search was initiated by this researcher to determine if there had been recent studies that determined the basic reason why young adults were leaving churches across America. The search found that Ron Bruner contends that the key factor that determines the success of young adults in the church is whether they are thriving or just surviving. The study noted that young people are uniquely influenced by the number of pastors, friends, and mentors

⁴⁵ Matthew Henry, *The Gospel of Luke - Complete Bible Commentary Verse by Verse* (Balneário Rincão, BRA: Grupo Oxigênio Ltda-ME, 2016), 140. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁴⁶ Nel, and Moser, "The Connection between Youth Ministry's Division): 1-8.

who will invest time and energy into their spiritual maturity.⁴⁷ The evidence that supports Brunner's assertion is based on the premise that some form of spiritual training must take place for young adults to feel adequate enough to share their intimate feelings in a similar manner as the duties of discipleship would provide. He also argues that the basic gap in the retention of young adults in the church is that the majority do not know Jesus because they have never had a personal relationship with Him. He supports this assertion with Scripture by recounting the friends and peers surrounding a person will produce positive or negative characters (Rom 7:21-24). The relationship gap has infiltrated the intellectual and spiritual capacity of young and old adults in churches across America.

Greg Ogden, famed Christian writer and former pastor, argues that when Jesus gave the command to His disciples to go and make disciples, He spoke the mission statement for the church (Matt 28:19).⁴⁸ The mission statement is a perpetual expression, lasting for as long as the church survives or is amended in the constitution by its membership. Discipleship, instituted through the ministry of Jesus Christ, was designed to last forever because it lays the foundation for the operation and delivery of the Christian ministry and moral values planted by Jesus Christ and His disciples. Discipleship was designed to be perpetual: a continual process of pointing the lost to the cross of Jesus. This problem is not only basic for typical young people in general, but is also beneficial for young adults with Christian backgrounds who are leaving the church and are not returning to their home churches.

⁴⁷ Ron Bruner and Dudley Chancey, *Owning Faith: Reimagining the Role of Church and Family in the Faith Journey of Teenagers* (Chicago, IL: Leafwood Publishers, 2017), 139. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁴⁸ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*., 6.

Wright argues that “the history of the Old Testament makes a difference to know that it leads to Jesus and that He gives meaning to it.”⁴⁹ Knowing Jesus from the Old Testament gives the reader a vivid understanding of His place in the Bible from the beginning to his entrance in the New Testament. When young adults are taught how to bridge the connection between Jesus’ mission in the Old and New Testaments, they will have a greater appreciation for His life, teachings and purpose for coming into the world. They will desire to emulate and imitate the message He came to present to the world. The vision and mission statements clarifies the responsibilities and duties of all members of the church, but the members still need the training elements of discipleship to fully understand the identity of Jesus Christ.

Young adults need real life lessons on following the precepts Christ taught His disciples and the surrounding community served by His disciples. Young adults experiencing the love, humility, and authority Jesus gave to His disciples can never be underestimated or oversimplified by mere reading. A Bible-based *Discipleship Training Guide* will give young adults ample life experiences in spiritual disciplines, and faith formation. Nel and Moser argue that there are methodological factors working against established guidelines to develop discipleship programs to train and retain young adults.⁵⁰

A general study of scholarly literature that identifies with the problem at GLMBC presents compelling evidence and substantiated truths as to why young people should build a personal relationship with Christ and work diligently in their home church to perfect the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They suggest that similar problems exist in every mission church across America, regardless of denominations or religious affiliations. McFarland and Jimenez argue that

⁴⁹ Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 12.

⁵⁰ Nel, and Moser, “The Connection between Youth Ministry’s Divisions: 1-8.

the problem of young adults leaving the church is a problem everywhere. They say “young adults who left their churches did not trade it in for another religion; they left because of dissatisfaction with Christianity, doubts, skepticism, and hypocrisy observed in the leadership.”⁵¹

Young adults are leaving their church in search for reasons that cannot be resolved. The problem is both local and worldwide. The problem has reached this researcher’s church. GLMBC is struggling to sustain young adults' attendance because the leadership lacks the tools and training to disciple them. This decline has attributed to the closing of a number of local churches. Young adults are going in several directions: pursuing employment in the secular world, searching for existence and contentment, gathering at megachurches only to become puppets and followers of established leaders, etc. They would rather settle for false hope than forge leadership paths in their own culturally related and generational churches.

These reasons are mounting in the scholarly texts that this researcher has read, but no text has a stable solution that will stop the exit of these young adults from their home churches. The young adults at Greater Love did not sit down with the leadership to discuss any problems they may have encountered. They left without any inclination of dissatisfaction. Roger C.S. Erdvig, Qualitative Research Methodologist at Liberty University and Senior Director of Worldview Education, at Manitou Springs Colorado, states that emerging adulthood is a worldwide transition period where youth are experiencing changes in their physical, mental, and spiritual capacities. Erdvig further states that these issues are causing dramatic changes in the retention rate of young adults in churches across America.⁵² This strand of exit crosses all color and cultural lines. No church or demographic group is exempt from the damage that is felt with

⁵¹ McFarland and Jimenez, *Abandoned Faith: Why Millennials Are Walking Away and How You Can Lead Them Home* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family Publishing, 2017), 44. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵² Roger C. S Erdvig, “A Model for Biblical Worldview Development in Evangelical Christian Emerging Adults,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 29, no. 3 (2020): 285–306.

the loss of young adults from the leadership and Christian ministry in their churches. This exit is felt in homes, industries, and every institutional network where the imprints of young adults once made an impact. Greater Love realizes the errors that were made with young adults formerly attending the church and are anxious to correct them.

According to DeVries and Pointer, some churches have youth ministers whose duty is to train, mentor, and teach young adults to step into leadership positions when they have been duly trained, but so many young adult ministers are facing dissatisfaction with the leadership because “they are giving false excuses for why the youth ministry should not be funded.”⁵³ As a result, a number of churches have dismissed the young adult ministry in their churches and young adults have stopped attending their home church. The Board of Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church argues that the primary role of the leadership of any church is building relationships and leading by examples. The essential way people build relationship with others is “through the love of Christ.”⁵⁴

Churches, whose attendance is predominately black, have seen a momentous decline in the membership of their young adult population. Previously, before multicultural churches became prominent, young black adults were attached to their churches by a deep sense of knowing Jesus; this knowledge was engrained in the fiber of the historic roots of their churches. These ties were securely attached to the ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ that flowed from the churches into the homes and the community. Biblical training, teaching, and discipleship were expected because the churches operated as a unit. They were a village where everyone

⁵³ Mark DeVries and Scott Pontier, *Sustainable Young Adult Ministry: Making It Work, Making It Last* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 84-85. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵⁴ Board of Discipleship, *Guidelines Ministries with Young People: Empower Youth and Young Adults in Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), 8. ProQuest Ebook Central.

mattered and all the people came together to lift one individual who pledged to follow Christ.

Henry Louise Gates, Emmy and Peabody Award-winner, filmmaker, literary scholar and cultural critic, argues that the black church is the source of black identity today and functions on several levels as a “spiritual center, a place of worship, a social center and a cultural repository.”⁵⁵ The black church has an empowering effect upon every chapter in the life of the story of every Afro-American raised up and brought to Christ behind its doors. William P. Cooper, former author and researcher, and Rahul Mitra, associate professor of communications at Wayne State University, combined their efforts to engage in research involving the gap associated with “religious de-conversion.” They approached the gap through a communicative lens centered on the exodus of Afro-American Youth from the local church. They concluded that Afro-American young adults are the most prolific demographic group when it pertains to religion. They found that religion was important to 75 percent of them in comparison to 45 percent of white and 59 percent of Hispanic young adults. The studies also revealed that some black megachurches have lost their identities and gravitated toward wealth instead of saving souls.

These churches associate themselves with their megachurch counterparts, while remaining local black churches communicate through training, mentoring, and developing relationships in knowing Jesus that are lasting. They support their own when times are tough. These skills of life and sustainability cannot be learned overnight. They have to be engrained within the nature and culture of a people. Such sustainability, ingrown faith and love for Christ are the ingredients that cause young people to stay and fight through the problems and resolve solutions together. The questions this researcher seeks to answer within these texts are, “Why did

⁵⁵ Henry Louis Gates, *The Black Church : This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2021), 24-25.

young adults leave GLMBC” and “What will stop them from leaving in the future?”

Naomi Riley, an American conservative commentator and author argues that “young adults will not simply keep coming to church,” they have other alternatives and are pursuing them.⁵⁶ This view is received differently by Richardson and Stetzer argue that although 66 percent of young adults stopped attending church when they were ages eighteen to twenty – two, one-third of them returned to regular church attendance at the ages of twenty – three and thirty. The loss was 46 percent “This loss means that it will require more evangelism and commitment to return this loss to the church.”⁵⁷

John Littleton, retired priest in the Diocese of Adelaide, argues that “growth in discipleship is a primary section in the Vision Statement of the 2019 – 2022 guidelines for the Anglican church.”⁵⁸ Littleton established a discipleship program in the vision statement of his church to perpetuate the ministry of Jesus Christ. Discipleship has become an important segment of the foundational structure of the constitution of a number of churches. Establishing discipleship principles early in the vision and mission of the church clarifies the responsibilities and duties of all members of the church; but the members still need the training elements of discipleship to fully understand who Jesus truly is. Young adults need real life lessons on following the precepts Christ taught His disciples and the surrounding communities served by His followers. Young adults experiencing the love, humility, and authority Jesus gave to His disciples can never be underestimated or oversimplified by mere reading. A Bible-based

⁵⁶ Naomi Schaefer Riley, *Got Religion? : How Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues Can Bring Young People Back* (New Brunswick, NJ: Templeton Press, 2014), 9. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵⁷ Rick Richardson, *You Found Me: New Research on How Unchurched Nones, Millennials, and Irreligious Are Surprisingly Open to Christian Faith* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 80. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵⁸ John Littleton, "The People of God, Discipleship and Ministry in the Anglican Church Today and Tomorrow," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 21, no. 1 (2023): 3-20.

Discipleship Training Guide will give young adults ample life experiences in spiritual disciplines, and faith formation. Nel and Moser argue that there are methodological factors working against established guidelines to develop discipleship programs to train and retain young adults.⁵⁹ Therefore, the establishment of a discipleship program has been in existence for some time in several small isolated churches and has just recently been revised in a number of large Bible-based churches led by Christ-oriented pastors to ensure the perpetuity of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Institute and Director of the American National Family Life Survey Center argues that working schedules and habits of parents of millennials and Generation Z offspring prevented them from carrying out their parental duties, which accounted for 38 percent to 46 percent of the exit.⁶⁰ The notion of Gen Zers leaving the church for other adventures presents somewhat of a dilemma. This dilemma heightens reasons other than working schedules and inappropriate habits of parents that caused young adults to exit the church.

Recognizing the Exit

Tracey Lamont, Assistant Professor of Religious Education at Loyola has an entirely different approach not envisioned by other authors. Lamont argues that ministers want to change the name of their program rather than the worldview method of reaching young adults.⁶¹

Beth Seversen, Associate Professor and Director of Christian Ministries and Director of the Center of Practical Theology at North Park University, argues that young adults are the first ones to recognize that something is missing at the church that they are attending. They are ready

⁵⁹ Nel, and Moser, "The Connection between Youth ministry's Division: 1-8.

⁶⁰ Daniel A. Cox, "Generation Z and the Future of Faith in America." American Enterprise Institute (2022), <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/generation-z-future-of-faith/>.

⁶¹ Tracey Lamont, "Ministry with Young Adults: Toward a New Ecclesiological Imagination." *Religions* 11, no. 11 (November 2020): 1–10.

to leave the church when they are void of spiritual growth.⁶² They are aware whether the church has an inviting atmosphere, if they are given chances to grow in faith, and whether or not they are encouraged to participate in leadership activities.

Sharon Ketcham, Professor of Theology and Christian Ministries at Gordon College, argues that struggling churches and young people need each other and young adults should think twice before exiting the church.⁶³ Ketcham makes an excellent point. Apparently, pastors and church leaders have not remained alert to observe any changes in the attitudes and dispositions of the young adult population. When the leadership fails to recognize a problem affecting the growth of this population in the church, this population will confront the issue themselves through dialogue with the leadership or make a silent exit. Such is the case at GLMBC. Some Gen Zers, influenced by former young adult members, recognized that the upbeat services experienced at megachurches were not happening at GLMBC, so they left to go where the services were “music to their ears.” Recognizing the exit of young adults is a national issue.

Leadership in some churches is more concerned about replacing the growing number of vacancies they see in the pews on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings than they are for the causes of the vacancies. Robert Drov Dahl retired Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education and the School of Theology at Pacific Northwest University, and Jeffrey Keuss, Professor of Christian Ministry at Pacific Northwest University, take a different approach. They argue that young adults feel that they are locked in between the processes that occur naturally in life and making decisions about their spirituality.⁶⁴ This is one of the basic reasons some of the young

⁶² Seversen, *Not Done Yet*: 159-160.

⁶³ Sharon Galgay Ketcham, *Reciprocal Church: Becoming a Community Where Faith Flourishes Beyond High School* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 170. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁴ Robert Drov Dahl and Jeffrey Keuss, "Emerging Adults and Christian Faith: The Faith Experience of Emerging Adults in the Pacific Northwest," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (2020): 130-144.

adults have left GLMBC. They are conflicted with growing up and facing changes in life that they are not familiar with. Then, there is the issue of financial responsibilities which were previously taken care of by their parents or guardians.

Young adults are surrounded by several choices that can be overwhelming. Some choices are not related to Christianity or living righteously, but the time will come when God will take control of a young person's life and decisions must be made. That's why young adults, should have someone praying for them to make the right choice concerning giving their lives to Christ. Once the right choice is made, the distance to discipleship is not far away. It is just a matter of confessing Christ as Lord and Savior and agreeing to follow in His precepts, graciously loving others unconditionally, showing humility and exercising service to God by serving others. These standards are the cost of discipleship: giving up all to follow Christ.

Furthermore, recognizing the exit is a process of communication that must begin early in the foundational structure of the church. Possibly there was a lack of communication in reaching out to young adults in the church community. Perhaps miscommunications caused by misguided and misleading instructions attributed to young adults recognizing the exit. Therefore, the selection of a proactive Bible-based discipleship training guide at GLMBC must include communication as one of its primary skills of apprehension and methods of delivery. Active forms of communications must apply to the leadership, youth director, director of all ministries and the membership. The delivery, apprehension, and application of communicative skills will enhance the instructional approach of training members at GLMBC to be observant, dutiful, faithful, and obedient disciples; ready to imitate follow, and deliver the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Jacob Dunlow, Instructor, and Dissertation Chair at Liberty University, asserts that few church leaders are concerned with ways to train and grow disciples to retain young adults in their

churches.⁶⁵ Leaders of these churches fail to recognize the exit. The study of present literature indicates that Gen Zers and millennials are the groups most affected by the exit. Millennials are a group of young people who profess to be nonreligious, but claim spirituality in their belief and love for mankind. They do not attend church or spiritual activities, but freely discuss their knowledge of a loving God.⁶⁶ Millennials, regardless of cultural affiliations, have a common trend in all churches. They tend to be the pacesetters for setting the tone in which direction the young adult body will vacillate. Church leaders, who refuse to notice the absence of youth in their churches, fail to comprehend that they are placing the future existence of their church in jeopardy. These leaders will one day look up and see that all the pews where their young adult population once occupied are now vacant. Church leaders must show an overall interest in the direction their church is heading and implement Bible-based strategies that will include discipleship and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

A remedy for this exit is getting church leaders to change their focus from financial gains to spiritual gains in faith, love and fellowship to ensure the future of their church and the perpetuation of the Gospel the disciples initiated. Recognizing the exit requires a leadership that stays on guard to detect any changes in the order of the dispensation of religious doctrines and practices. Carefully observing how Christ handled conflicts, disagreements, and disobedient behavior will decrease any form of disruption and distractions that may arise in the church.

The duty of the leadership is to assure the membership that the spiritual and business matters of the church are done in decency, order and transparency. When members know that the leadership leads with authority and convictions received from following Christ, they will have a

⁶⁵ Jacob Dunlow, "Disciples of All Nations: The Challenge of Nurturing Faith in Multi-Ethnic Congregations," *Christian Education Journal* 14, no. 2 (Fall, 2017): 285-307.

⁶⁶ Sarah Cunningham, *Beyond the Broken Church: How to Leave Church Problems Behind without Leaving the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 116-117.

faithful desire to work in the church. They will give freely of their tithes, offerings, and time to ensure that the operational expenses of the church are met. Every member is committed to the spiritual and intellectual growth of the church and wants to see the church grow and advance spiritually. Their belief is based on serving a God who cares about their faith and the physical needs of every member in the church.

Estep and Kim argue that “the propensity for faith development is a part of every human’s genetic code.” They coined it a “generic human phenomenon and a genetic consequence of the universal burden of finding or making meaning.”⁶⁷ Therefore, the predisposition for the faith of participants involved in testing the *Discipleship Training Guide* will increase as they become involved in faith based activities that will test, stretch and even cause them to doubt their faith. The Scriptures describe faith as the confidence of things hoped for and an assurance of what individuals do not see (Heb1:11, New International Version). Jesus tells His disciples they can receive anything they ask if they have faith (Matt 21:22, ESV).

The leadership at GLMBC must increase their faith so they will be able to lead a group of young adults who demands a new form of guidance, teaching, and modeling of spiritual disciplines that will strengthen their resolve to follow Christ. They desperately need leadership that is consistent and equipped with the tools of discipleship tailored to meet the needs of the church and the surrounding community. Young adults are fully aware of deficiencies in the structure of the leadership of the church. Their desire, according to the Board of Discipleship of the Methodists Church, “is to be taught and trained by leaders who have walked in their shoes, have experienced their struggles, wrestled with indecisions, are good listeners, and committed to the development of the spiritual needs.”⁶⁸ Young adults at GLMBC, who are transparent in their

⁶⁷ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 23.

⁶⁸ Board of Discipleship, *Guidelines Ministries with Young People*: 31.

intellectual formation and spiritual capacities, believe that this is the only way to resolve the problems they have to deal with on a weekly scale.

The leadership at Greater love will include prayer, Scriptures, and testimonials of faith journeys in all events that occur in the church ministries. They have discovered that sharing through prayer, Scriptures on love, obedience, and peace will increase the faith of young and old participants in the church. Allowing young adults to have a voice in the planning and developmental stages of the programs presented to the membership will enhance the communicative skills of leadership and ministries at GLMBC. Prayer is the key that will unlock many doors that have been difficult to open on their own accord. Recognizing the need for prayer in the lives of young and old adults will become an essential goal at Greater Love. Terry Linhart, an author, speaker, consultant, and professor of Christian ministries at Bethel College in South Bend, Indiana, argues that prayer should be incorporated in developing any ministry in a church for the results of desired outcomes and the strategies that will be used to produce them.⁶⁹

Training Young Adults in Spiritual Disciplines

Archbishop Avery Taushev, the former Abbot of The Holy Trinity Seminary in New York, argues that “parents should train their children just as they were trained in the early church when they practiced the Ten Commandments based on the laws of Moses, and further believed that training young adults has always been a primary issue in a number of churches who fail to observe the Scriptures.”⁷⁰ John E. Goldingay, David Allan Hubbard’s Professor Emeritus of the Old Testament in the School of Theology of Fuller Theological Seminary in California, invokes the Scriptures as a point of validation and reference to biblical training as a teaching tool for

⁶⁹ Terry, Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 120. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁷⁰ Avery Taushev, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament: Complete Three Volume Set* (Chicago, IL: Holy Trinity Publications, 2021), 553. ProQuest Ebook Central.

learning the basic standards of faith, service and spiritual growth observed in discipleship for all people (2 Tim 3:15-16).⁷¹

Training allows a person to learn and understand vital guidelines and responsibilities of their roles and duties in the church. It will give young adults valid biblical reasons for the expectations that they will be inheritors and torch carriers of the leadership in the church when the elders are not able to perform their duties. It will give them justification for the reasons they should perpetuate the same message that Christ gave his disciples (Matt 28: 19). If all Gen Zers and millennials at GLMBC were strong in spiritual disciplines, they could ward off the adverse approaches of young adults who have left the church, but characteristics such as wavering faith, untested commitments, fear and anxiety have prevented that from happening.

Sophia Steibel, Professor of Christian Education Emerita at Hannibal-LaGrange University, Hannibal, MO., argues that training allows the body to grow spiritually through faith, prayer, and meditation.⁷² Spiritual disciplines are not taught like physical training. The person is the teacher, but the Holy Spirit is the facilitator. Therefore, teachers, who will train young adults, must have a spiritual relationship with God that is genuine and transparent. Catherine Wright, an Interdisciplinary Christian Ecotheologian at Wingate University, argues that people, who want to follow Jesus, imitate Him and absorb His Spirituality. “They must know how to pray”⁷³. Young adults must be trained to know that prayer is powerful and that prayer is a gateway for communicating with God. Brian Tabb, Academic Dean and Professor of Biblical Studies at

⁷¹ John Goldingay and Brian J. Tabb, *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament Genre, Authorial Intent, and the Nature of Scripture*, Edited by Brian J. Tabb (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 52. ProQuest Central.

⁷² Sophia Steibel and Martha S. Bergen, “The Body: Discipleship of our Physicality,” *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 1 (2019): 95-111.

⁷³ Catherine Wright, "The Power of Example: Following Jesus on the Path of Spirituality in Luke-Acts," *Religions* 14, no. 2 (2023): 161.

Bethlehem College and Seminary expounds upon the hostile threats Peter and John encountered before the Jewish Council (Acts 4:25-28 ESV). He exemplifies the power of prayer by describing the prayers of believers on the outside of the council who unite in prayer to save Peter and John. Tabb writes that the “believers respond to suffering by an exemplary prayer shaped by the Scriptures.”⁷⁴

Kathy Hoppe, Assistant Professor of Counseling, Family Therapist, and author, argues that “the best training comes through supervision and modeling” of basic concepts and skills.⁷⁵ This statement supports the need to train young and old adults about discipleship. This technique will be utilized in this researcher’s project because supervision and modeling are strategies Jesus and His disciples used to train and teach their followers. Mentoring allows for assurances that a particular skill or message will be performed, while modeling gives the individual a vivid picture of what is to be learned. This researcher realizes that more emphasis was placed on the message at the old church rather than the transference of unified faith and understanding the life and ministry of Christ. In essence, this researcher is willing to suggest that some of the same programs and leadership at the old church infiltrated into GLMBC. The old leadership mentality was not quick to respond to the flight of young adults leaving the church or appropriately respond to the lack of discipleship tools tailored to their needs to disciple them.

If the church had recognized this flight of young adults earlier, the influence and bullying would not have affected young adults at the church. The leadership would have provided a defense of debatable theological and theoretical pointers for the young adults who left the church. This literature review has given this researcher new strategies for closing the exit to the

⁷⁴ Brian J Tabb, *After Emmaus: How the Church Fulfills the Mission of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 74-75. ProQuest Central.

⁷⁵ Kathy Hoppe and Jeff Hoppe, *Discovery Teaching Like Jesus, Engaging Adult Learners* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 16. ProQuest Central.

church door and developing tools of discipleship for the old and young adults.

Tony Beard, a campus minister in Pennsylvania and writer for Gospel-Centered Discipleship and Campus Ministry Today, agrees with this researcher's views that church leaders are failing the young adults in their churches. Beard argues that pastors and church leaders are losing this generation of young adults while they sit idly by "watching it all unfold."⁷⁶ Beard sees the problem and recognizes the reason for the exit and why churches are not training their youth in spiritual disciplines. Many of the strategies, methodologies and practices Beard suggests in his book are good examples of strengthening procedures such as mentoring, modeling concepts, communicating ideas, and practices for training young adults in the church and the community. Cory Seibel, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Edmonton, Alberta, an online tutor for Ridley College in Australia, argues that there is a crisis due to the loss of grounds of Christianity in America. They claim that this loss is due to a high retention rate of young adults that is causing them to exit the churches at astounding rates. This exodus is creating concern where the mainline churches are struggling to pass on its message to the next generation of young adults.⁷⁷ Therefore, activating the perpetuity of the foundational structure of the church is a struggle for all protestant churches across the globe.

This struggle will continue if church leaders refuse to focus on the real problem suppressing the retention of young adults. The problem at GLMBC and other similar churches is that they are struggling to maintain the attendance of young adults because the leadership lacks the tools and training to disciple them. Preston Sprinkle, a biblical scholar, speaker, and a New

⁷⁶ Tony Beard, *Let No One Despise You: Emerging Christians in a Post-Christian Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), ix. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁷⁷ Cory Seibel, ed., *The Generative Church: Global Conversations about Investing in Emerging Generations*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 156. ProQuest Ebook Central.

York Times bestselling author, who's written more than a dozen books, argue that church leaders are teaching discipleship without including the basic tool: the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the gospel that makes disciples and institutes discipleship.⁷⁸

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the central tool needed to effectively teach, model, mentor and train individuals to become effective biblical disciples. Knowing and applying these tools will increase the faith, service, and other spiritual disciplines of young and old adults in the church. Paul was adamant in instructing Timothy about spiritual disciplines. Paul believed that Timothy could legitimize his youth with older members in the church he pastored by modeling spiritual disciplines such as love, faith, and purity. Once the elders saw his dedication, and love for Christ and others, they would listen and follow his teachings and the instructions Paul taught and trained him to apply in his ministry. Paul suggested that he study the Word and immerse himself in the Scriptures, and soon the people would see his works, and he too would begin to recognize the progress he is making with the people in the church and the local community (1 Tim 4: 11-16).

Jonathan Pokluda, lead pastor of Harris Creek Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, and former leader of The Porch, where he saw the ministry grow from 150 to more than 7,000 young adults, argues that young adults have the propensity to persuade people in authority to change their minds about decisions previously made and have a unique talent to make a difference in their surroundings, or church community. When they are given the opportunities to show their potentials to serve and support a humanitarian cause, they will perform better than expected with

⁷⁸ Preston Sprinkle, *Go: Returning Discipleship to the Front Lines of Faith* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2016), 29. ProQuest Ebook Central.

the “strong backing of the church.”⁷⁹ The action of persuasion takes courage and stamina to stand up with Christian authority and make a difference in the company of old and young adults. When young adults know Christ and are guided by His precepts, they will grow enough faith to trust the leadership, and will serve the church wholeheartedly.

Linhart, argues that when the leadership of a church decides to implement cooperative learning procedures in their discipleship training programs; including working to identify teachers, who are well-trained and familiar with the stages of growth and intellectual development in individuals; young adults will gain trust in the leadership and will work wholeheartedly to reciprocate their confidence and trust.⁸⁰ Young adults realize that they must show respect toward the leadership in order to receive trust and respect. Trust and respect are co-partners in the church. They work together to bring about changes. When conflict, confusion and mistrust occur, the leadership should be trained with the spiritual disciplines of love and patience to handle the issue. Spiritual gifts, such as peace and self-control, work for the good of the leadership in exercising confidence that is gained daily by communicating with God.

The early church, in the book of Acts, is a primary example of why prayer is important in the daily structure and guidance of today’s church and its membership. The early church leaders set the foundation for going to God and petitioning Him for spiritual and physical needs. Peter was placed in prison by Herod Agrippa I because he saw how it pleased the Jews when James, the brother of John was beheaded during the Passover. Herod wanted to execute Peter also, but was reluctant because of the number of believing Jews entering the city to observe the Passover. He feared opposition from the believing Jews, so he placed Peter in jail guarded by four

⁷⁹Jonathan Pokluda, *Welcoming the Future Church: How to Reach, Teach, and Engage Young Adults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 11. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁸⁰ Terry, Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations: 94.*

squadrons of soldiers with the intention of killing him after the Passover (Acts 12:3-5). The church was fervently praying for Peter. An angel entered his cell and woke him, Peter got up and the chains fell off his hands. He was led by the angel to the house of Mary, the mother of John and James where the believers had gathered to pray (Acts 12: 6-13).

Young adults at GLMBC have heard those Scriptures several times, but it needs to be taught repeatedly with a greater emphasis on the power of prayer. They need to know that earnest, fervent, and righteous prayers will move silently through any object, material or structural force to release its power and complete its mission. When people are taught how to pray and pray with convictions, purpose and zeal, God will move.

Frank Laubach a former Congregational Christian Missionary Educator, who was educated at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, and a mystic known as “The Apostle to the Illiterates,” regarded “prayer as the boundless, mightiest force in the world: ready and able to accomplish *anything*.”⁸¹ There is power in prayer and young adults should be taught the meaning of prayer and need to understand and know the power of prayer in their personal lives. The power of prayer will be modeled to young and old adults attending GLMBC to let them know that through sincere prayer they have one tool that will move mountains and create lakes and rivers in dry places on their behalf. All they must do is have faith and believe that it will come to pass.

Fred Edie, an educator in Christian education at Duke University’s School of Divinity, and Mark Lamport a professor at graduate theological schools in Colorado and Arizona, and the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*, the *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*, and the *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States* assert that “No one can

⁸¹ Frank C. Laubach, *Prayer: The Mightiest Force in the World* (Chicago, IL: Burtyrki Books, 2020), 7. ProQuest Ebook Central.

sufficiently explain the doctrines of the trinity, atonement incarnation, and communion with God through prayer.”⁸² Other disciplines that are effective and progressive through prayer are meditation, memorization of Scriptures, journaling, fellowship, and fasting. Young adults operating in these disciplines will make a great contribution to the field of discipleship.

Mark and Tammy Endres, founders of Hand of Jesus Ministries Inc., a prayer and equipping resource to impact a hurting world, contend that the reason for receiving a word of knowledge is to “increase the faith of the person praying, as well as the person receiving the prayer.”⁸³ This statement about prayer is very straightforward, factual and profound because it explain what faith does and why it is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1). Faith stands upon the shoulders of prayer to carry the believer to higher heights in Christ.

Adele Calhoun worked in Christian ministry for over thirty years and is currently a copastor with her husband, Doug, of Redeemer Community in Wellesley, Massachusetts. She comments on the fact that Christ gave His disciples lessons in spiritual disciplines to increase their faith and understanding of His ministry. She says, “The desire to know God fueled these disciplines.”⁸⁴ Wanting to know about God and His relationship in the Trinity is a good reason for young adults to become acquainted with these disciplines. Furthermore, Timothy a mentee of Paul received extensive training on spiritual disciplines. Paul says to Timothy, “Train yourself to be godly. Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding

⁸² Fred P Edie and Mark A. Lamport, *Nurturing Faith: A Practical Theology for Educating Christians* (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2021), 137. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁸³ Mark Endres and Tamm Endres, *When Heaven Seems Silent: How to Wait on God's Promises Through Pain, Disappointment, and Doubt* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2014), 30. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁸⁴ Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 22. ProQuest Ebook Central.

promise for both the present life and the life to come (1 Tim 4:7-9 ESV). He also said, “Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believer in word, action, conversation, faith in spirit, and purity” (1 Tim 4:12 ESV). Paul was a leader and a mentor who trained his students to be Christ-like and to avoid the things of this world that were not spiritual.

The leadership and young adults at GLMBC can take a lesson from the training and mentoring Paul instructed to Timothy. Paul imitated the ministry of Christ in his daily walk in the community and the churches he helped to establish. These spiritual lessons that come directly from a primary source will be an asset in developing a Discipleship Training Guide for the leadership and young adults at GLMBC. The tools of discipleship are clearly laid out and found in the Scriptures. They will readily equip the old and young adults with the necessary tools that will increase their spiritual growth and permit them to test their faith to maintain balance in their lives.

Other forms of spiritual disciplines utilized by biblical leaders to assist young people in knowing Christ and focusing their attention on Christian traits and character are fasting, solitude, generosity, meditation, and worship. Seibel relates spiritual disciplines to methods of helping young people to slow down from a life of busy routines and tune in to Christ.⁸⁵ Taking the focus of worldly attractions helps to mold the individual into an exemplary Christian.

Seibel continues to stress spiritual disciplines in maintaining a balanced walk with God. “She gives examples of the distractions in her life while she was learning Christ as a young person. She attributes the success of her life to knowing God and practicing spiritual disciplines.”⁸⁶ She demonstrates through practice, modeling and mentoring young people that

⁸⁵ Seibel, *The Generative Church*: 178.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

fellowship, surrounding the body with peers who have the same belief systems, will increase faith and grow character.”

Realigning Faith and Service

There are times when the gears in an instrument or vehicle become rusty and the technician or mechanic must use a lubricant to cause the parts to move freely with less frictional force. Such is the spiritual processes in the lives of Christian: they need realigning with a lubricant like the move of the Holy Spirit to get them working proper. Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit while service is a spiritual discipline. Both entities are related to the spiritual formation and intellectual development of the individual. Figuratively speaking, without faith, an individual who is weak minded will not believe he can move mountains or speak to a tree and it moves at his/her command. Such is the power of faith and service working together.

The best example of faith and servanthood may be seen in the life of Christ who demonstrated servanthood to His disciples. He implied that He did not come to be waited on, but to wait on others (Mark 10:45 ESV). Jesus exemplified servanthood through His ministry to model humility and serving others to His disciples. The story of the Last Supper embodies this principle when the disciples gathered around the table for communion (John 13: 1-20).

Faith and service are co-partners in the process of discipleship because they complement each other. Lawrence Iwuamadi, a Roman Catholic Priest argues that faith and service work together when selecting followers of Christ because they are inseparable units in working with people in the community.⁸⁷ Realigning faith and service mean reevaluating the present strategy of implementing faith and service when witnessing, sharing Jesus, or facing surmountable obstacles in life. Realigning faith and service is finding that place of peace in Christ where

⁸⁷ Lawrence Iwuamadi, “Being with Jesus and Being Sent Out,” *International review of mission*, 111, no. 1 (2022): 110–122.

distractions do not dictate the order for the day. According to current research, this is what young adults are seeking in the church: a place where they may apply faith, and acceptability, without questions. The faith of young adults attending GLMBC must increase exponentially for the retention level to increase. They have missed biblical guidance because of the lack of an instructional tool to adequately provide a strong faith to convince and demonstrate the need for service in the surrounding community and the church. Training these young people is a delicate situation because their faith and trust are fragile.

Therefore, the leadership who will assist the researcher in training these young people must exhibit an outward show of faith so young people may witness faith at work in the life of an older adult. They must be able to model self-control, faithfulness, genuine love, and a desire to impart spirit-filled instructions to these young adults. Young adults attending GLMBC must be willing to allow these leaders to train, mentor, and model these spiritual gifts to them without animosity or indifferences in who trains them if there are remarkable changes in the character of the trainers. They should be receptive to the strategies and methodologies selected to faithfully demonstrate the cause- and- effect outcomes which will validate the “if” and “then” juncture of the problem and purpose of the thesis of this researcher’s project. If the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

Duguid agrees that the practice of the imitation of service according to the teachings of Christ must be serious. Resistance to temptation qualifies the gifted to serve as a disciple for Christ.⁸⁸ Temptation is an ever -present trait found in a number of youth ministries. They see how megachurches include technological games and other devices to entice youth to join their

⁸⁸ Duguid, *Matthew-Luke*: 100.

churches. Such instruments are pawns to tempt young adults to leave their churches. These instruments are tools of distraction and will cause young people to become victims to their usage when used inappropriately such as during praise and worship segments of the church ministry. Unhealthy influences from friends and outside sources have affected the retention of young adults by leading them away from cultural ties and Christian traditions that is found at their home church.

The leadership is cognizant of the fact that it will take more than cultural ties and traditions to secure the trust and obedience of these individuals. It will take the leadership to restore a new-found commitment based on a new found faith and trust that is aligned with service and obedience to the Great Commission established by Christ. The leadership must reexamine their intentions and increase the spiritual formation and intellectual growth in faith development and human formation for all individuals. In essence, young adults at GLMBC are looking for the same spiritual and physical connections they enjoyed before the onset of COVID-19. No doubt, the young adult population felt rejected and neglected when the church doors were closed for almost a year due to the spread of COVID-19, and now, the leadership must find a way to regain their trust. This trust must be regained in the similar manner the disciples of Christ regained their faith and trust.

The disciple's faith was weakened when they were upon the sea and Christ was down in the hull of the boat sleeping. A massive storm rose up on the sea and caused the boat to be tossed and driven by the storm. The disciples were so afraid that they went down below and awoken Christ, saying "Save us Lord, we are perishing." He came up from the bottom of the boat and said, "Why are you so afraid?" "O, you of little faith" (Matt 8:24 -26 ESV). Christ renewed His disciple's faith when He rebuked the wind and they saw the sea become calm again.

The leadership of GLMBC must pray and ask God to give them a discipleship tool that will renew and increase the faith of these young adults attending the church. They must see faith in action, just like the disciples saw the sea become calm in order to renew their faith and regain their trust. They must receive a word of knowledge just like the words Christ gave them to increase their intellect, faith and trust in themselves and each other.

Faith in the Afro-American Community

Robert Cosby, a conference speaker, pastor and author discusses faith and service from the viewpoint of the African-American churchgoer and argues that the church is a refuge because “it adapts to meet the social, economic, and spiritual needs of its members and is the glue that keeps families and loved ones together.”⁸⁹ Yes, faith has always been the glue that has not only kept the church together, but it also kept the home in shape so God could work in the lives of the entire household. Young adults who came out of black churches are no stranger to the adhesiveness of the “sticky substance” that kept them in church and a vital part of the foundation and future of the perpetuity of the church. Some young adults who were raised in black churches since their youth have stayed with the local churches and have prospered.

Shaonta’ Allen, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Dartmouth and African American Studies Affiliate, argues that the black church is a “cultural incubator” because it provides a haven from oppression and subjugation.⁹⁰ Afro-American young adults have been reluctant to leave the “cultural incubator” because of strong family ties. African-Americans have tried for years to find their place in a society whose roots are engrained in Anglo-Saxon methodologies,

⁸⁹ Robert Cosby, “Older African American Adults: Understanding the Role of the Black Church’s Support in the Community,” *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 39, no. 4 (2020): 353–71.

⁹⁰ Shaonta' E. Allen, "Doing Black Christianity: Reframing Black Church Scholarship," *Sociology Compass* 13, no. 10 (2019): 13 (10): N. PAG. Doi: 10.1111/soc4.12731.

educational advancements, and Christian ethics. Many young adults have neglected their cultural heritage in order to blend in and feel acceptable in these circles. They eventually end up back at the black church because “it functions on several levels as a spiritual center, a place of worship, a social center, a cultural repository, where the faith of our mothers and fathers are summoned, preserved and reinvented every Sunday.”⁹¹

Afro-American churches must compete with several local churches for the attendance and discipleship of their young adult members. These young adults spend several years at these local churches. Finally, they come home at an older age, seeking leadership positions. Many Black churches are obliging to the returning members because of the cultural heritage they were raised up with during their youth. Knowing the cultural heritage of a people is just as essential as knowing one’s relationship to the body of Christ. Once the spiritual connection is made, young adults will learn that because all Christians are one in Christ, the spiritual heritage is the same for all believers in Christ because of the connection of faith and service.

William Chaffe, American historian, and currently the Alice Mary Baldwin Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University in Durham, NC, argue that black activities in the black church consisted of family, church, and community programs. The church became the centerpiece for gatherings, political discussions, and educational goals.⁹² The Black community felt safe, young adults were vocal and carried their responsibilities in the foundational structure of the church. They knew where they were supposed to be, what they were capable of doing, how it was done; and they did it well! They attended local, state, and national young adult conferences and represented their churches.

⁹¹ Gates, *The Black Church* : 24-25.

⁹² William H Chafe, *Lifting the Chains: The Black Freedom Struggle since Reconstruction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2023). 81-89, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Questions arise: what happened? What has changed and caused black young adults to drop out of the church as if it never existed? According to Thabiti Anyabwile, a church planter in Washington DC, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman in the Grand Cayman Islands, and a Council member with The Gospel Coalition, the answer is that prosperity ministers have changed the way black churches, teach, preach, and spiritually feed their congregants. The focus is based on twisting faith and the Gospel of Christ to prosperity, rather than focusing on the spiritual growth of the body, soul, and spirit.⁹³ When faith and service are twisted and substituted for financial gain, young people are the first to take notice of the disposition of their leaders. Lives become twisted and faith trickles down to fear and anxiety. Innocent hearts and minds are caught up in a barrage of false doctrines, teachers, and leaders. Young people are the ones who receive the short end of faith and service because they are the ones who give more of their trust, faith and service to the church. They want their leaders to know and obey God as related by Seversen in a previous discussion that young people are the first to see changes.⁹⁴

According to Estep and Kim, “faith includes both trust and belief. It is the complete trust in the Scriptures and the fact that generates an ultimate trust in an individual and the work of Jesus Christ.”⁹⁵ Faith has to be grown from conditions or circumstances in a person’s life that were previously devastating and considered by many to be impossible of receiving full recovery, but through the ministering of God’s grace and Love, those things that were impossible were made possible. No one can describe the substance and evidence of faith without experiencing them in their lives. That is why it is important that old and young adults at GLMBC are given the

⁹³ Thabiti Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.), 24-25. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁹⁴ Seversen, *Not Done Yet*: 159-60.

⁹⁵ James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation*: 18t.

necessary tools of discipleship to grow and increase their faith.

Samuel Wells, an English priest of the Church of England, vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields in central London, Visiting Professor of Christian Ethics at King's College London, and Sally Hitchiner, the Associate Vicar for Ministry, have a different approach. They believe that faith brings young adults to the church through the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit, working through them to promote changes in their lives whereby they will affect the lives of other young adults.⁹⁶ On the other hand, Estep and Kim relate faith to “the complex interworking of the Holy Spirit and the individual’s human intellect.”⁹⁷ Such a glorious experience of living and walking by faith is a feeling every person should want to encounter. The disciples of Christ understood the effect faith has on the spiritual and intellectual growth of a person. That is why they were adamant about asking Christ to “increase their faith” and He replied by saying, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you” (Luke 17:5, ESV).

When the faith of young adults is fully grown and ripen, nonbelievers will smell the aroma of this fruit of the Spirit and will either, be drawn in by its essence or turned away because of its capacity to bring about changes in their lives. Therefore the leadership of GLMBC must equip the church with the tools of discipleship whereby they will be able to imitate the traits of Jesus Christ through servanthood. Servanthood forms lasting relationships and creates bonds of trust and respect.⁹⁸ Spiritual disciplines will dictate the atmosphere of the church community and will determine the nature of the character of its occupants.

⁹⁶ Samuel Wells and Sally Hitchiner, *Being With Leaders' Guide: A Course Exploring Christian Faith and Life* (La Vergne, TN: Hymns Ancient & Modern, 2022), 24. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁹⁷ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*: 18t.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

When a church community is saturated with spiritual disciplines, the outcomes of its effect will be felt throughout the surrounding community. The disciplines of fellowship, love, peace and the essential tools of discipleship are at work throughout the church facilities. Matthew Harmon argues that God’s original intention for creating man was to create a people of service to carry out His plan of humanity in the world.⁹⁹

Craig C. Hill, Dean, and a Professor of New Testament at Perkins School of Theology, agrees with Harmon and argues that Paul modeled the life of a servant through his weakness and lowliness, but explains that it is through these acts of suffering that God is at work. It is through suffering that identity with Christ is manifested.¹⁰⁰ Christians recall Paul’s suffering from the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor 12:6-8). He asked God to remove it three times, but God’s response was, “My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, you are strong (2Cor 12:9 ESV).

Paul modeled servanthood throughout his missionary journeys as a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul suffered a number of afflictions, hardships, disasters, beatings, imprisonments, and rejection, but through Christ, His love for God increased. Therefore, servanthood in the midst of weakness is a blessing for the disciple for it shows the power of God making the servant strong. Service is a spiritual discipline that is portrayed by all biblical disciples. It is abstractly measured by the way Christ modeled servanthood to His disciples: with poise and humility. God can take a simple act of service and use it in an extraordinary way. God does not require spiritual gifts that are highly visible in a person’s life to create followers to receive a temporary charge to be great. Young adults are realizing this fact and are gravitating toward service projects in the

⁹⁹ Matthew S. Harmon, *The Servant of the Lord and His Servant People: Tracing a Biblical Theme Through the Canon* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 30. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁰⁰ Craig C. Hill, *Servant of All: Status, Ambition, and the Way of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 70. ProQuest Ebook Central.

community such as homeless shelters where they can feel the warmth of people who really need love and encouragement to survive. Young adults want to make a difference in the lives of people who like them, are looking for something special. They realize that service is not about fame. It is the act of love God shines on the individual to fulfill his purpose in life.¹⁰¹

This act of love vibrates from one heart to another, giving service a transferable form of energy. Christ saw this change in the character of a person receiving the service and modeled it to His disciples (Mark 10:45). Service, demonstrated by attending to the needs of people who are less fortunate will aid in giving young adults at GLMBC a clear understanding of what Christ gave to a person in need. The more opportunities young adults are given at GLMBC to imitate Christ; the more spiritual benefits will lead them to enter paths of righteousness where they will walk and believe they have walked the paths of Christ and His disciples. Knowing Christ is the first step to entering the body of believers of true discipleship.

Theological Foundations

The theological foundation of discipleship rests upon the Scriptures and Christian principles instituted by Christ and the apostles who established the first Christian church over two thousand years ago. According to Kenneth Collins, professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies, the Gospel of Matthew is credited with building the framework for the institution of the Christian church in the New Testament. Collins writes that the book of Matthew is the only Gospel to record the word “church and connects the Old and New Testaments.”¹⁰² Christ laid the theological foundation for discipleship and modeled descriptions of it throughout His life and ministry until His Ascension.

¹⁰¹ Austin Wofford *Forged: Young Adults and the Renewal of the Church*, 172.

¹⁰² Kenneth J. Collins, *Wesley One Volume Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2020), 809. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Matthew writes that the church was built upon the faith and confession of Peter, a disciple of Jesus Christ (Matt 16:18). Paul writes that He is the Chief Cornerstone in which the whole building is joined together (Eph 2:19-22). Matthew's Gospel thoroughly gives an introductory lesson for ministers and laymen searching for material on the history of the church and its relationship to the ministry of Jesus and His disciples. He gives a vivid picture of the teaching prowess of Christ; mentoring elements of discipleship to His disciples. He describes the traits and character of a follower (Matt 5:7). He gives His disciples instructions for His mission (Matt 10). He teaches them how to survive and live together as a community of believers (Matt 18). He models and imitates servanthood before them through love and humility (Matt 26:14-19). Then, He commissions them to go, teach, and baptize (Matt 28: 18-20). These traits are the tools that GLMBC needs so it will be empowered to train and teach their leadership how to be equipped to teach and model similar traits to the young and old adults who presently remain at the church.

Osborn asserts that teaching was the strongest asset Christ demonstrated to His disciples. He describes how Luke portrays Him as a teacher of action who improvises classrooms to teach the things He proclaims to be true and put them into action.¹⁰³ The Gospel of Luke describes all the attributes of Jesus. Chen asserts that the Jewish leaders referred to Christ as "teacher" because "it was a title used primarily by unbelievers who did not believe the message of salvation and redemption."¹⁰⁴

The high priest and the Jewish leadership of the church did not trust Jesus, so they were

¹⁰³ Grant R Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse* (Ashland, OH: Faithlife Corporation, 2018), 116. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁰⁴ Diane G. Chen, *Luke: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 264. ProQuest Ebook Central.

constantly sending spies to follow Him by using the ruses of politics to entrap Him. They were listening for Christ to say something incriminating so they could approach Pilate and use it as evidence to imprison Him and bring Him before the political court system (Luke 20:20-26). The nonbelieving Jewish religious sects, the Jewish leadership and other nonbelieving Jewish citizens used several tricks to entrap Him. He used His prowess of “the Master Teacher” to teach them lessons they were not expecting Him to say (Luke 20:28-32). His rebuttal to their questions left them speechless and ignorant of the same Scriptures of the Old Testament He referenced in His comments to them (Deut 25: 5-10).

Learning the Scriptures is essential for the biblical growth of GLMBC and the acquisition of spiritual knowledge for its potential; disciples to imitate Christ. The best defense in imitating and following Christ is using His identical words to counteract derogatory comments coming from unbelievers. The Scriptures contain a storehouse of comments from “the Master Teacher” Memorizing Scriptures is a spiritual discipline that will be included in the *Discipleship Training Guide* that will be written for the training of the young and old adults attending GLMBC. They are tools that will be needed to equip the leadership so they will be able to disciple the current young adults at the church. These Scriptures will teach the young and old adults the definition of discipleship and demonstrate the cost of being a biblical disciple.

The writings of Bonhoeffer define the words, “the cost of discipleship” and demonstrate that there is a “greater cost for leadership.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, true discipleship is one of imitating the teacher, adopting his/her lifestyle, recapitulating his/her values and reproducing his/her philosophy and teachings. It is one where the disciple becomes a Christ-like leader.

¹⁰⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 32. ProQuest Ebook Central.

The apostle Paul speaks of discipleship as venturing on a journey or taking an “active walk” where each person’s walk or stride is different from anyone else’s walk. The disciple chooses to walk toward commitment and salvation or a life of disobedience and destruction.¹⁰⁶

The Role of Family Members in the Theology of Discipleship

Family plays an essential role in discipleship. Jesus had four brothers who followed Him as disciples. They were Jude and James, who wrote books in the New Testament, and Joseph and Simon (Matt 13:55). Balch describes how Luke eloquently involves the family of Jesus; His mother, brothers, and cousins in His discipleship ministry. Luke does not refer to the brothers of Jesus by name, but does reference His mother, Mary who answered the call of God from the angel and never wavered in her belief in Him being the Savior of the world. She was supportive of His call and mission; following, looking, and often praying from a distance.¹⁰⁷ The family ties goes beyond brothers to aunts, uncles, sisters and cousins (John 19: 25; Luke 1:13, 36). Jesus said, “Those who do the will of my heavenly Father are my brother, sister, and mother” (Matt 12:48-50) When Christians are born again through baptism, they become members of His family.

Christ was adamant about using family members in His ministry. His group of disciples consisted of brothers: Peter and Andrew, and James and John who were disciples (Matt 4:18-22). These brothers were a part of Jesus’ circle of trusted friends. Families were an essential part of God’s design of salvation when He delivered Christ into a sinful world of evil and darkness. A strong society has a leadership team that consists of family members.

¹⁰⁶ Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2020), 137. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁰⁷ David L Balch, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Luke* (Chicago, IL: Eerdmans, 2021), 59. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Family ties were acceptable on a spiritual level. An example is the relationship associated with the mentorships of Titus, a young man whom Paul considered his spiritual son because he led him to receive faith in Christ (Titus 1:4). God used this young man to train and teach the elderly men and women in his ministry (Titus 2:1-15).

Jesus also demonstrates the importance of the application and leadership of the young and old in discipleship in the community, church and family structure. There was Timothy, a young man, trained in the Scriptures by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois (2 Tim 1: 5-7). Paul requested him to join him on his missionary journeys (Acts 19:21). Paul used young people in his work for the ministry of Jesus Christ to ensure that the acts of discipleship were imitated in the church community and that it would continue through many generations to come. This act supports young adults carrying the future torch of leadership.

Engaging young people in the early movement of Christianity and discipleship was no strange occurrences. The Old Testament utilized their strength, youthfulness, skill, and knowledge of the Spirit of God (Prov 20:29; Isa 40:30-31). The New Testament included them in the plan of salvation through the transference of discipleship and the furtherance of the ministry of Jesus Christ (1 Tim 4:12). The Old and New Testaments included examples of the benefits of training, teaching, modeling and mentoring young men and women for the present and future discipleship of Jesus Christ (Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4)

Discipleship: The Tool of Confession

Confession is one of the basic tests of salvation, faithfulness to God and Jesus Christ. Every person who has become a Christian and a believer of Jesus Christ came to Him by the confession of his/her sins. A person cannot be a disciple of Christ unless he/she confesses their sins to Him (Rom 10:9). According to Kenneth Collins, “The central theological belief of

discipleship is the way in which believers confess and communicate their faith in a coherent way toward one another, representing their oneness, and to outsiders as a mark of their holiness.”¹⁰⁸ The mark of a disciple is that one disciple knows another disciple and they respect each other through the bonds of unity and fellowship in Christ. Disciples trust each other because the hand of God works through them. Swindoll contends that “for centuries, the church was led by creed, confession and catechism.”¹⁰⁹ He advocates that discipleship, that is apathetic to the doctrine of confession, creed and catechism and theology, is not Christian discipleship. The Scriptures include instances where the tool of discipleship in training youth is essential for perpetuation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Prov 22:6). Observance of the older generation teaching the younger generation was first authorized in the Old Testament (Deut 6:6-7).¹¹⁰ This practice is being utilized at GLMBC. One of the participants in the research is an older person. This was noted in the circular graph in the text.

Baptism: The Theological Tool of Invitation to Discipleship.

Baptism is essential to the work and ministry of a disciple because it personally identifies the believer with Christ. First, baptism represents the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. When the new convert is baptized, he/she is baptized into his death and resurrection. Secondly, it is a passage of entering into faith. Once the candidate for baptism goes under the water and comes up, he/she enters the membership of the church which is Christ’s body. The third reason for baptism is that it serves as a public confession of faith. The public confession indicates that the believer is announcing that he/she is living a Holy life separated from sin.

¹⁰⁸ Collins, *Wesley One Volume Commentary*, 36.

¹⁰⁹ Charles R Swindoll, *Insights on Acts* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2016), 305. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹¹⁰ Thomas R Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 383. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Beutler argues that the disciples recognize the invitation to discipleship when John the Baptist introduces Jesus to the disciples by saying, “Here comes the Lamb of God,” follow Him because He will take the sins from the world” (John 1:29 ESV). Baptizing into Christ takes the sins from a person’s body. The disciples took their cue and brought other followers to Christ.¹¹¹ John the Baptist pointed the disciples to Christ. That gift keeps on giving in the church and the surrounding communities.

Boxall demonstrates through his text, that the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the river Jordan signifies justification for Christian baptism in the church. Therefore, Boxall justifies the reason why disciples “should be baptized before being commissioned” by the church.¹¹² This researcher believes that if Jesus Christ, the leader, teacher and mentor of the disciples, was baptized, then, those followers who imitate and emulate Him should also be baptized. Baptism symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Luke 24:6-7; John 11:25-26; 12:23-26). Every disciple should know the meaning of these Scriptures and should teach them to church members and new converts. Shin writes in his text that the book of John is filled with instructions and descriptions of “ethical moments where Christ showed His humanity and love for all mankind.”¹¹³ Shin exemplifies these moments of ethics by discussing Christ’s humanity such as His human characteristics; His reactions to the frailties faced by humans, and imagery, where Christ is described as the light of the world (John 8:12). Shin denotes that ethics belong to a branch of knowledge that governs a person’s behavior.¹¹⁴ These descriptive examples are a

¹¹¹ Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 56. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹¹² Ian Boxall, *Matthew through the Centuries* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019), 83.

¹¹³ Sookgoo Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship As Moral Progress* (Boston, MA: BRILL, 2018), 18-20. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

preview of what a biblical disciple should exemplify as a member of a discipleship community initiated by Jesus Christ.

Wolter discusses the importance of ethics from a point discussed in the Old Testament when vessels were washed from the outside. He denotes the misrepresentation of cleanliness and the purification of vessels. Wolter makes this analogy with respect to a person who is baptized; the water does not clean him/her. It is the symbolism of the water to the unbeliever which creates no visible change, but it is an inward cleansing that is spiritual to the believer and brings about a lasting change. He concludes that “it is not important how the condition of the outside of a person looks, but the conditions of the heart and the inner parts of a person determine their character.”¹¹⁵ Wolter’s view of ethics is similar to Shin’s views of ethics. Therefore, since ethics was practiced by Christ and the early disciples, these rules should be applicable to all disciples and should be taught and modeled by the leadership to potential disciples.

Watson and Culy assert that the Gospel of John was written for the Christian journey of future disciples because it presents a more personal side of Christ who “prays for the discipleship of future disciples (John 17: 20-21), and provides guidance, not only for how to become His disciples, but also how to grow and thrive as His disciples.”¹¹⁶ This information pointed out by Watson and Culy serves as a tool of discipleship that may be used as an introductory stage for the leadership at GLMBC when developing a *Discipleship Training Guide* for the church.

The Bible has an enormous set of standards, tools, and guidelines that describes the duties and responsibilities of a disciple (Mark 11:22-24; John 14: 13-14). These tools are original. They were taught, mentored, trained and modeled by Jesus Christ which authenticates and validates

¹¹⁵ Michael Wolter, Wayne Coppins, and Christoph Heilig, *Luke 9:51-24, the Gospel According to Luke: Volume II*. 1st ed., (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 122.

¹¹⁶ Edward W. Watson and Martin M. Culy, *The Gospel of John and Future Disciples: The Making of a Disciple: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021).

their usages. These tools will meet the unique needs of the members of the church and assist the church in growing more disciples. Locating the proper tools with a theological foundation, background, representation, and directions are vital for the instructional segments that a *Discipleship Training Guide* will achieve and deliver. Theological and philosophical knowledge are co-partners in developing a discipleship guide because theology will build upon the foundation that is already laid for the guide, while philosophy will serve as the framework that connects the problem and purpose for the “if” and “then” juncture to formulate, validate and authenticate the thesis.

Timothy George asserts that the righteousness for the foundation of theology is revealed in the gospel where the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and says, “If we seek salvation, propitiation, and forgiveness, we must first seek righteousness that we may be loved by God.”¹¹⁷ Therefore, a person, seeking discipleship cannot walk in the office of a disciple unless he/she admits their sins to God who draws, Jesus who saves, and the Holy Spirit who seals him/her from falling back into the former state of sin. George continues to state that the apostles, having laid the foundation, exhorts Christians to use every effort to walk in a manner that is worthy of the calling.¹¹⁸ The responsibilities of a person seeking discipleship are serious and should not be taken for granted. Paul describes the importance of discipleship in (Gal 3:27) when he explains to the Galatians that all the people who were baptized in Christ had “put on Christ.”¹¹⁹ Putting on Christ means living a life comparable to the life Christ lived. Paul declares “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the

¹¹⁷ Timothy George, ed., *John Calvin: Commentary on Romans* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2022), 31. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 159

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 160.

life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20 ESV).

The Role of Evangelism in Discipleship

The book of Romans expresses salvation and righteousness through the implication of the empty cross upon which Christ died. It is considered a guide for the unbeliever in their search for deliverance from the consequences of sin. Many Christians refer to the book of Romans as the Roman Road because it lays out a road from a life of sin to one of salvation. Paul introduces his book to the unbeliever by making it plain that no one has an excuse for not knowing Christ. “We all need Salvation” is his fervent cry (Rom 1:19-20; 10:9). The leadership of GLMBC must show through examples, modeling and imitation that they have been baptized in Christ and has put on Christ in their talk, walk and methods of communicating with members in the church and nonmembers outside the church. They must be taught how to evangelize in the home, church and community. They must demonstrate that discipleship is an ongoing process that follows them throughout a lifetime. David Gustafson defines evangelism as an introduction to a relationship with a triune God.¹²⁰ Paul was somewhat annoyed over the fact that the non-Jews accepted his message of the resurrected Christ more so than the Jewish people of his background. Paul belongs to the tribe of Benjamin and the Jews had a problem accepting the Messianic Christ and His resurrection.¹²¹ Paul’s confidence in God through Jesus Christ gave him courage to evangelize to the unbelieving Jews in Rome. Introducing Christ to a people, who do not believe in Him, would be a complicated process for Paul because they were his own people. Such a task would be troublesome for some of the young adults attending GLMBC, who after training go out into a community of nonbelievers that consist of their friends and relatives and invite them into

¹²⁰ David M. Gustafson, *Gospel Witness: Evangelism in Word and Deed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 21.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 18-21.

the body of Christ.

That is why the leadership at GLMBC needs to be spirit-filled and knowledgeable of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ so they will be able to equip young adults with the necessary tools of discipleship and mount a biblical defense for following Christ. The leadership must openly rededicate their lives to God by repeating Romans 10:9 and living it daily so that the church will see a change in their spiritual lives that will describe the purpose of their increased faith, just by believing and following the teachings of Christ. Then, young adults will be able to trust and believe in the words spoken by the leadership; and will gladly bring others to God by sharing Christ with them.

Theoretical Foundations

A number of theories and models have been developed to address discipleship and its role in promoting the biblical foundation of the church. The theoretical concept is that these models will develop into a strong and effective example for discipleship. Some psychologists have combined basic theories of learning with the Scriptures in an effort to increase the faith and spirituality of their clients. Such models will be an asset to the church in building the character, stamina, and growth of an enduring faith in the lives and thoughts of young and old adults.

Jennifer Wyant discusses the first model which describes an ancient model of discipleship through the works of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. She discusses how Martha practiced discipleship by emulating the role of a disciple and serving Christ, while Mary emulates a disciple by recognizing and respecting the authority of Jesus and sitting at His feet.¹²² These sisters are examples of theology and theory working together to establish a working model of discipleship. The fact that these women were reportedly initiating the concept of discipleship

¹²² Jennifer S. Wyant, "Beyond Mary or Martha: Reclaiming Ancient Models of Discipleship, *Religious Studies Review* 47, no. 2 (2021): 230.

indicates that Christ does not show partiality. He can use any occasion, or person to carry out His Father's plan of redemption and salvation. The key to obedience and service to God is to remain faithful to His call.

A second theoretical model, suggested by Holly Carey is entitled, "Women in Action Model for Discipleship in Mark's Gospel." This model traces the paths of women in the New Testament whose lives were impacted by being in the company of Christ. The model begins with the first woman, Peter's mother-in-law serving Jesus with food and ends with the women at the tomb who served Jesus by staying with Him while he was on the cross. They were with Him, preparing spices to wash and preserve His body. She mentions that on both occasions, the disciples stood by and watched or were either not around for fear of losing their lives.¹²³ The model is favorable and has no mentionable weakness. Its strengths lay in the fact that more women in the New Testament followed and imitated Jesus and His disciples than men of that day and time. Jesus is the template for Christians.

Therefore, the church's goal is to be like Him.¹²⁴ He is compassionate, kind, humble and sensitive to the needs of others. He, like His Father exhibits masculine and feminine traits such as caring, loving, forgiving, gentle, and peaceful. Knowing these traits is a direct result of knowing Jesus and feeling his presence in the midst of His followers. Furthermore, there are by far more women followers of Christ today and this fact is evident in the churches across America and beyond. Women have a propensity to be more compassionate and forgiving. These traits are associated with their faith.¹²⁵

¹²³ Holly J. Carey, "Women in Action: Models for Discipleship in Mark's Gospel." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (July 2019): 429–48. doi:10.1353/cbq.2019.0139.

¹²⁴ Chris Rogers, *Apprentice to Jesus: 40 Days of Walking in the Way*. La Vergne, TN: SPCK, 2020. 9.

¹²⁵ Carey, "Women in Action," 429- 48.

The third model is developed by Arthur Canales, a pastoral theologian, adolescent and young adult ministry scholar, and motivational speaker. He suggests six stages of a young adult discipleship program.¹²⁶ The first stage consists of discussing areas in the life of Christ and His ministry. The second stage consists of empowering young adults to live the gospels. The third stage consists of engaging in a mid-week Bible study. The fourth stage consists of engaging in service activities in the community. The fifth stage consists of having a Christian Leadership seminar and the sixth stage consists of offering Christian discipleship weekend retreats. This model has several strengths that will produce a cohesive structure where young adults may form bonds, learn scriptures and learn responsibilities.

A weakness is that some young adults are not comfortable with week-end trips because they have personal activities for the week-end and jobs that prevent them from leaving the area. Furthermore old and young adults at GLMBC will gain much from learning the Scriptures, but are in need of training that will give them a lasting tool to perpetuate a biblical discipleship format in the church and the community. Such a model would only stifle their need for learning Christ and needing a small group environment to share their faith with members of the surrounding community.

A fourth model suggested by Rod Culbertson, Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Dean of Student Development at the Charlotte, North Carolina campus of Reformed Theological Seminary is based on a *Military Approach to Discipleship*. The model requires a “demand for strict submission and obedience throughout the process.”¹²⁷ The strength of this

¹²⁶ Arthur David Canales, *Models and Methods for Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Ecumenical Examples and Pastoral Approaches for the Christian Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 141. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹²⁷ Rod Culbertson, *Christ Changing Lives: Digging Deeper into the Practice of Disciple Investing* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 66. ProQuest Ebook Central.

model is its demand for obedience to God. The weakness is that the members will be forced to serve God when He gives them the freedom and choice whether to serve and obey Him. This form of Military Discipleship will not work for the problem at GLMBC. The leadership needs an atmosphere of free will where they will come to know God through the love emanating from Christ and will learn to accept Him in their lives without pressure or threats of punishment.

A fifth model is the Faith Development Theory (FDT) that was initiated and implemented by James Fowler, a psychologist and theologian. Fowler defined faith as “A behavioral indicator in which faith and devotion are provided by core values and power which give order and consistency to the boundaries around our lives”¹²⁸. These indicators support and sustain our mundane and everyday commitments and trusts to give orientation, courage, meaning, and hope to our lives, and, to unite us into communities of shared interpretation of loyalty, and trust. Fowler used “faith as a primary factor to establish positive outcomes in his client’s lives.”¹²⁹

Faith and service are two complimentary forces or primary movers that will stimulate the minds of young adults to know the power of God. When a person’s faith is increased, even if it’s the size of a mustard seed, they can move any object in their path, climb any mountain, and accomplish any feat; for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11: 6). Gen Zers and Millennial’s faith must be activated through a movement of the Holy Spirit working through them. It may be at community workshops, sharing Jesus activities, where individuals discuss their relationships with Christ with each other, and engage in praise and worship service.

A sixth model for a discipleship training guide was first introduced in the late seventies by Carey, and Carey called the *System Approach* to designing different programs. Burggraff

¹²⁸ Timothy Paul Jones, “The Basis of James W. Fowler's Understanding of Faith in the Research of Wilfred Cantwell Smith: An Examination from an Evangelical Perspective,” *Religious Education* 99, no. 4 (2004): 345-357.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

adopted the same approach, and developed a discipleship model in which he forms 10 steps similar to the systematic steps formed by Carey and Carey. Burggraff stated that the participants in this modeled program must be knowledgeable of some segments of the Scriptures, apply biblical truths to daily living, alter their behaviors when discussing the ministry of Christ, and respect the opinions and rights of other participants¹³⁰ The model gives the framework and the church builds around it by adding the ten steps. The church does all the organizing and designing, but some churches are more comfortable with ready-made guides.

A seventh model is based on the book, *Holy Habits* by Andrew Roberts, a Methodist minister. James Butler uses this model which is based on biblical teaching, fellowship, prayer, giving, service, generosity eating together, worship and making disciples as demonstrated and modeled in the Scriptures (Acts 2: 42-47). It includes the participation of individuals from all age levels from the youngest to the oldest. The emphasis is on biblical teaching lived out with proactive activities in the Bible. “This model suggests that “theological action research is both action research and collaborative processes working together to renew theological practices found in the Scriptures.”¹³¹ The results of this model generated positive outcomes that consolidated the membership generationally and theologically. Participation was strongly connected to a sense of belonging. The only fault with this model is that participants complained about the lack of Bible study. They stated that there were no activities included where they could participate in active Bible study. The inclusion of proactive Bible study activities is no issue for this researcher because they will be a vital part of the guide’s core of instruction in teaching,

¹³⁰ Andrew Burggraff, "Developing Discipleship Curriculum: Applying the Systems Approach Model for Designing Instruction by Dick, Carey, and Carey to the Construction of Church Discipleship Courses," *Christian Education Journal* 12, no. 2 (2015): 397-414.

¹³¹ James Butler, "The 'Long and Winding Road' of Faith: Learning about the Christian Life and Discipleship from Two Methodist Congregations," *Practical Theology* 13, no. 3 (2020): 277-289.

service, and training. Bible study, along with other amenities such as group study, social gatherings, prayer, worship, and singing will significantly add to the cultural and missional segments of any project.

An eighth model, adopted by several churches and written by Ogden is *Passage into Discipleship*. Ogden created a discipleship program for the local church by building a discipleship ministry through small reproducible discipleship groups.¹³² This program consists of a leader's guide that lists weekly sessions with time elements included for five sessions. Each session begins with one person discussing their faith journey for the past week. A Scripture is memorized each week. There are twenty-five topics for the program. This guide is an ideal program for all age levels and is designed to increase retention at all age levels. Unlike the prior model, there is plenty of time for application of the Bible in this model. The strength of this model lay in increasing memorization of the Scriptures in the mind of the member. The weakness lay with members who are "visual and hand on learners;" who need Scriptures through action living, imitation and emulation where they can see the Scriptures at work in the lives of dedicated Christians.

The ninth model is designed by Chris Rogers in which He implements a "forty days program for the participants to follow." Each day represents a dynamic fact that occurred in the life of Christ during His ministry on earth. The participant is given twenty questions which he/she picks one, each day, to discuss. The program uses an actual model of the "head, heart, and hands to represent the areas in which the participant wants Jesus in his/her life."¹³³

¹³² Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*: 219.

¹³³ Rogers, *Apprentice to Jesus*: 10-11.

Some of the models had very little lasting spiritual effect and impartation of biblical doctrines that would sustain a church going through a period where a large percentage of the congregants are dispersed. Other models had no action-packed activities to increase faith or promote biblical disciplines. Some models approached discipleship with a solution to aid the problem of retention, but these models were not long lasting.

A tenth model recommended by Beth Felker Jones is *the John Wesley Model*. This model focuses on the formulation of faithful doctrines, biblical sources, and authority for the application of theological principles. The model operates on the principle of a four sided structure with each side representing a source that is related to the Christian life such as Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.¹³⁴ This model's strength is its practice of theology and its connection to Scriptures and experience. Its weakness is traditions associated with the word, "theology." Most people believe that traditions are habits that can be difficult to overcome, and for that reason, should not be relate to theology.

The eleventh model, developed by Robby Gallaty argues that the best model is *The Jesus model* which follows the teaching and models discipleship Jesus gave to His disciples. Gallaty asserts that this model is the best model because these men who grew out of this group "took the Gospel of Christ to the World and laid the foundation for future discipleship."¹³⁵ This model received no complaints because all the tools of discipleship are demonstrated and imitated to the disciples by the master teacher. There are no weaknesses found in this model because Christ lived the processes in the flesh with love and authority given to Him by His Father in heaven.

¹³⁴ Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 16-18. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹³⁵ Robby Gallaty, *Growing up, Revised and Updated: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2022), 14. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Several of the models listed in this paper may be beneficial for some churches that have specific needs and their needs may be fulfilled by implementing one or more of these models, but the need at GLMBC is somewhat different. Some modification will have to take place to fit the dynamics of a cultural group such as the one that exists at the church. These models were designed to be used by churches derived from the Anglo-Saxon era and have several gaps as they relate to multicultural churches with one predominate culture. That culture may be offended by some of the activities listed in the models, should they choose to implement one of these models in their church.

The guide developed by this researcher will use concepts from the teaching model Christ used in training His disciples. Jesus Christ has already laid the foundation and all this researcher has to do is to build upon it. The primary theme of the guide is knowing Jesus. This guide will introduce six weeks of application of biblical training, teaching and modeling. It will include Session One: Knowing Christ from the Old Testament to the New Testament; Session Two: The Reason God Sent Jesus into the World; Session Three: Jesus Christ Chooses His Disciples; Session Four: Jesus Equips His Disciples for Discipleship; Session Five: Knowing Christ Through His Suffering and Human Traits; and Session six: Christ Commissions His Disciples to Go, Teach, Baptize and Make Disciples.

These sessions have all the essentials of discipleship needed to equip the leadership at GLMBC. The leadership of GLMBC will receive all the necessary tools of discipleship that will assist them in training present and future young adults. The strategy for introducing these activities will form permanent imprints in the participants' minds that will continue to follow him/her throughout a lifetime. These activities will paint a relational picture for young adults by placing them at the center of the action research. They will learn the methodology of teaching,

training, and modeling by placing them in similar positions. This researcher believes that individuals learn best when they are at the center of the principle being taught.

Nicole Johnson, a nationally known author, speaker, and dramatist, argues that many people may earn degrees in the ministry and teach other about Jesus Christ, but know little about Him personally. Not knowing Christ personally, has caused several Christian leaders to miss out on the increased faith received from experiencing the power of His Words penetrating their lives.¹³⁶ Knowing Christ and forming a personal relationship with Him has produced great leaders of character who are living witnesses emulating and imitating His identity.

Furthermore, Daniel R. Hyde, a Pastor in Carlsbad, California and the author of several Christian texts, argues that churches and their pastors are in a hurry to change the lives of people without training them in discipleship or teaching them how to know Jesus as a Savior who came to earth in a fleshly form.¹³⁷ As a result, members are lacking in connecting with Christ and the community. They know His name, but have no knowledge of His love, caring attributes, and His place as their advocate with the Father. Therefore, young adults at GLMBC need tools of discipleship on knowing Jesus for their training to be effective. Knowing Jesus gives their lives meaning and purpose. Therefore, if the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

¹³⁶ Nicole L Johnson and Michael T Snarr, *Faithful Witness in a Fractured World: Models for an Authentic Christian Life* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 33. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹³⁷ Daniel R Hyde, *God with Us: Knowing the Mystery of Who Jesus Is* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021), 8. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the conceptual framework which includes the literature review, and the theological and theoretical foundations, create an overarching background for the defense of the thesis. The defense of this researcher's thesis will provide a clear assessment of the question. The problem is that GLMBC is struggling to sustain the attendance of young adults because the leadership lacks the tools and training to disciple them. The remaining young adults are questioning the motive of these young adults who have left the church and the sincerity of the vow made when adopting the church by-laws and constitution to follow these guidelines. Many of them are graciously filling the void of those who have left, but are missing the conversations and moments of sharing Christ with them. The remaining young adults and the leadership at GLMBC have decided to not sit by and allow disruption, recalcitrance, and disobedience rule the day at GLMBC. They will work faithfully to preserve the cultural history, foundational liberties, and biblical discipleship ordained by the ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ through the purpose and thesis of this research.

The purpose of this DMIN action project is to develop a *Discipleship Training Guide* to equip the leadership of Greater Love to disciple young adults. The purpose is related to the problem in that GLMBC is a young church. The percentage of young adults and youth are higher than older adults, therefore, GLMBC is subject to change in size, amendments to the constitution, leadership, and direction, but will still "hold fast" to its precepts to perpetuate its foundational principles and the Great Commission to go, make disciples, baptize and teach, (Matt 28: 18-19). Similar concepts concerning discipleship, curricula and young adults are discussed in the literature review.

Littleton argues that “growth in discipleship is a primary section in the Vision Statement of the 2019 – 2022 guidelines for the Anglican church to perpetuate the ministry of Jesus Christ.”¹³⁸ Nel and Moser argue that the establishment of a discipleship program has been in existence for some time and has just recently been revised in a number of churches. This revision is to ensure the perpetuity of the ministry of Jesus Christ and the church.¹³⁹

Seversen argues that young adults are the first ones to recognize that something is missing at the church that they are attending. They are ready to leave the church when they are void of spiritual growth.¹⁴⁰ The reason young adults can detect that something is missing in the training they are receiving is because they communicate with other young adults who are receiving some form of training that does not resonate with their training formats. Young adults want training that is relatable, consistent, and meaningful. If they are not getting it under their present leadership, they will go where they can feel the flow of discipleship in the leadership and membership.

The apostle Paul speaks of discipleship as venturing on a journey or taking an “active walk” where each person’s walk or stride is different from another person’s walk. The disciple chooses to walk toward commitment and salvation or a life of disobedience and destruction.¹⁴¹ Yes, biblical discipleship is a journey where the believer walks the same paths and roads Jesus walked. The journey, though it began over two thousand years ago, is fresh and comes alive as the believer takes Christ into his heart, mind and soul.

¹³⁸ Littleton, “The People of God, Discipleship and Ministry in the Anglican Church,” 3-20.

¹³⁹ Nel and Moser, “The Connection between Youth ministry’s Division:”1-8.

¹⁴⁰ Beth Seversen, *Not Done Yet*: 159-160.

¹⁴¹ Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 173.

According to Mariner “Jesus’ form of discipleship cannot be separated from God’s gift of salvation.”¹⁴² The leadership and young adults at Greater Love must recognize that discipleship is akin to salvation because a disciple and a church leader, who is also a disciple, must be saved before they can bring other disciples to Christ. *A Discipleship Training Guide* with all the tools and rudiment of a theological approach to discipleship will enlighten and invigorate young adults at GLMBC with renewed dedication and obedience to follow Christ and recognize their responsibilities.

Knowing Christ is a reason to trust and vigorously defend Him in the midst of nonbelievers and point them to God through the love and passion of Christ. The theoretical foundation of discipleship is found in the model of *Holy Habits* which includes the participation of individuals from all age levels. The author implies that theological research is a combination of action research and collaborative processes working together to rebirth theological practices in the Scriptures.¹⁴³ When member are given opportunities to develop Holy habits, they are obedient to God and the leadership of the church.

The suggestions derived from *Holy Habits* imply that the problem and purpose validates and supports the thesis of this researcher’s project. The theoretical foundation justifies the thesis by given valid reasons for the “if” and “then” segments. The “if” and “then” positions substantiates and authenticates the thesis theologically and theoretically by connectivity. Therefore, If the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

¹⁴² Keith T. Marriner II., *Following the Lamb: The Theme of Discipleship in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 38. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁴³ Butler, "The 'Long and Winding Road' of Faith," 277-289.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The ingredients that make up the organizing principles underlying this chapter have already been introduced. Chapter one includes the ministry context which introduces Greater Love Church; outlining its core values and historical timelines to the present day. It gives a synopsis of the problem affecting GLMB and poses a question related to its resolution. Chapter two discusses brief views on discipleship with a focus on leadership and poses a purpose for eliminating or reducing the problem. It includes scholarly authors with suggestions concerning how the researcher's problem may be improved.

The research design is represented in this chapter. The design describes how the project will be implemented to include data collection, the number of participants involved in the research, the relationship of the researcher to participants, and how information will be recorded and stored. This chapter initiates and discusses the heart of the research project and lists the research: method of the application of qualitative and quantitative research. These two methods of analysis give an in-depth outline of the organizing principles of the project.

Christian Formation and Human Development

The primary outcome of action-based research, such as this project, is to produce constructive concepts of Christian formation within the character and structure of the individuals participating in the research. The participation will give them training to impart what they have learned to their surroundings communities. Therefore, to resume the process of spiritually growing these participants after the research, this researcher will seek every opportunity to advance human development and spiritual growth in the lives of all participants engaged in this research. The researcher will use various activities and Scriptures that imitate the ministry of Jesus Christ. The strategy is to increase the faith of every participant and provide an atmosphere

of belonging so these young adults may grow spiritually in their everyday lives. Biblical discipleship is not easy to perform or engage in without a growing knowledge of Jesus Christ, faith development and Christian formation.

One of the most valuable gifts of the Spirit of God is faith. It is valuable because it is a gift and a fruit of the Spirit of God. Many individuals have lost it, while others have increased it. But, according to Estep and Kim, even though faith received many accolades throughout the New Testament, there are no sequential steps to substantiate its growth.¹⁴⁴ How does faith grow and by what standard does someone measure its intensity? This researcher intends to measure the intensity of the faith of ten participants involved in this research through qualitative research. The results will show that because of training with the discipleship guide, the faith of young adults increased.

Ryan states that the gap between the church and culture is further widened by what people believe and what they say they believe.¹⁴⁵ Estep and Kim conclude that this gap is found in the theological and theoretical foundation of resolving the nature of faith.¹⁴⁶ Faith can only be described, demonstrated, lived and proved qualitatively. It is an abstract fruit and gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it can only react as the Holy Spirit gives it utterance within a believer's body. So often belief is equated with faith, but the Holy Spirit does not activate belief. It can only activate faith and the other fruits and gifts that it empowers. Everyone believes in something, but faith is guided by the Spirit of God. Furthermore, God's image is the center-of biblical humanity. The belief that the capacity for religious awareness is innate in humans is the theological concept

¹⁴⁴ Estep, and Kim., Eds. *Christian Formation*: 221.

¹⁴⁵ Donna R. Ryan, *Equipped to Tell the Next Generation* (Eugene, OR: (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 49. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁴⁶ Estep and Kim, Eds. *Christian Formation*: 221 -222.

of humanity created in the image of God.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, these attributes give individuals the innate ability to gain spiritual insight from the research they are engaged in as well as contribute to the growth and responsibility of the accountability and trustworthiness of the research.

According to Estep and Kim, dealing with human development and theology is related significantly to an interworking relationship between psychology and theology.¹⁴⁸ That is why researchers are working with the arm of sociology to explore the realms of faith experimentally because it is connected to the mind, body, and soul of a participant in the field of research. The philosophical nature of the experimental subject is such that he is willing to be examined through methods that use observation, collection of data, and conversation to determine his/her spiritual views on certain topics involving faith.

Faith is a gift and a fruit of the Spirit of God. Faith gives the new convert a double boost of courage, strength and understanding to face and conquer any task that comes before him/her. It is the ingredient that causes things spoken into the atmosphere to come into existence and bring about changes in the life of the believer. Matthew's Gospel tells Christians that faith moves mountains (Matt 17:20). It is this faith that is ever-growing, ever-learning, and enduring through stressful times and prosperous times. It will carry new converts into the community, proclaiming the grace of God and the salvation that is given them through His Son, Jesus Christ. This same faith will enable them to teach, train and convert other followers to imitate Christ and perpetuate His ministry throughout eternity,. The disciples said to Christ, "increase our faith" (Luke 17:5 ESV). The disciples knew that for them to be effective in the community of unbelievers and those who had just received a glimpse of Christ, they had to be able to perform the same tasks

¹⁴⁷ Dr. Felicity B. Kelcourse, *Human Development and Faith (Second Edition): Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*. (Danvers: Chalice Press, 2015), 162.

¹⁴⁸ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation: vii*.

that would cause the people to not only follow them, but to believe the things they were saying about Jesus Christ. The same principles apply to these participants. This researcher asks them to do the same things Christ taught His disciples to do once they have been trained in the rudiments of discipleship. They must go into the local communities and show unbelievers that going through Christ and God is the only way to receive salvation. The concept of Christian formation in these participants must be learned from the premise that their faith should grow daily as they involve themselves in knowing Christ and participating in the spiritual activities listed in the discipleship guide. There are no direct steps for developing faith in this guide, nor are there direct steps listed in the Bible. This researcher is depending on the verses in the Bible to promote and grow faith in these participants (Heb 1:1; Luke 1:37; 2 Cor 5:7; Rom 10:37).

The increase of faith in these participants as they engage in the processes of the research project will focus in such areas as social, ethical, spiritual and physical adjustments. Every aspect of faith development is related to psychological and social changes generated through reflection and experience.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, this researcher aims to train, teach, and mentor these participants in the rudiments of faith that Christ trained and taught His disciples so they will bear fruit throughout the seasons. She trusts that these participants will receive the faith of Jeremiah who believed that “Blessed is the man whose belief is in the Lord; His belief is the LORD. He is like a tree that is planted by the waters. Its roots flow into the stream. It has no fear when heat comes, for its leaves are still green. It is not restless in the year of drought, because it continues to bear fruit” (Jer 17:7-8 ESV).

¹⁴⁹ Kelcourse, *Human Development and Faith*: 72.

Faith and trust are the driving forces behind this project. This researcher's faith in God and her trust in the participants will provide the substance that will generate positive and consistent evidence in the outcomes of this project. This belief is based on the recipe and ingredients received from reading the books authored by Sensing, Estep, Kim, Merriam and Tisdale who laid the groundwork for the implementation of this project. Therefore, this researcher is following the recipe and using the ingredients they suggest in producing a well-developed product.

Sensing provides the initial ingredients and writes that methodology consists of three general parts: the rationale, the intervention and the evaluation.¹⁵⁰ He suggests that the three parts describe the approach to resolving the problem. This researcher has designed a general format that examines each segment of the parts of the methodological approach to ensure that she is including the proper ingredients.

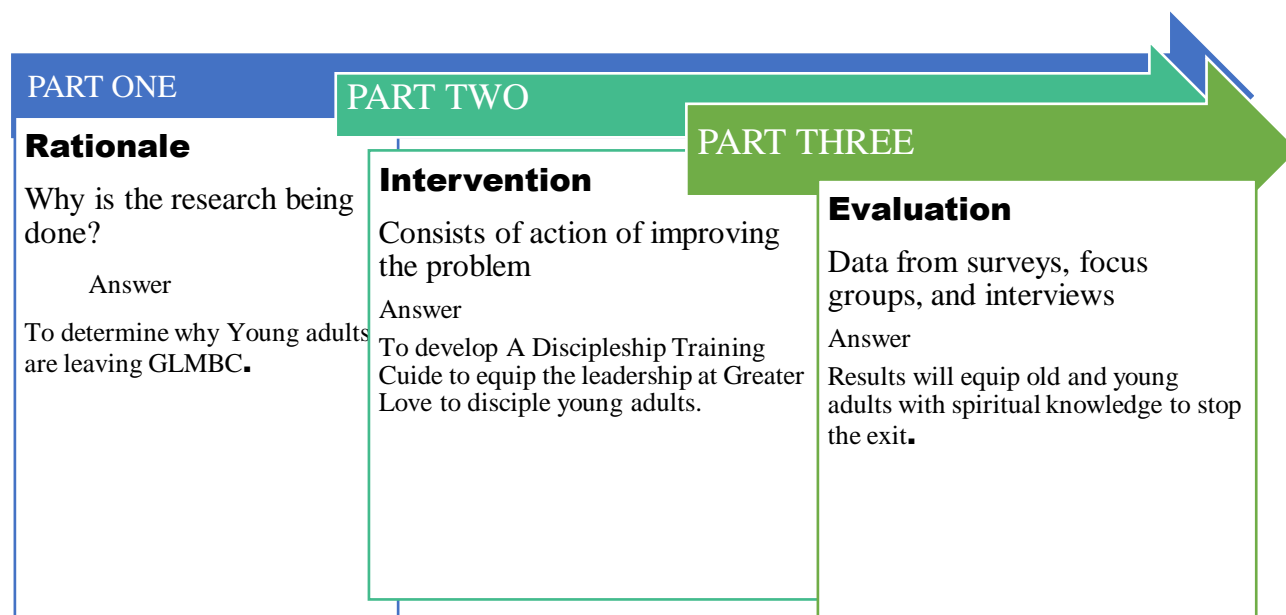


Figure 1. The methodology Process

¹⁵⁰ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research : a Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 63-66.

The Rationale

The rationale covers the purpose and reason for the research. It gives an overarching description of the research and how it was accomplished. Several questions will be answered; such as, “What is the nature of the project,” “Why is the project being investigated,” and “Who is involved in the project?” Merriam and Tisdale say, in qualitative research, understanding is the primary rationale for the investigative research.¹⁵¹

Sensing states that his approach to the rationale of research is devoted to inquiry rather than choosing a particular method.¹⁵² This researcher will begin her study using the same practical approach. Inquiry based learning is a process where participants take part in active research. The participants are engaged in real-world connections through exploration, experimentation and problem-solving activities. It places them in positions to become data collectors, decision makers and designers of the action-research project. The application of inquiry is a rationale that allows the researcher to learn the basic character of the participants, their motivations, and their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is essential that this researcher ensures that all the participants understand their parts and roles they will play in the rational segment of the research. This researcher must convey to the participants proper ethics in research which contribute to the integrity, authenticity, and efficacy of the research. In other words, the participants must know why they are participating in this research, the purpose of the research, and the importance of observing ethical protocol. This process will be discussed with the participants in a closed meeting.

¹⁵¹ Sharan B Merriam and Elizabeth Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (Newark, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Incorporated 2015), 239. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁵² Sensing, *Qualitative Research* : 55.

The Intervention

Intervention is a process of deliberately entering a situation to improve a problem. Jenny H. Packs suggests that qualitative research describes and clarifies the intervention of human experiences which is difficult to do.¹⁵³ It is difficult because humans have features including physical and mental characteristics that cannot be measured accurately with tools basic to scientific research. According to Sensing, intervention is derived from a theological plan of action.¹⁵⁴ The following questions arise: “Where are we going?” The focus is on direction. “How will we get there?” Strategies and processes are at work in determining what path to take through action-research, and “How will we know when we get there?” Knowing when the road ends is determined through the assessment of data collected by the participants, analyzed and synthesized by the researcher. Therefore, this researcher will begin the intervention process after receiving approval from IRB and her mentor. The intervention will describe the processes involved in collected data from questionnaires, observation, surveys and focus groups. A small segment will be identified quantitatively.

The Evaluation

Merriam and Tisdale state that evaluation is the result of collected data based on the worth or value of a program. Its purpose is to make judgments about the effectiveness of the program, to communicate decisions about future programming.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, evaluation determines the validity of a program: whether it meets a standard appropriate for the stakeholders involved in the ownership and distribution of its products.

¹⁵³Jenny H. Pak, and Stacy Eltiti, “Integrating Theology in Teaching Quantitative and Qualitative Research in Psychology,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 42, no. 1 (spring, 2023): 15-17.

¹⁵⁴ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*: 10.

¹⁵⁵ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*: 4.

This researcher will evaluate the efficacy of this research through data collected from focus groups, questionnaires, surveys and field notes. The evaluation of the increase in spiritual disciplines cannot be measured instrumentally. This researcher will monitor the differences between the spiritual attributes of the participants during the time they began the research to when the research ends. Essentially, Christian researchers who hope to capture spiritual experiences need to engage in qualitative research accurately and complete agreement.¹⁵⁶

Therefore, this chapter will present the individual tasks for the design of the discipleship training guide by including the basic tools of discipleship along with four themes. The guide's primary focus will be on the first theme: Knowing Jesus. It is imperative that disciples, when being about God's business, know who Christ is and have a personal relationship with Him if they are to be effective in spreading the Gospel of the Great Commission. Knowing about Christ's ministry and His place in the Old and New Testaments are essential in training, increasing faith, and engaging in service. These themes are found in figure 2.

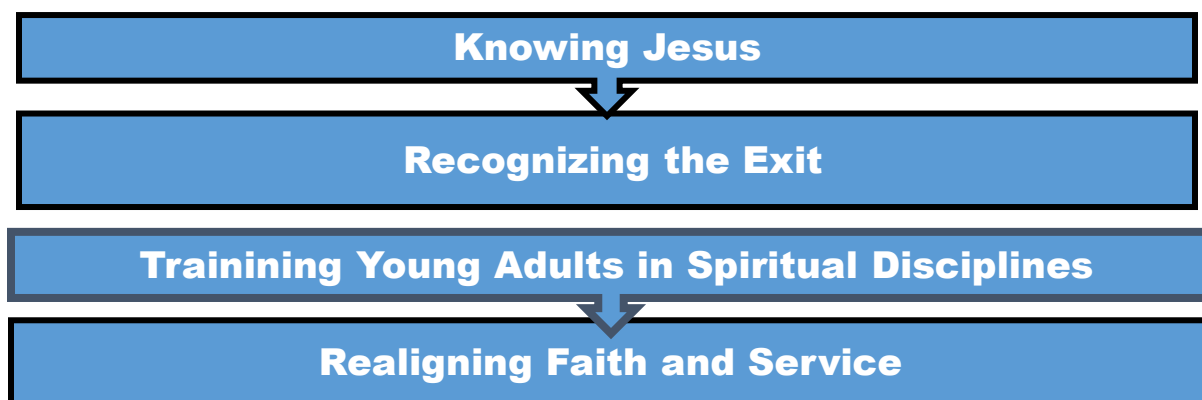


Figure 2: primary themes.

Some of these themes were originally gleaned from the analysis of the pre-questionnaires. An analysis of the post-questionnaire results revealed a reoccurrence of the same

¹⁵⁶ Pak, and Eltiti, "Integrating Theology Research:" 15-17.

themes throughout the responses the participants gave. These patterns were easily recognizable throughout the research project as well as the tools of discipleship.

The tools of discipleship will be identified and included in the guide. These tools will prove to be the solution to the problem affecting GLMBC. These are the tools that the church leadership lacks in training and retaining young people in the membership. These tools are found in the Bible and are tools used by Christ to train His disciples. The tools of discipleship are essential when implementing them into the church's ministry. Training members to become disciples without the proper tools is futile, frustrating, and exhausting. The leadership at GLMBC eventually discovered this deficit when young adults began to leave the church. Therefore, the tools of discipleship are included in the *Discipleship Training Guide*.

There are three lists of tools. This researcher decided to group them in order of need, proficiency and spiritual growth. She received the order from the participants during one of the group activities. The participants ranked the tools according to their needs, with prayer being the first tool. Their reason was that no tool could be used effectively without prayer. Bible study was next because it was the road map that showed them the way to salvation after praying to God. Then, the third tool was confession. They felt that after prayer and Bible study, they would be ready to make a confession which would result in baptism and an introduction into fellowship with the membership through the breaking of bread and drinking wine. The application of these previous tools gives the individual spiritual authority, courage, and understanding to imitate Christ, engage in fellowship with the body of Christ, and a discerning spirit to understand the spiritual power received from praise and worship. Now he/she will begin to edify God and other believers while participating in corporate prayer. He /she will begin to understand the "Golden Rule" as they start reciprocating the results of their faith toward each other. Now, they are ready

to evangelize in the surrounding community. They have learned how to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, and share their personal encounters with Christ, while walking into the area of stewardship: giving of time, finances and serving others.

Tools	Tools	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • Bible Study • Confession • Baptism • Communion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitate Christ • Fellowship • Praise/Worship • Edifying Others • Corporate Prayer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reciprocation • Evangelism • Sharing Jesus • Stewardship

Figure 3: the tools of discipleship

The purpose and objective of the intervention design is to develop a *Discipleship Training Guide* that emphasizes discipleship to increase the retention of young adults. It will address the problem and the project's purpose through qualitative and quantitative analysis using a thematic approach of themes, patterns and categories of small quantities. The deductive method is used where codes are drawn from the data collected from participants. These codes are fixed for heightened levels of reliability. This researcher will use field notes, surveys, and questionnaires for triangulation. The ten participants in this research are all adults. They are a combination of millennials and young adults participating in the research to represent the constituency of the membership. Two of the participants are leaders of the church and will take an active part in the training. The leadership must know Christ and develop a personal relationship with Him and the young adults if they are to make changes in the future structure of

GLMBC. This researcher expects that the participants will enjoy the action based activities assigned for each of the six sessions.

Intervention Design

The intervention design for this project cannot begin without the approval of the IRB and the assigned mentor. The design previews the who, what, when, where, and how of the project in addressing the problem and answering the research questions. This researcher is familiar with all ten participants. Seven are members of her congregation. The remaining three are aware of the church's existence, but are not members. They do attend on various occasions and are looking for a home church.

As the pastor of this church, this researcher understands that she is in a position of influence, but she will make a verbal declaration that she will not influence the study. She will make it clear to the research participants that their decision to take part in this research will have no impact on their present or upcoming associations with GLMBC or this researcher. All the participants respect her and have known her for several year; they believe in her leadership as a pastor, her honesty and integrity. This researcher has a mutual respect for the members of this research project and will carry out her responsibilities during the stages of the intervention design process of the research. This part of the intervention design involves several tasks that must be performed. The research should take six to eight weeks to test the training guide for efficacy and authenticity. The leaders involved in the training will be given a synopsis of the guide which will last for the first three weeks before the initial training.

The first task will consist of writing a flyer to announce the research project to the church (see Appendix A). The flyer lets the surrounding community know about the research and that they can be involved in the training process. It also lists the requirements and gets the attention

of Gen Zers and Millennials living in the church community.

The second task will consist of sending a recruitment letter to GLMBC, seeking participants for the project (see Appendix B). This letter breaks down the reason for the research and gives potential participants a reason to attend the initial meeting. The letter also gives the potential participant notice of the time of the meeting so he/she will have prior notice. Participants will have ample time to decide if they will participate in the research.

The third task will consist of sending a follow-up recruitment letter to the church (see Appendix C). The follow-up letter reminds potential participants who have not responded to the first letter, how much time they have left if they are considering taking part in the research. The fourth task consists of the pastor, a doctoral candidate for the DMIN degree, requesting the use of the church facilities (see Appendix D). Although, this researcher is also the pastor, she recognizes that she does not own the facility. She is showing proper etiquette by giving the Board Directors the advantage of saying yes, or no.

The fifth task will consist of sending a consent form to potential participants (see Appendix E). The consent form, along with the mentor will give the researcher permission to start the project. It will list the conditions and activities involving the participant. It will discuss the terms of consent along with the signature of the participant to satisfy the IRB requests. The consent form will be discussed in detail at the initial meeting. An extra note will be placed in the envelope to invite all participants to attend an invitational dinner on Tuesday at 5:30 in the church's fellowship hall. The researcher will introduce the consent form Tuesday evening by projecting an image of the form on a screen. All follow-up questions will be answered. The researcher will answer additional questions before asking participants to raise their hands if they want to volunteer. The volunteers will sign the forms and pass them on to the church leaders.

The church leaders will pass them to the researcher. She will place them in her personal file cabinet which will always be locked. Each participant will be given a note book, a pen, pencil, and a small note pad which they will leave at the church after each week of training.

A general analysis of the distribution of participants is found in figure 4.

The graph gives a demographic distribution of the participants according to their age levels. A percentage distribution of the ages are also given. This information is used in the description of the participants. In essence, there are ten participants, ranging in ages 20 to above fifty, the lowest percentage of age level is 10 percent, while the highest is 40 percent.

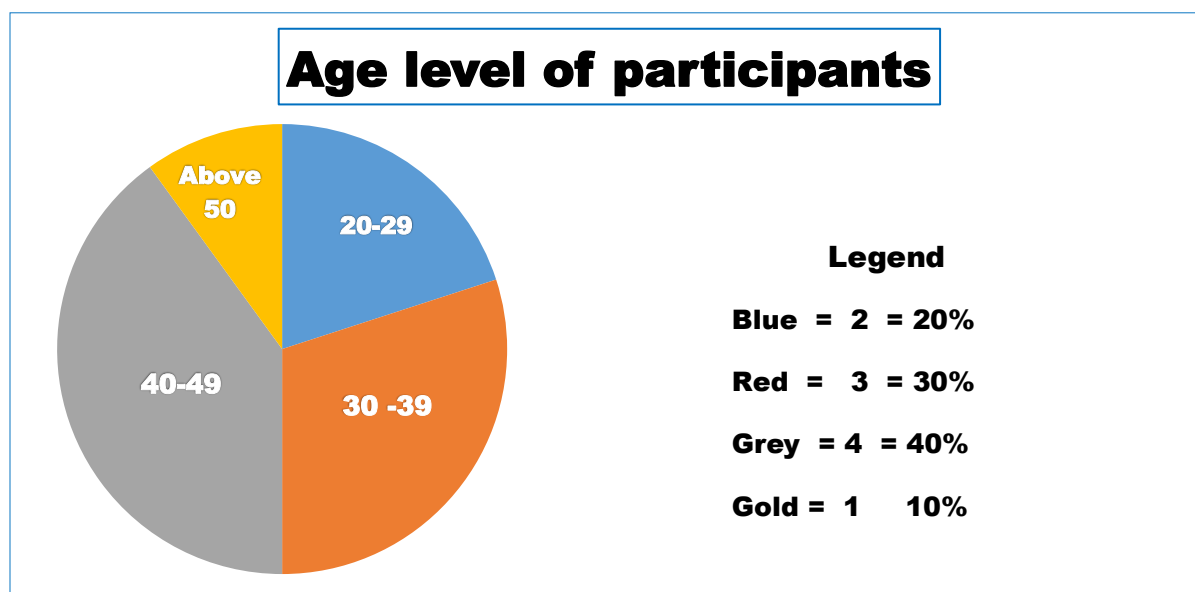


Figure 4: age distribution of participants

The researcher has prepared five blue and five red cards with numbers one to five written on them to determine the experimental and control groups for the research project. The researcher will ask each participant to choose a red or blue card. The five participants who chose the red cards will be the experimental group, while the five who chose the blue cards will be the control group. These individuals will be assigned numbers in the research process referring to them individually. These numbers and the colors will be written on all the materials used by the

individual member to maintain clarity and unity. This method is chosen for the safety of hiding their identities from anyone who is asked to read the material for clarity, and substance, in verifying the authenticity of the *Discipleship Training Guide*. Using numbers instead of names will reassure the participants that all their information given through interviews, questionnaires, and surveys will be kept confidential. This is a reiteration of what is written in the consent forms.

This graph represents the visual number of females to males participating in the research. The number of females almost always outnumbers the males in most research projects of this nature. Figure 5 represents the visual number of females to males participating in the research.

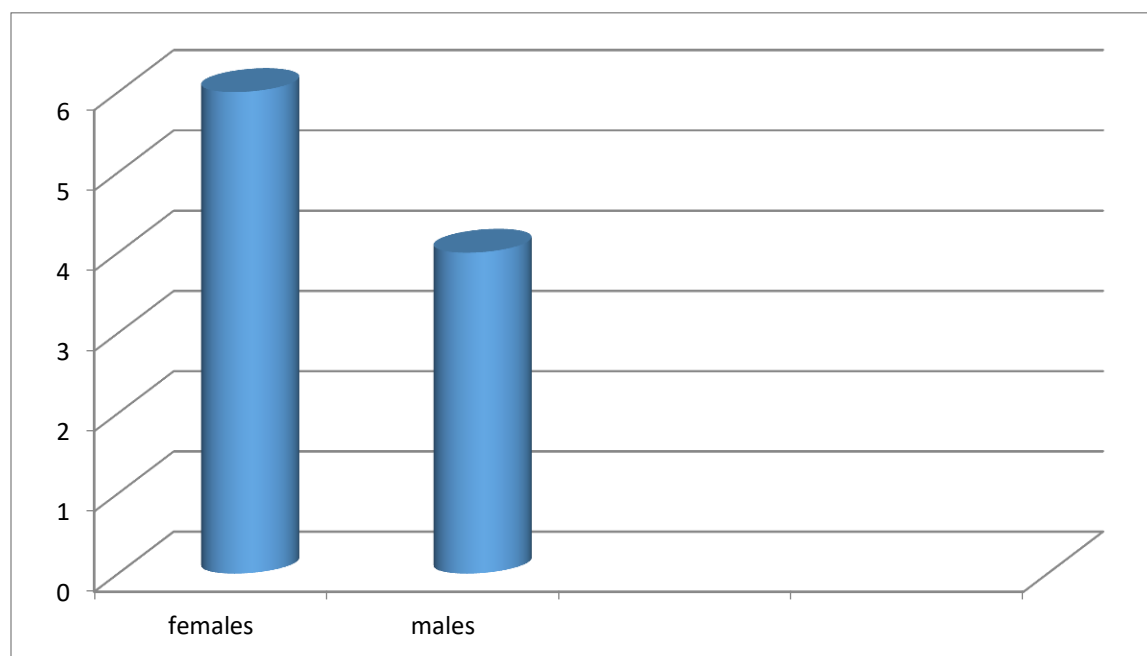


Figure 5 shows the number of males and females in the research.

Both groups will be exposed to the same material, such as the Scriptures for each session, which is projected on the screen for them to learn and recite at the net session. Each verse pertains to the session. They may write the verse in their note books. They are also included in the opening and closing prayers to increase their faith, and remind them of their commitment to attend and complete all the sessions. They are encouraged to volunteer to pray; and some do pray

during and after the sessions. Finally they enjoy the moments of fellowship with the entire group of participants. The control and experimental groups take part in all other segments of the research, except for the training and using the guide. The control group will not receive training or use the guide. Then, they will go to separate parts of the building. They will come together during the last ten minutes of each session for closing prayer. Prayer will strengthen the participant's resolve to trust and follow God through the messages received in the training classes and the fellowship at the end of the sessions. Fellowship and prayer are tools of discipleship which will also give them the stamina and a strong conviction to continue attending the training sessions and see them to completion.

All the participants, serving as stakeholders, will gain an inside view of what strategic methodologies are used to address the problem and will observe how the leadership works to design and develop solutions to the problem. The participants working together will create an environment of trust, dependence, and fellowship that will minister to the needs of all church members and the community when the research is completed. They will also gain an inter-working knowledge of what it takes to be a servant of the people, the community, and the duties of a church leader. The guide will be taught to all church members. Different sessions will be written for the youth.

The sixth task will consist of the researcher showing a PowerPoint display which will include the problem; the purpose and plan (see Appendix F). This task gives direction for the problem, purpose and the plan and lets the stakeholders know what is expected. It will answer questions such as who, what, when, where, and how during the research. It supports the purpose and objective of the research project because the participants will be representatives of gathering tools for the project and will serve as representatives for data collection.

After completing the PowerPoint display, the leadership will pass out an open-ended survey for each participant to complete (see Appendix G). The survey will be completed by the participants before entering the researcher's office for the recorded interview. They will enter the door one at a time. The remaining participants will be entertained by the leadership who will hand out materials such as note pads for the research and monitor the participant's progress.

The seventh task will consist of a pre-interview questionnaire. The researcher will turn on the recorder and ask the same interview questions to all the participants (See Appendix H). The recorder will be turned off after each participant finishes and turned on again when the next participant enters. This process will continue until all participants are finished. The participants are asked to return to the fellowship hall the following Saturday morning for a brunch, prepared by the kitchen staff. The researcher will make recordings and maintain a journal entry of all participants. The researcher will record in her journal, reactions, bodily movements, moods, and gestures of the participants'. Each move and gesture will assist the researcher when analyzing the focus group discussions to see how well the participants work together.

The researcher will take the interviews home to be transcribed. Each question will be coded to recognize the themes embedded in the questions. Coding allows the researcher to identify bits of nuggets that are related to the themes and will aid in analyzing the recordings of the interview for strength, weaknesses, comparisons and differences in postures. A copy of the individual surveys, pre and post will be stored in locked compartments. This form of introductory survey will generate lasting results graphically that the researcher may make a part of her spiritual growth ethics and spiritual knowledge for each participant by referring back to its outcomes, while writing the results of the research.

The eighth task will consist of the participants meeting at the fellowship hall the following Tuesday at 5:30 pm to select a facilitator for the experimental group. The group will choose a facilitator. The researcher will discuss details of the purpose of each group and the purpose of the *Discipleship Training Guide*. The researcher will train one of the five experimental participants and one of the participants of the control group how to facilitate the processes that will occur in the groups. They will receive the following training:

1. Assure that the session starts on time and will keep a second hand watch with them to begin the activity part of the session and when to end the session.
2. Ensure that all members of his/her group has all the materials for each session.
3. Keep a recording of each focus group's discussions.
4. Keep a journal of the group sessions.
5. Monitor members for refreshments and breaks.
6. Ensure that all members of his/her group leave their notebooks and note pads, pens, pencils, and color-coded cards at the church.
7. Ensure that the members of their group are relaxed and comfortable.
8. Assist in guiding the discussions.
9. Assist in recording focus groups.
10. Maintain journaling of all events.
11. Ending the sessions on time.

The ninth task will consists of the experimental group receiving a copy of the DTG (see Appendix K). The researcher will tell the five participants to take out their notebooks and prepare to take notes on the guide. The sessions will last 2.5 hours. The control group will not receive the DTG, but will learn on their own through reading their Bibles, perusing other

Christian journals and books placed in the room and receiving instruction from a facilitator placed in the room with them to monitor the time and offer them refreshments. The research and training will continue for six to eight weeks. The tenth task will consist of the groups taking the post-survey and questionnaire given in the fellowship hall (See Appendix L and M). The surveys are given to make comparisons between the first and second surveys.

The results of both surveys should convey an increase in results if the guide is authentic and reliable. The researcher will take the first survey and compare it with the second survey while checking for the codes that were originally assessed to each theme. She will collect the data, analyze them and construct a graphical analysis of the result of the themes with a primary focus on the theme: Knowing God.

Task eleven task consists of the researcher collecting all journals and recordings made by the facilitator. The researcher will analyze each participant's journal; looking for similar and dissimilar reactions, while comparing certain aspects of it to her own journal. She will analyze the recordings for specific details of the themes and how they will be used in coding and the thematic analysis process of the qualitative process. A thorough diagnostic review of all data will be analyzed to give a true picture of the efficacy, validity and authenticity of the DTG. All journals and recordings will be kept in a safe enclosure. The twelfth task consists of the participants receiving certificates of participation and a catered dinner. This task is the last day the participants will work in this capacity. This researcher wanted to express her appreciation to the participants for the orderly process and work they had completed. The meal was catered by a local chef. The certificates were professionally designed so the participants will remember the occasion when they were data collectors for this researcher's research project.

These twelve tasks may be difficult to follow in their written format. Therefore the researcher has condensed the tasks and placed them in a chart so the reader may be able to follow their sequences as they relate to the order of the tasks involved in this research. They are found in table 1.3. The tasks are important because they give the reader a step by step progression of what each process the research is conveying to his/her audience. It also gives a breakdown of the steps and shows a visual representation of them by placing them in the appendices so they can be easily seen and interpreted. This researcher has prepared a chart of the tasks to recap for her readers. The chart gives a step by step progression of the tasks, the person responsible for delivering the information, how the data is collected, and the place where the task will take place

TASK	HOW DATA IS GIVEN	HOW DATA IS COLLECTED	PLACE OF ADMINISTRATION
Received IRB Approval	Told by mentor	NA	Office/Fellowship
1. Sent flyers	By secretary	NA	(See Appendix A)
2. Given recruitment letter	By secretary	At first meeting	(See Appendix B)
3. Sent follow-up letter	By secretary	At first meeting	(See Appendix C)
4. Permission to use facilities	Letter to the Board	Board member	(See Appendix D)
5. Consent forms given to participants at first meeting.	At meeting	After meeting by raised hand	(See Appendix E)
6. PowerPoint display given	At meeting	In person at meeting	(See Appendix F)
7. Pre- survey, questionnaire	Pre-and post-info	Lock in safe place	(See Appendix G, H, I and J)
8. Participants placed in 2 groups: experimental and control	Participants pick a red or blue card	Facilitator will give cards to researcher	Fellowship hall
9. Experimental group gets DTG,	Instructions to facilitators	Facilitator give data to researcher daily	second classroom (See Appendix K)
10. Post surveys and post questionnaire given	Surveys given to researcher	Guide taken up	(See Appendix L & M)
11. Research data collected	Facilitators		Fellowship hall

Table 1:2 recaps of tasks

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Implementation of the intervention design began on December 15, 2023, two weeks after receiving notice from the mentor and the IRB approval on the twenty-eighth of November. The participants were contacted by the secretary and told to meet at the church for a fellowship dinner and discussion of the research. When they arrived the leadership and the researcher greeted them and opened the meeting with Scripture and prayer. The participants completed their meal and the researcher discussed the project by asking the participants to hold up the consent forms received earlier by the secretary. The projector was already in place and set to project the first page of the consent form(Appendix E) The researcher asked the participants to read along silently while she read aloud, stopping at each paragraph to allow for questions.

There were no questions. The researcher asked the participants if they understood all the procedures. One participant asked a question about what to do if an emergency occurred and they were not able to make it to a session. The response by the researcher was that he should take care of the emergency first and then attend the session if time permitted and be filled in later, but if he was not able to attend, remember what had been mentioned earlier; “your participation is not binding.” The researcher stated that prayerfully, nothing will happen, and the sessions will continue as planned. The participant appeared to be satisfied with the researcher’s response. The researcher told the participants if there were no more questions, to sign the form and pass them to the leader of the church. Ten participants responded by signing the form. The researcher thanked the other members for attending and released them so she could continue the meeting with the remaining ten participants. The researcher proceeded with the PowerPoint presentation that introduced the research (see Appendix F). She read the problem, the purpose, and the approach to attack the problem; asking for questions as the statements was read. Everyone appeared to be

aware of the problem and was pleased that some form of intervention was in progress.

The researcher told the participants they will be given a pre-survey and recorded questionnaire (see Appendices H, I, and J). The meeting should last no more than thirty minutes. She asked the participants to remain seated and take the survey while the leaders ushered them individually into the pastor's office to take the recorded questionnaire. One of the leaders recorded the interview, while the researcher asked random questions from the questionnaire and took notes on the reaction of each participant as the question was answered. This process continued until the last participant completed the interview. The participants, when leaving the interview, were told to complete the same questionnaire in writing in the fellowship hall. The leadership gave each participant a form and a pencil when they entered the fellowship hall (see Appendix H).

The purpose for the written questionnaire was to have additional information that would not be revealed in the interview. The participant would feel free to respond without any pressure from the pastor or church leader. The information written on these forms would give the researcher additional information that would not be found in the answers from the interview when coding the process for analysis. The reason the researcher decided to use a survey and a questionnaire is to narrow the information so she could receive precise answers that would be consistent and valid, and authentic. If a person is saying the same thing verbally, in written form and in a relaxed atmosphere where he/she must circle and answer a give response, then, all the answers will coincide. If the answers are different, the participant is not being truthful or there may be extenuating circumstances which prevent them from knowing, such as the person may not be a full-time member and would not know. The researcher will take note of such an incident if it shows up in the analysis and will monitor the individual throughout the research program to

determine if there is a change in his/her responses.

The researcher placed the recordings, surveys, and questionnaires in a secure place. She began to design categories for the codes that previously determined from the foundations of the theological and theoretical concepts, review of the literature, and the responses from the questionnaires. The participants were asked to meet each Tuesday afternoon at 5:30 in the fellowship hall to begin the first session of the *Discipleship Training Guide*. The sessions are designed to last no more than two and one-half hours. The remaining five sessions will take place each Tuesday afternoon until all six sessions are complete.

Coding and Categorizing Data

The researcher immediately began placing the answers to the survey in a standard format, while looking for general patterns throughout the responses that were similar. The codes were assessed for each answer the participants gave and arranged in a presentable form for the results segment of the project. When the interview was given to every participant, some behaved awkwardly because they had never been recorded before, while others answered the questions naturally with very little hesitation.

The participants whom the researcher believed would have instant answers, struggled intensely to give a reasonable and appropriate answer. These answers were also analyzed, looking for examples of coding that were related to the pre-determined themes/categories derived through deductive processes from the data. Bits and pieces of data were gleaned from transcripts written from recorded interviews, group discussions and field notes. They were compared with the data gathered from surveys and interviews captured in the initial research data. These results were merged to derive a general set of codes/patterns that were checked with the themes previously and currently determined through pre-data analysis. The merger identified and

confirmed themes from the theological, theoretical, and literature revue. Other strongly confirmed themes were detected due to the merger; some were added to the list, while those that were not recurring were deleted. Open coding was used.

The results from the final survey confirmed the themes selected from the initial-survey and the initial-questionnaires related to “knowing Jesus.” The codes found in the post-survey matched the patterns and codes in the post survey. This theme appeared multiple times in the pre-survey, pre-questionnaires and the focus groups activities in the discipleship guide. The decision was made during the pre-research stage of implementing the discipleship guide to focus on the theme of “knowing Christ” because this theme was far-reaching in providing ample material from the Old and New Testaments that were extensive, practical and related to the problem of the project. There were a total of four themes; only one theme was used in the *Disciple Training Guide*. That theme was “knowing Jesus”.

The remaining three themes will be discussed and explored later during the growth and leadership ministry of the church. This theme was chosen first because it provided more feedback from the original surveys and questionnaires. Furthermore, this researcher noticed that some themes overlapped with knowing Christ. These themes were training in spiritual disciplines, and realigning faith and service, but they were not used as codes in both or all three areas. Much of the recurring data bits were showing up in the same theme associated with Knowing Christ. Therefore, the researcher devoted the guide to knowing Christ and forming a personal relationship with Him. It is the belief that when young adults know who Christ is, what He sacrificed for them, how He suffered for them, and gave His live for a ransom for their sins; then, they would be prone to accept Him as their Lord and Savior. Therefore, much attention was focused on this theme because it will become the driving force behind restructuring the

framework for the implementation of a new strategic plan to develop a new focus for GLMBC.

This researcher decided that the other themes would be included in the DTG later, once the church membership and new converts had a working knowledge of the identity of Christ. She would further strategize to design activities with all the church leadership engaging in evangelism and receiving trainings on forming personal relationships with Christ and other church community members. These strategies are important for the retention of young adults. Further plans will be designed to train and teach the present membership on the first theme and follow up with the other themes once spiritual and physical growth are observed in the leadership and the membership. It is often said in the Christian arena of theology and philosophy, “How can one teach about Jesus, when they do not know Him or have a personal relationship with Him?”

This researcher’s intention is for all the members of GLMBC, including new converts to receive training, teaching and mentoring on knowing Christ and developing personal relationships with Him. When youth are taught who Christ is at an early age, they will not forget the impact He made on their lives in the young adult stages of their spiritual development in their Christian training. They will appreciate the trainings, contributions and molding that created permanent fixtures in their lives.

The entire church will feel the change in the atmosphere, the music and the messages coming from the church’s clergy. Once the head is focused in the right direction, the rest of the body will line up with the Word of God and follow the leader. Following church leaders who are saved, equipped with biblical knowledge, and obedient to the Word of God is essential for the spiritual and emotional growth of the physical church. It also gives direction for the maturation of the spiritual church lead by the ministry of Christ. When church leaders are in step with the teachings and trainings left by Christ, the membership will line up behind the leader and follow

him/her wherever he/she would go, including directions that are daring and challenging.

The members of the church need to imitate the movements and actions of the leader, while walking beside him/her. The leadership of struggling churches may take a lesson from this analogy: this researcher has. Therefore, reiterating the thesis of this researcher's project: if the leadership is trained with discipleship tools tailored to the needs of the church, then, they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter is the results of data that was gathered by stakeholders to develop a proactive Bible-based Discipleship Training Guide for the retention of young adults. The outline of the research produced the following results: Ten participants became stakeholders by taking part as data collectors. Five were placed in a red group, the experimental group, while five were placed in a blue group, the control group. Both groups received all material and information except group blue did not take part in the training. The gathering sources were focus groups, interviews, surveys, and questionnaires. Data collected from the sources were coded, analyzed, synthesized, and triangulated. Codes were taken from the transcript of the participant's interview questions. Data focusing on the efficacy of the themes was used to develop a *Discipleship Training Guide* to increase the retention of young adults.

The researcher merged these themes with the pre-selected themes previously chosen from the literature. Several of the themes previously selected did not merge effectively with the themes taken from the research. Therefore, this researcher decided to include additional themes from the research data that received the most responses when the themes were tallied to receive authenticity and reliability when the guide was tested.

A far-reaching goal of this research is recognizing a multigenerational membership working together as a Bible-based group of believers: loving, lifting, and sharing each other's problems and troubles. A secondary goal of these results is to develop a church committed to Christ, the surrounding community and a place where young adults will find their spiritual home. Finally, these results will determine the discipleship tools needed to train and teach the leadership to disciple and guide young adults presently in the membership at GLMBC.

Collected Results

The researcher analyzed the transcript of the interviews several times. Parts of the interview questionnaires were scrutinized line by line for each participant. The researcher was looking for code words that could be assigned to various categories. The following categories were constructed from the following codes found in the majority of all answers.

Category one is entitled knowing Jesus

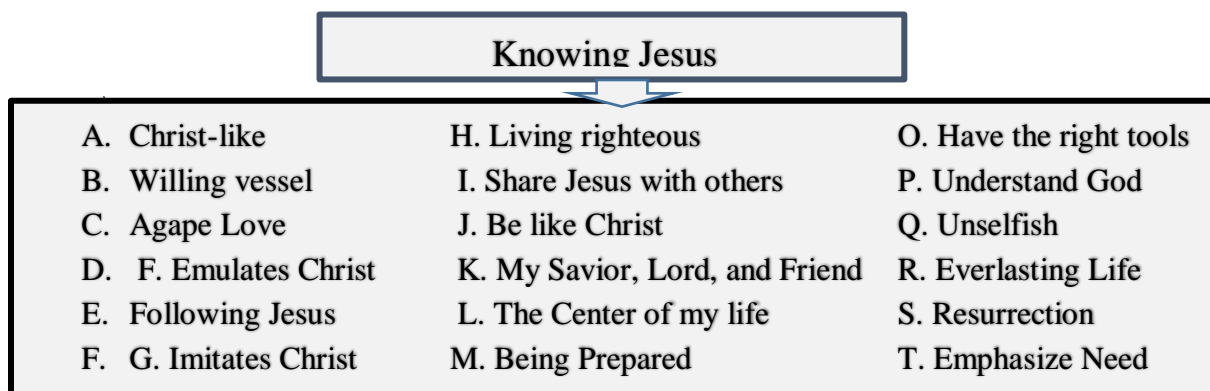


Figure 6: First theme

This category had more patterns in the list of codes than the other themes. These patterns were easy to recognize because they are all relatable to Jesus Christ. Participants discussed terms associated with the theological and theoretical foundations in the questionnaires and responded positively to similar pattern found in the surveys. Their answers in the interview questions were direct and posed no false projection of ambiguous remarks.

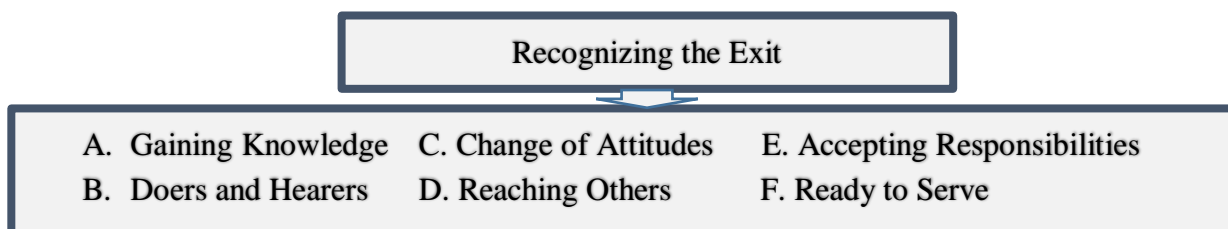


Figure 7: Second theme

. Recognizing the exit had very little codes that could be classified as a legitimate theme, but this researcher included it because Severson concludes that young adults were the first ones

to recognize the exit and the first to leave the church.¹⁵⁷ Connecting this information with the purpose is relatable because it ties in indirectly with equipping the leadership with the proper tools of discipleship so they will be able to train and teach young adults. The participants saw these codes as the duties of the leadership of the church once they began to recognize the exit. The rise of the exit of young adults from the church indicates that the leadership of the church need to reflect on the church and its deficiencies rather than treating young adults as problems that need to be solve.¹⁵⁸ According to Merriam and Tisdale categories should represent the purpose of the research.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, the purpose of this research project is to develop a *Discipleship Training Guide* to train and equip the leadership of GLMBC to disciple young adults. The third theme, “Training in Spiritual Disciplines” and its codes are found in figure 8.

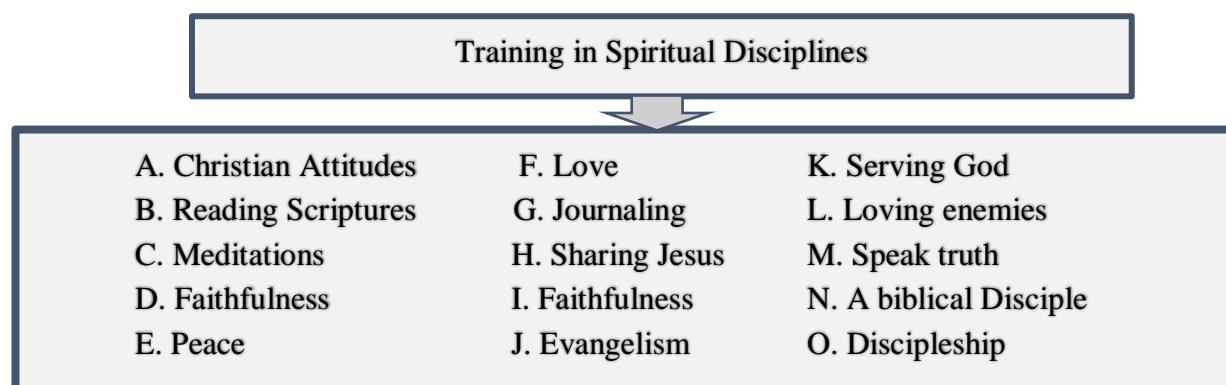


Figure 8: Third theme

The theme, “Training young adults in spiritual disciplines” generated a number of codes from the pre-questionnaires, interviews and surveys. These codes were easy to find because they left patterns throughout the collected data. Furthermore, spiritual disciplines are the background structure of developing a biblical discipleship program.

¹⁵⁷ Seversen, *Not Done Yet*: 159-160.

¹⁵⁸ Ketcham, *Reciprocal Church*: 170.

¹⁵⁹ Merriam, and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*: 212.

The fourth theme, “Realigning Faith and Service” is vital to the success of the guide because the role of the church is to support the faith of each individual member. A members’ faith maybe weak or strong, therefore it is the duty of the leadership to ensure that each member feels secure in the operation of his/her faith. The inclusion of this theme ensures that these codes will serve to be prime movers in the implementation of the discipleship guide.

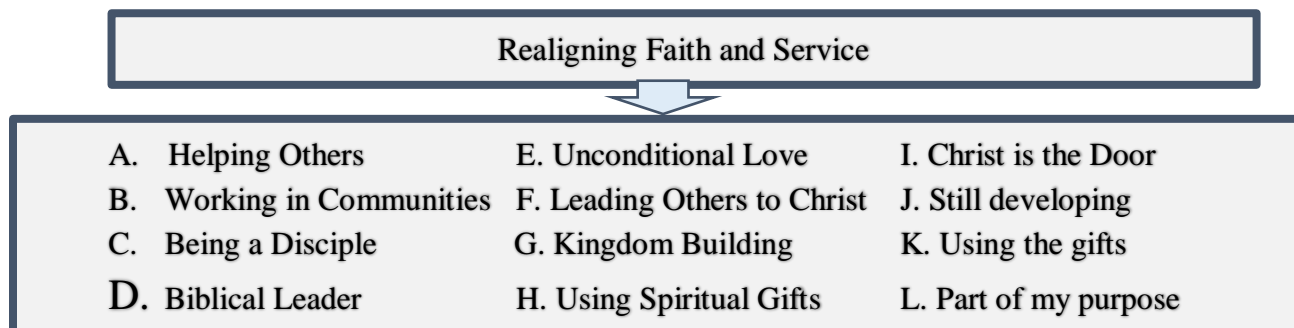


Figure 9: The fourth theme

There were more codes related to knowing Jesus and training in spiritual disciplines in the post surveys and questionnaires than from the answers participants gave in the pre-surveys and pre-questionnaires. These codes were recurring words or phrases that showed up in every segment of all the participants responses. After analyzing these codes, the researcher began to implement the first theme into the discipleship guide. The other three themes will be implemented after the guide is taught to the entire membership. The guide was given to the experimental group. The control group was not given the guide. The participants were exposed to the guide for a period of six weeks. The researcher looked over her journal notes of the six sessions with the participants. The results of the six sessions were transcribed and written in a formal format. They are found below:

Collected results from Notes on Session One

The sessions listed in this part of the text are excerpts of notes taken during the sessions. The entirety of session one, started with an introduction to the program which included Scripture

and prayer (see Appendix K). The researcher greeted the participants and opened with scripture and prayer. The participants were shown a five minutes video of *The Cost of True Discipleship*.¹⁶⁰ This kind of video, along with many others is free and the producers encourage churches and Christian ministries to use them as needed. The narrator was very explicit in the terminology and description of the cost to be a disciple. One of the participants was nodding her head in agreement with the narrator when she abruptly said, “My Lord,” when the narrator discussed the things the original disciples were asked to give up to follow Christ. This researcher previously noticed that these five participants originally stated on the pre-survey that they all were disciples in their church and community. When the video ended, the facilitator asked them to raise their hands if they were disciples. No one raised their hand. The researcher lectured on knowing Jesus in the Old Testament while the participants took notes. She showed a five minute video on “Was Jesus in the Old Testament?”¹⁶¹ The participants were amazed at the instances where the narrator showed Scriptural evidence of Jesus’ presence from Genesis throughout the Old Testament. At the end of the video, the participants were given an activity entitled, “Looking for Jesus in the Old Testament.” The participants worked on the following activities for session number one: “Looking for Jesus in the Old Testament” and “Validating Jesus’ presence in the Old Testament.” The activities were handouts generated by the researcher. They worked together. They enjoyed the fellowship and the information of knowing that Jesus was here from the foundation of the world. Three of the participants had very little knowledge of Jesus’ presence in the Old Testament and listened very attentively. The researcher saw them writing several notes.

¹⁶⁰ Allen Pharr, “The Cost of True Discipleship | Audio Sermon,” The Beat, December 27, 2017, YouTube video, 47:20, <https://youtu.be/eoPIOcmRDM?si=0VyBZcOX68NO66Id/>

¹⁶¹ Daniel Maritz, “Was Jesus in the Old Testament?” DLM Christian Lifestyles, December 23, 2022, YouTube video 22:13 <https://youtu.be/9J619tzRsJQ?si=q538bfFAa6BzOrDv/>

Collected Results from Notes on Session Two

Session two, (see Appendix K) was held in the fellowship hall. It opened with prayer and the participants gave the scripture that was assigned for them to learn in unison (John 14:6). The notebooks, pencils and pens were handed to the participants as they began to take notes on the session for the day. The participants took their Bibles out to follow the discussion. The researcher took out her journal to begin taking notes on the behavior and disposition of the participants during the session. The session began with a video of Billy Graham preaching “Who is Jesus.” This video received acclaim as his best sermon. The participants watched with awe as his voice rang like thunder when he asked “Who is Jesus?” He started out with His birth and ended up with His crucifixion.¹⁶²

The researcher expounded on the topic and gave the participants a focus group activity entitled, “Who is Jesus?” The activity is designed for fifteen minutes. They worked together and commented on the questions in the activity. One question that created a lot of discussion was ‘Must a person be saved to be a disciple?’ Participant number five suggested that although she was saved, she could never give her life for someone unless it was for her own child. She continued, “I thought Jesus came to give His life for everyone.” Participant number two responded and said, “I would, gladly give my life because He gave my life back to me many times when the doctors told me I would not survive; but I am still here as a testimony of what He will do” Participant number four said, “I would not give my life for anyone, not even my own family member.” Another participant said, “I am not ready right now to sacrifice my life for

¹⁶² Billy Graham, “Who is Jesus?” Living God’s Truth, March 5, 2018, YouTube video, 23:45, <https://youtu.be/zjZLQY3TBd4?si=1d5RppUKRR8NX79I/>

someone else, but that doesn't say I will not, after I have grown to know Jesus and start a personal relationship with Him. The facilitator ended the discussion and the groups assembled for prayer and dismissal.

Collected Results from Notes on Session Three

The researcher welcomed the participants (see Appendix K). The session was held in the fellowship hall. One of the participants volunteered to open with prayer. The participants were beginning to feel a sense of belonging to each other. They were highly motivated by the videos and the activities following the discussions that they did not want to miss. These videos set the tone for the lessons. This researcher overheard one of the participants say, "I feel lost if I miss any of the videos." She continued to say, "I told my husband about the sessions and now, he wants to come, but I told him he was too late to get in." "Yes," the other female participant said. "My husband looks forward each week for me to tell him everything that goes on." The researcher began the session by discussing the baptism of Jesus and showed a ten minutes video on the *Temptation of Christ*.¹⁶³ The facilitator asked the question, "if there was a time when the devil was heavy on their trail?" The responses were "When I got saved;" another response was, "When I got a new position on my job." The facilitator asked, "What did you do to get him off your trail?" One young man quickly responded, "We need to say what Jesus said to him: 'It is written,' and say the words from the Bible to prove it to him." There were nods and words of approval as the participants were adamant about this response. The researcher lectured and gave an activity on the "Marks of a Disciple." The participants paired off and were given a timed

¹⁶³ Geethanjali Kids, "Jesus Tempted || Temptation of Jesus – Bible Story", October 4, 2021, YouTube video, 10:07, https://youtu.be/FN4L5_TWsf4?si=WtIvpIAjnsy0_T6/

activity where they filled in a blank that began with an incomplete sentence, “a disciple is.” They were given ten Scriptures to locate the answers. The second activity was entitled “*The Cost to be a Disciple*.”¹⁶⁴ The participants were given an activity with six biblical scriptures with blank words about Christ’s journey to the cross. Lesson number six was a continuation of the strategies Jesus used to train His disciples. This researcher introduced various strategies and showed a four minutes video on the Parable of the Talents. When the video was over, the participants shared Jesus with each other. This activity was creative, friendly and thoughtful. The session ended with prayer

Collected Results from Notes on Session Four

The atmosphere was more relaxed for this session. The participants had grown to love each other and had a much deeper respect and admiration for each other’s responses. Those who were shy and reserved at first were vocal during the focus group discussions. They eagerly participated in the discussions. Their answers were thought-provoking and they took care to use exact words to express their thoughts. The young adults really took a great part in the discussion on the tools of discipleship. The participants were given a list of scriptures and asked to find the tools Jesus used to train His disciples and the disciples used to train others. When asked if these tools would keep the young adults at GLMBC satisfied, a response was, “I don’t know about the others, but it will make a difference in my decision because I know what the tools are now, how to use them, and how much more beneficial they would be in my life. The facilitator asked, “What will it take to attract other youth to come back to the church?” Their answers varied from

¹⁶⁴ Allen Pharr “The Cost to be a Disciple” The Beat, Jan 2024
<https://youtu.be/eoPIOcmRDM?si=0VyBZcOX68NO66Id/>

the leadership showing skills at using the tools, to changing the disposition of the leadership in their openness, trust, and transparency, to changes in developing genuine attitudes toward all ages in the church family.

Collected Results from Notes of Session Five

The participants had finally come to a point where they all felt secure and safe in each other's presence. They were engaging in small talk about prior sessions and were amazed at the amount of knowledge that had escaped them from not being exposed to the proper information about discipleship. Some were planning evangelist activities after the session was over. The researcher began the session (see Appendix K) with one of the participant's saying the Scriptures alone, while another participant opened with prayer. These actions by the participants indicate their calmness, state of mind and their freedom to express themselves aloud while others were listening. The prayers and learning the Scriptures were taking an effect on them because they felt comfortable enough to pray openly, whereas at first, they were reluctant to do so. This researcher has noticed, from a pastoral position, most people do not want to pray openly.

The Researcher started the discussion with notes on the arrest of Christ and how He was betrayed by His disciple for thirty pieces of silver.. A video was shown which discussed "The Suffering of Christ".¹⁶⁵ Many of the participants were moved by the scenes they saw and were very sad that Jesus died. They all rejoiced when He arose on the third day.

Collected Results from Field Notes on Session Six

Session Six (see Appendix K) was down to earth because all the participants were sharing their experiences from being a part of the training program. The session started on time. This

¹⁶⁵ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, "Matthew 27 | Jesus is Scourged and Crucified | The Bible," April 6, 2012, YouTube video, 4:49, https://youtu.be/nlALmOx8Sk0?si=t3bj0_RbgqIfv8YU

researcher opened with prayer and the participants read the scripture in unison. The researcher introduced the lesson by giving the background behind the Great Commission and why it is called commission. A video was shown on the “Great Commission”¹⁶⁶ and its effect on the world. One participant texted another participant to say that she would be late because she had to take care of her elderly mother first.

The participants were very open with each other, very polite and friendly. The participant who texted, came in and everyone was empathetic toward her plight. They were genuine and caring. All the participants were sorry that this was their last session. They began to discuss with this researcher how much they did not know and how much they had learned. One young man said “I did not know that all of this information was in the Bible.” He continued to say, “I have been encouraged to read it more often after seeing the videos about Jesus and all the things He had to do in such a short time.” A young woman said, “I had to tell everything I learned to my husband. He is picking up the Bible and reading it now for himself and discussing it with me.” She said, “I think he is planning to join the church.”

This researcher thanked the participants for their service and commitment in attending all the sessions. The facilitator collected all the notebooks, pencils, and other tools and placed them in a basket. She passed out the post surveys and post questionnaires for the participants to complete. They left when the post-survey and post-questionnaires were completed (see Appendices J and M) This researcher took the data home and started analyzing it.. Merriam and Tisdale suggest that comparing and contrasting data from online sources may skew the results

¹⁶⁶ Entwistle Community Church, “Jesus Gave the Great Commission – The Gospel Project for Kids,” March 7, 2021, YouTube video, 2:51, https://youtu.be/26B_F_IluqA?si=joRrEfOb_TWS-xw3/

and be “far less reliable than in the real world.”¹⁶⁷ Therefore all coding for this researcher’s project was analyzed by hand and tagged to themes/ sub-themes and categories that were derived from data collected by the participants. This researcher perused several texts on coding in order to gain an in-depth knowledge of the coding process. Sensing, Merriam, and Tisdale proved to be beneficial and rewarding in presenting coding. Their methods discussed a step- by- step analysis of the process that was simple to adapt to and easy to interject into the investigative process. There is much to be learned from coding and the process is better understood when the coding is done manually rather than through purchased software.

Data Analysis

Graphical Analysis of Quantitative Data from Random Questionnaires

This researcher chose the following methods of analyzing data for the following reasons: The graphical analysis approach gives a picture of what the data collectors captured in the research. It gives a breakdown of the individual participant’s results while allowing the reader to visually see the results of each participant’s contribution to the study. A third reason is that it helps the reader to understand the patterns and relationships that exist between processes and outcomes. It reveals what the other participants are engaging in throughout the research project. The fourth reason is the researcher wanted to know how the values of each participant’s answers are related and how they fit into the scheme of the research. The fifth reason is that it gives a personal analysis of how much the participant knows about Jesus, his place in the Old Testament and His role in the Trinity. The sixth and final reason is to determine the authenticity and efficacy of the *Discipleship Training Guide*; its efficiency in reducing the retention rate of the

¹⁶⁷Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*: 178.

present young adults at GLMBC and its propensity to develop and equip leadership with the necessary tools of discipleship to teach and train its young adult population.

. There were fourteen questions in the pre -and post-questionnaire section. If the answer is correct, a score of seven was assigned. If the response had some relationship to the answer, it was given a score between five and six. If the answer had a response close to four, it was given a score of three and one half points. If there was a thread of knowledge it was given a score of one two or one and half points. This researcher wanted to remove any evidences or traces of doubt when accessing the papers or any material where the participant entered replies that had a resemblance to the correct answer or answers relating to individual responses to eliminate any bias or discrepancies in the results. If the participant had no knowledge of the subject, or left the answer blank, the score was clearly a zero.

Questions were randomly chosen from the pre and post-questionnaire results to check the authenticity of the guide. The points each participant received is plotted on the y axis. The reseacher determined the percentage in each random question to demonstrate the impact or convey the magnitude of the change for each participant. The researcher noticed that percentage change may be positive or negative. The percentage changes were calculated using the following formula (post result minus pre result divided by the pre result times one hundred). Ps is an abbreviation for participant, used by All Acronyms.com.¹⁶⁸ The legend is the red color represents the expermental group, while the blue color represents the cotrol group, green is change, and yellow is the percentage of change. The researcher wanted to validate the first theme of “Knowing Jesus.” She added several notations in the questionnaire that discussed Jesus’ role in the Old Testament as well as His role in the Trinity. She looked for this theme in the random

¹⁶⁸ Participants, <https://www.allacronyms.com/participants/abbreviated>

selections such as the question below. The theme is also used to test the participant’s knowledge of Jesus Christ. Participants are abbreviated in figure 10 as Ps.¹⁶⁹

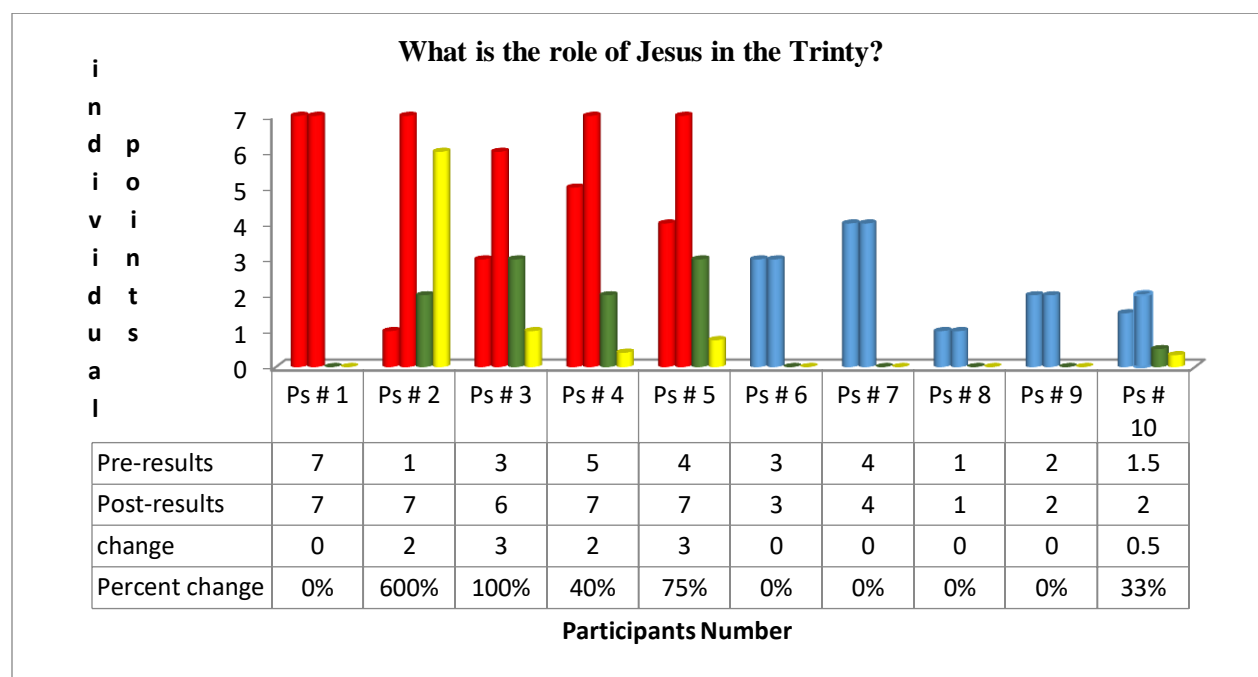


Figure 10: graph of pre and post-question 5.

The experimental group exhibited increases or maintained the previous score in all their results. Participant number two had the greatest percent change. These results are obvious in the plot of the post-results. Participants number six, seven, and nine maintained their results, whereas participant number ten changed by 33 percent. The results of the control group validated the fact that they received no exposure to the guide, whereas the experimental group received training. Their results changed significantly during the post-trials. These changes are supportive of a number of factors. The number one fact is young adults learn best when they are given direction and a guide that describes a purpose and gives them a roadmap to meet that purpose. Secondly, these results show that the theme “Knowing Jesus,” was an important segment of the

¹⁶⁹ How to abbreviate: “Participants,” AllAcronyms.com, March 18, 2024, <https://www.allacronyms.com/participants/abbreviated>.

research. When young and older adults are able to see progress, and understand the progress, they will be willing and eager to participate in ministries and key positions elsewhere in the future operation of the church.

The following graph is a plot of pre-questionnaire number eleven which is “Why should a disciple know Jesus Christ?” It is a repeat of a similar response in post questionnaire number two which states, “Discuss how the DTG increased your faith and knowledge of Jesus?” The results of this graph also validate the Theme, “Knowing Jesus.”

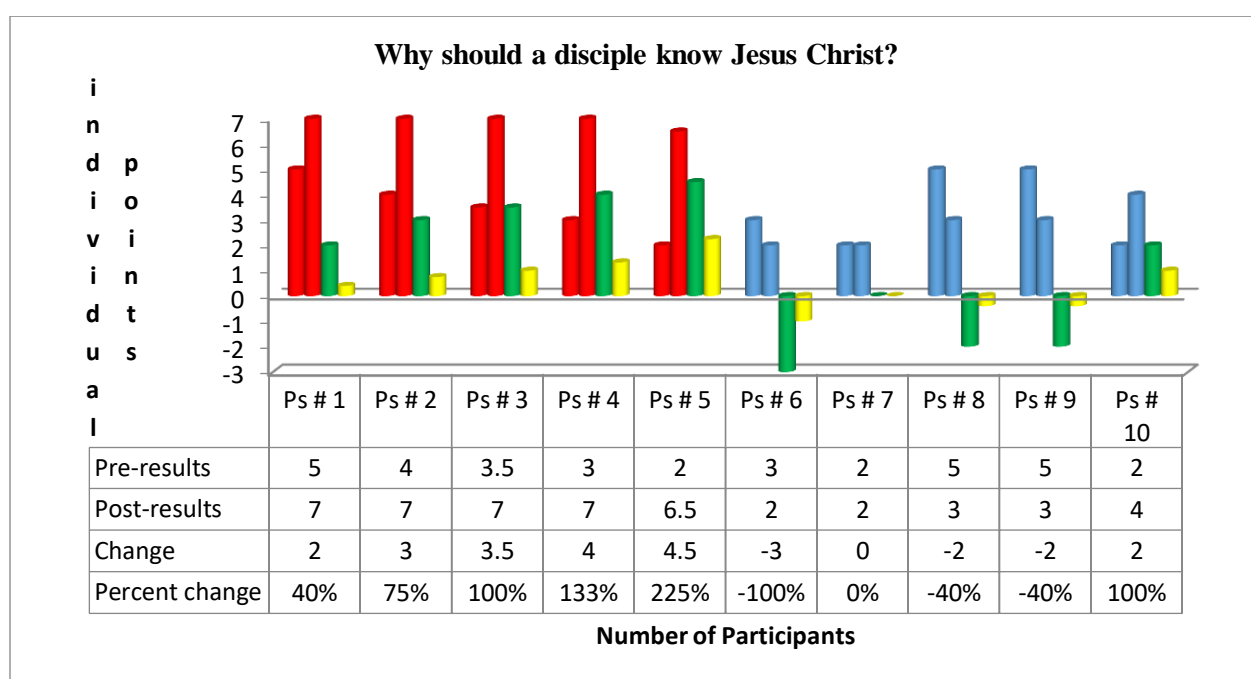


Figure 11: Graph of Pre- and post- question 6.

The experimental participants had a substantial change in their knowledge of Jesus Christ. Participant number five had the greatest change of 225 percent. Participant’s number six, eight and nine had negative changes which caused their percentages to be negative. Participant ten had a positive change, therefore their percentage change, 100 percent was also positive. The post experimental group’s results are far above the pre results. This increase indicates that the participants in this group were involved in the material and absorbed the lectures and video

representation of the session on this particular entry. Their scores indicate that they were attentive to the lectures, video presentation on knowing Jesus from the Old Testament and the action-packed activities that followed the discussions. Everyone should want to know Jesus. The knowledge of His crucifixion, burial, and resurrected reappearance on the third day give hope that Christians too will get up from the grave when He comes again. Paul said it best; “Knowing God gives us the Spirit of wisdom and a revelation of the knowledge of who He truly is.” (Eph 1:17 ESV). Knowing Christ from the Scriptures, reading of His, humility, and viewing His suffering and pain through the video dramatization and the proactive activities had a dramatic impact on the Christian formation and human development of the five participants. All five participants in the experimental group scored the maximum points on this question in the post questionnaire format.

Therefore, this researcher wanted to ascertain the impact of the DTG on the spiritual maturity of the participants. This researcher included pre-question ten and pre-question five post-question to determine the strength of the guide in developing the spiritual formation of young adults. Spiritual formation is vital to the growth, faith, trust, and motivational attributes of young adults. It is essential in recognizing their responsibilities in the church and the surrounding community. This question also validated themes three and four.

Theme three is related to spiritual disciplines, while theme four is related to faith and service.

Figure 12 is an indication that the third and fourth themes. Analysis of the spiritual formation of young adults and the faith and service of young adults at GLMBC are valid and were active throughout the research project. Prayer, service, and faith are essential spiritual disciplines that assist in the spiritual formation of young adults. Paul expressed prayer significantly when he said, “Do not be concerned about nothing, but let your requests be made known to God through

prayer and thanksgiving. And God’s peace, which exceeds all understanding, will protect your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6–7 ESV). The spiritual formation of faith and prayer can best be acquired through the application of the following Scriptures (Matt 21:22; Luke 1:37 Heb 11:6; Eph 2:8-9; Mark 11:22-24).

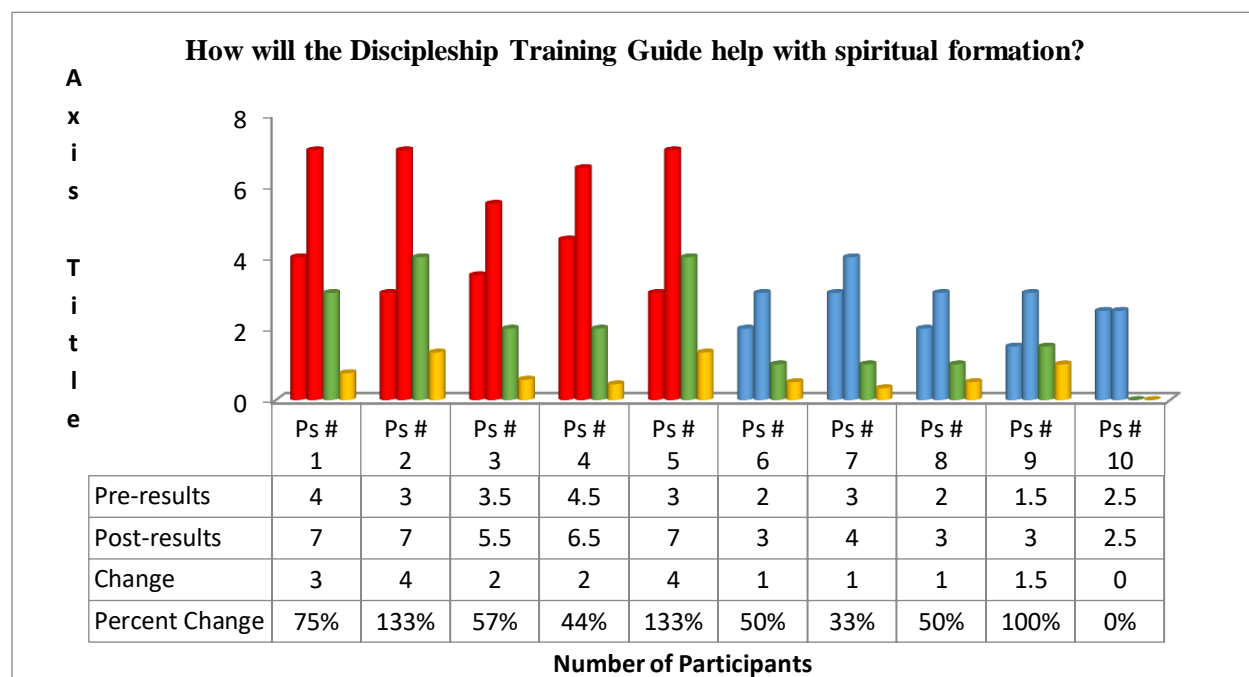


Figure 12 graph of pre and post-question 4

There are substantial changes in the results of all participants except for participant ten whose results remained the same. This change across the graph is possibly credited to prayer, which is given during the opening and closing of each session of the discipleship training program. Some of the participants prayed and witnessed during the offering of prayer by other participants. The observance of prayer and the participation in the fellowship were inspiring. The final analysis indicates that the DTG will improve spiritual formation of the young adults presently at GLMBC when applied in all activities they are involved in.

One of the questions basic to the research was to see if the young adults believed that GLMBC needed a DTG. The question was included to validate the guide. The question proved to be supportive. This change can be observed in figure 13.

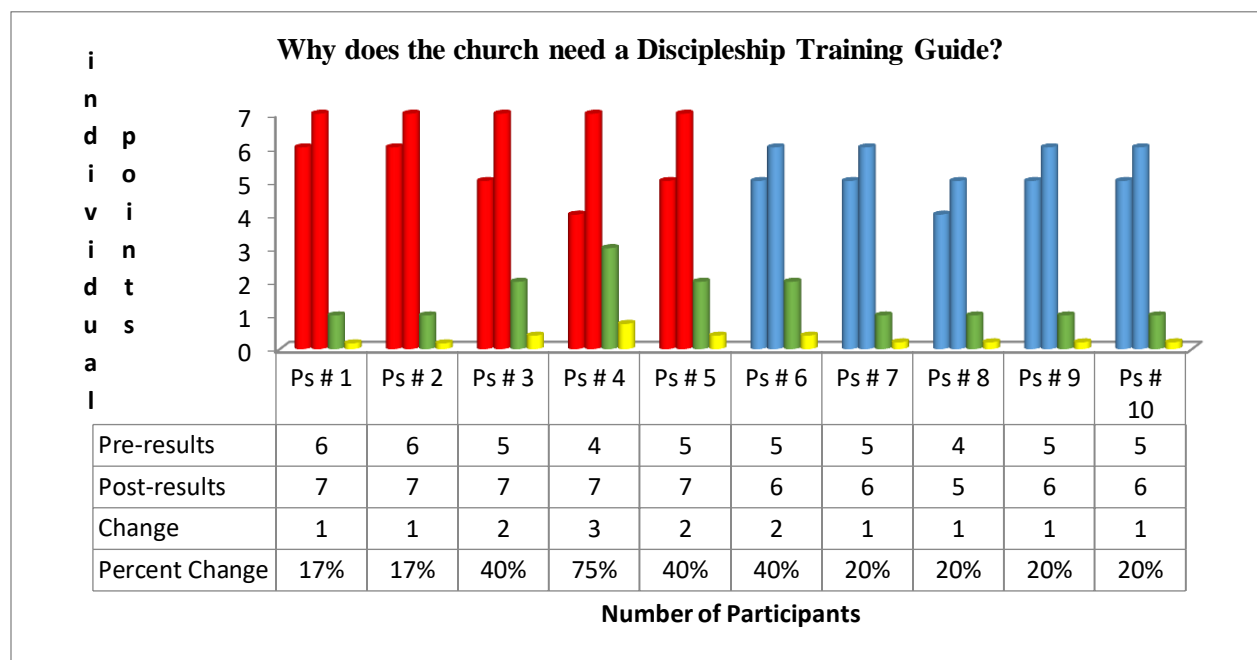


Figure 13 graph of pre and post question 11.

These values show an increase in both the experimental and the control groups. The results show that both groups see a need for a discipleship training guide. These findings suggest that all the participants believed that a training guide would improve the leadership status of the church and aid in providing a stable and well-rounded discipleship training for the young adults presently attending the church. Therefore, quantitative, statistical results indicate that a *Discipleship Training Guide* will aid in improving, training, teaching, and leadership capacity.

These results are important because they represent a visual expression of the needs of the young adult membership at GLMBC. It gives an open look at the state of affairs at the church. Knowing this information allows the church to reevaluate its mission and realign its future goals with the visual statements emanating from these graphs. The leadership has an opportunity to

correct some of the mistakes that were made as well as provide the vital tools of discipleship to maintain the retention of its present young adult demography.

The final graphical analysis generated by this researcher was to determine the number of times each theme occurred in the research project. The reason for this analysis was to project a visual representation of the themes so the researcher could ascertain the primary focus that would cause young adults presently attending GLMBC to remain faithful to the church ministry. A statistical analysis of the themes revealed the following results, found in figure 14. These results were determined by analyzing all the data, looking for any traces, nuggets, or references to any of the themes and tallying the number of times the references appear in the sources. The researcher wanted to get as much of an accurate count as possible. This process was repeated several times until the results concurred three or more times for accuracy and precision.

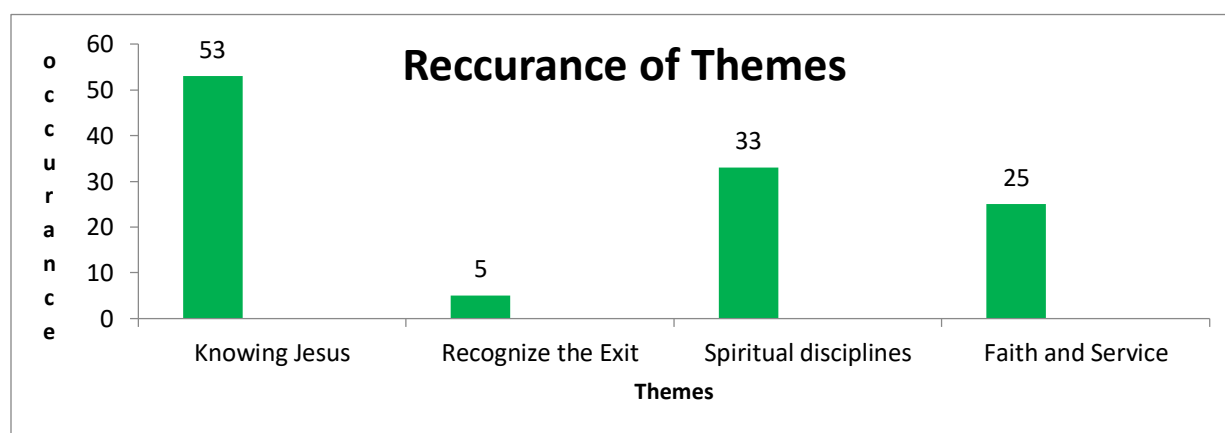


Figure 14 Reoccurrence of Themes

Figure 14 speaks volumes about the nature of the themes and how they fit in with the research. The first theme, "Knowing Jesus," appeared throughout the sessions and in the dialogue with the participants as well as in written form. The second theme, "Recognizing the exit appeared only five times throughout the six sessions. The theme has very little relationship to the other themes. This researcher decided that this theme conveyed much information about

the leadership; such as, had they recognized the exit earlier when the exodus began, they could have made an impact on stopping it. Then, this is not certain because if the leadership did not have the proper tools of discipleship to adequately train teach, and lead them, Greater Love would not be in any better position to maintain their retention.

These themes have infinite ties to increase the spiritual disciplines of young adults where they will become active disciples at GLMBC and in the community. Knowing Jesus and the application of the tools of discipleship are the keys to the retention of the present young adults in membership at GLMBC.

Qualitative Results of Data Analysis

Pre and Post-Surveys Results

The pre-and-post-surveys indicate a substantial increase in the experimental group. The pre-survey values indicate that both groups had increases in their final results. An example is seen in numbers seven, eight, and ten. The R values are Red (experimental group) and the B values are Blue (control group) and the distribution of the choices selected by each participant.

Pre-Survey Entries for Experimental and Control Groups	YES	NO	UNSURE
7. Young adults at GLMBC are vigorously taught the rudiments of discipleship.	R 2	R 3 B 3	B 2
8. The leadership at Greater Love trains and teaches its members about evangelism.	R 1	R 4 B 3	B 2
10. The leadership at GLMBC exhibits maturity in the spiritual segments of their lives.	R 2		R 3 B 5

Table 1:3 Pre-Survey results

The results indicate that both groups initially believed that the leadership did a poor job in discipleship. The highest number is in the “No” column. This number indicates that the experimental group and the control group had similar views. The responses for the experimental group is split for numbers seven and ten, but they are adamant about their response in number

eight. Therefore, these results clearly show that both groups had little to no trust in the leadership.

The post-survey of the leadership after exposure to the guide revealed:

Post-Survey Entries for Experimental and Control Groups	GREATER	LESS	SAME
14. I believe in the leadership of GLMBC as a result of training from the guide.	R 5		B 5

Table 1:4 Post- Survey Results (see Appendix M).

The post-survey indicates different results when number 14 is compared with pre - number 10 in table 1.3. The response shows that once the experimental group was trained with the discipleship guide, their opinion changed. The control group's situation remained the same. There were no changes in their responses.

Data Analysis by Triangulation

Triangulation is a multiple data-collection technique. It is a way to substantiate data that delivers coverage and gravity to an analysis to increase the trustworthiness of the research. It is a process to refine, increase credibility, and strengthen the quality of connections between concepts and perceptions.¹⁷⁰ Sensing says, most researchers are concerned about validating the results of the angles, while “the point is to demonstrate that different data sources or inquiry approaches reveal the same result; the point is to test for consistency by offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and observations observed.”¹⁷¹ Data is gathered from a number of informants and a number of sources which are compared with the two remaining accounts in order to produce a full and balanced study of the accounts as

¹⁷⁰ Merriam and Tisdale Qualitative Research: 246.

¹⁷¹ Sensing, Qualitative Research: 200.

possible.”¹⁷² The collected data is analyzed and refined for further study. Therefore, triangulation is used to increase reliability and validate the results of research from three sources of data.¹⁷³

This researcher began to apply cross references with the three data sources to determine their validity and authenticity. This researcher randomly selected some of the research questions to determine whether they were substantially validated by the participants who were the data collecting sources. She looked for any bias that would have skewed any of the cross referenced information. Therefore, the final method of data analysis for this research is through triangulation where the data from the research is assigned to three separate angles of an imaginary equilateral triangle. The three sections of data collection this researcher used to validate this research were questionnaires, surveys, and focus groups. Sensing states that opinion questionnaires tells us what the participant’s intention, goals, desires, and values are. They ask questions such as “what do you believe?” and “What do you think?”¹⁷⁴ Surveys, on the other hand are used for fact finding. They provide answers to questions such as “What, when, where, and how.”¹⁷⁵ The third angle is focus groups. According to Merriam, focus groups work best for people who do not have time for topics that occur daiy..¹⁷⁶

¹⁷²: Ibid., 72.

¹⁷³ Merriam, and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*: 245.

¹⁷⁴ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*: 72.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 142.

¹⁷⁶ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*. 114.

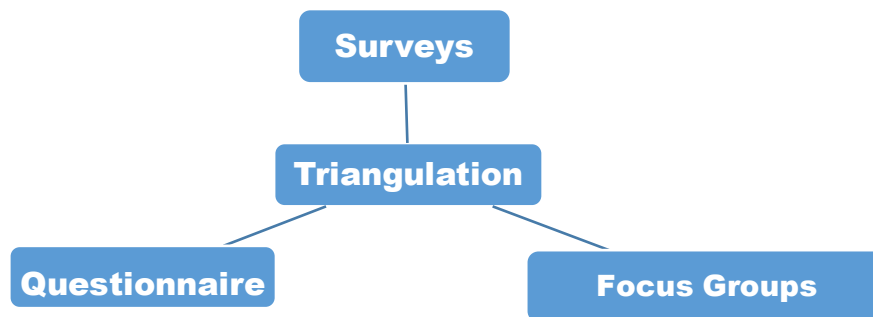


Figure 15 Triangulation of the three methods selected by this researcher.

Triangulation shows the results of this researcher's data collection methods. The information gleaned from these data sources show the three techniques of multiple data collection in achieving validity, authenticity, and efficacy. According to Sensing, triangulation is a process of cross-checking results from three sources to produce a balanced study as possible. Whether their results coincide or differ in the final analyses of triangulation does not negate the process, purpose or success of this method used in qualitative research.¹⁷⁷

Triangulation of Questionnaires vs Surveys for Efficacy

Questionnaires are a viable method of retrieving pertinent information to use in DMIN research. The more often a questionnaire is used in research, the more valid it becomes in assessing the authenticity and efficiency of the project.¹⁷⁸ This researcher discovered that questionnaires were not easy to formulate. It takes ingenuity, time and resourcefulness to develop thought provoking questions that are directly related to the problem being researched.

Researchers choose questionnaires to learn more about a person's situation, how they recall information and events being studied.¹⁷⁹ Questionnaires generate a storehouse of information from which the researcher may find small bits of information for coding to develop

¹⁷⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*: 72-73.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁷⁹ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*. 174.

themes and categories. Questionnaires were used by this researcher to determine if the same features or elements of the project was found in the other participants data for comparison, contrasting and categorizing information for categories, codes, and themes.

This researcher observed through transcribing the questionnaires that the participants had many common opinions. The questionnaires allowed this researcher to glean information that would not otherwise be open to discussion. The information this researcher was looking for were: the status of the past and present leadership as well as the effects of the ministry in providing character building disciplines to increase the faith and trust of young adults. The questionnaires were unique in providing truthful information about the structure of the Christian formation of young and old adults presently attending GLMBC. Other areas of information this researcher was seeking in the questionnaires were: the efficiency of the discipleship training tools, the efficiency of the increase in faith of the participants, and the efficiency of the guide in training.

The researcher cross-checked the results from the information from the initial and final-questionnaires about the effectiveness of the *Discipleship Training Guide* applying number seven, “Why do you believe the church should have a discipleship program? “ The information revealed is displayed in figure 16.

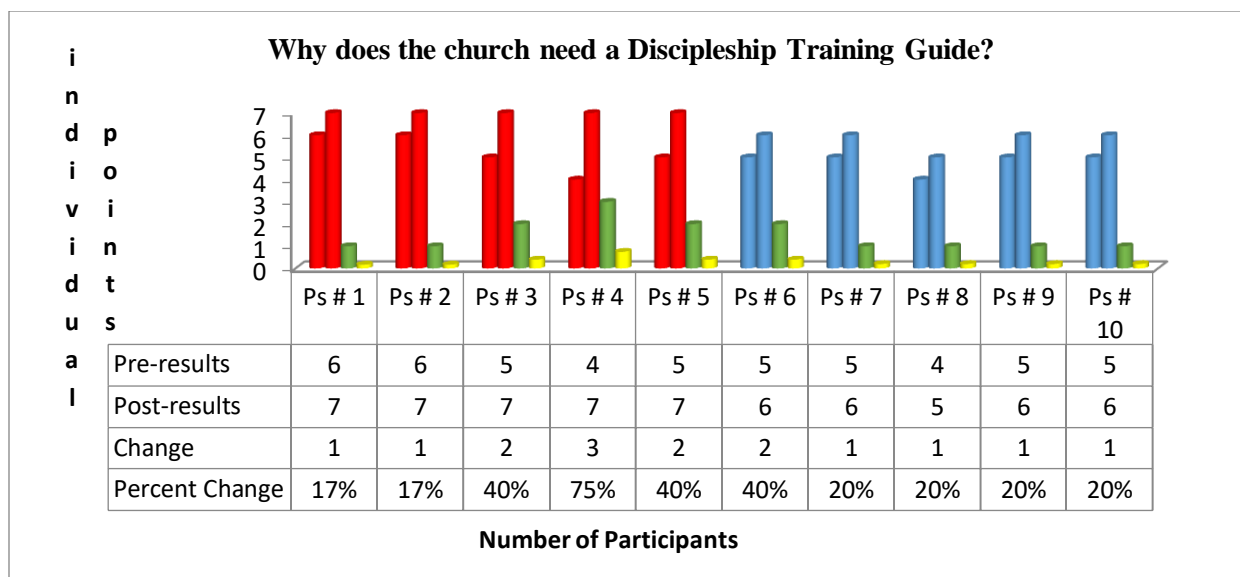


Figure 16 pre and post-questionnaire 4

The results in figure 16 show both groups believe that GLMBC need a discipleship guide, but the experimental (red) group has a higher change in value and in percentages than the control group. Therefore the areults indicate that there is dire need for a *Discipleship Training Guide* at GLMBC..

The pre-survey values for the same inquiry are found in table 1.5. This excerpt was taken from the results of the experimental and control group’s entry number seventeen. The comment was rearranged for efficacy, truthfulness, and validity.

Pre Training Survey Results for Experimental and Control Groups	Yes	No	Unsure
17. Greater Love Missionary needs a Discipleship Training Program.	R 5		B 5

Table 1.5 excerpt of response to survey question seventeen

The answer to the question is “Yes” for all the members of the experimental group and “unsure” for all the members of the control group. The researcher included a second excerpt from the post survey results to further verify the results. The results were the same.

This researcher wanted to seal the need for a Discipleship Training Guide at GLMBC without any doubt or questions arising later when the guide is introduced to the church body.

Therefore, she added a post results for a similar question: number three. This addition produced the results found in table 1.6.

Post-Training Survey Results for Experimental and Control Groups	Greater	Same	Less
3. I have a _____ understanding of the need for discipleship training after participating in the discipleship training classes.	R 5	B 2	B 3

Table 1.6 excerpts of post survey (see appendix M).

The chart shows that all the participants (five members) in the experimental group received a greater understanding of discipleship training, while there was a split in the control group, Two participants said their understanding was the “same,” while three participants view their understanding as “less.” Therefore, the results of the data information indicate that the questionnaire and the survey coincide and relate the same information concerning the efficacy of the *Discipleship Training Guide*.

An additional support of the results from the post-questionnaire and survey coinciding with their results is question number four, concerning the growth of young adults at GLMBC as a result of exposure to the discipleship guide.

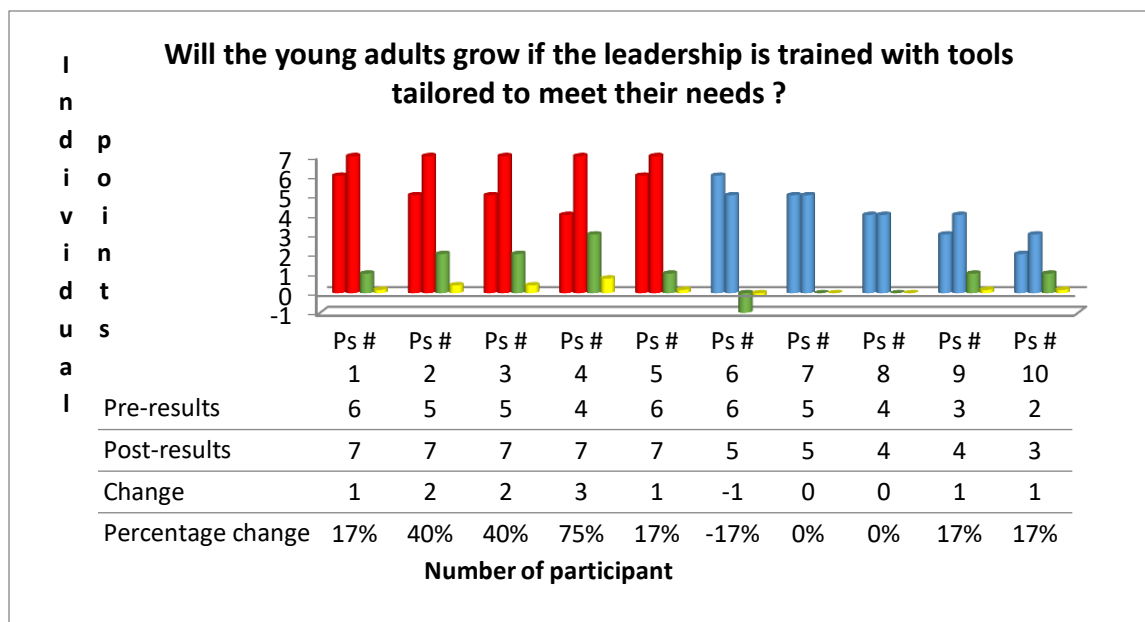


Figure 17 outcome of DTG

The results from the experimental group (red) were positive changes across the board while the control group (blue) produced mixed results. There was one negative value (green) from participant 6, while the other values remained constant (participants seven and eight). Participants nine and ten increased in their change of values and percentage change (yellow). The result of the graphical questionnaire is compared with the post-survey (see Appendix M)

Post-Training Survey Results for Experimental and Control Groups	Yes	No	Unsure	Less
13. I will follow Christ as a result of the training from the guide.	R 5	B 2	B 3	
14. I believe in the leadership of GLMBC as a result of training from the guide.	R 5		B 5	

Table 1:7 shows post survey of numbers 13-14.

The results show that all of the participants in the group receiving the DTG, (R), replied “yes” to the response, while the group that did not receive the DTG, (B), exhibited mixed results. The focus and the relationship of the answers to question number four lies in the meaning of question four and the relationship to comment fourteen, The relationship is a direct reflection of poor leadership and the knowledge received from knowing Christ because of the teaching and

training received from the DTG. This researcher believed that if the leadership encountered the same training and teaching that the participants encountered, then, the participants would see a change in the, disposition, and spiritual growth exhibited in the leaders. This change was noticeable during the sessions as one of the leaders who served as a facilitator was also a part of the training. The strategy behind the comment is: if knowing Jesus can cause this change, then it has a great possibility in producing an even greater change in older adults

Questionnaires vs Survey for Efficacy

Information gathered from methodological processes such as field notes, according to Sensing, is data selected from participants that consist of detailed descriptions of their behaviors, social interactions, group activities responses, and the organizational structure they bring to the research.¹⁸⁰ They give a comprehensive and thorough account of what goes on in the surroundings where the research is taking place. Field notes should be inviting so that the readers feel that they are there seeing what the observer sees.¹⁸¹ This researcher was very selective in writing field notes of the participants from the time they arrived to the time they left. Their reactions and interaction with the material and each other revealed a volume of responses that had to be analyzed and rewritten when this researcher was alone. The information was examined immediately while it was fresh on this researcher's mind. The field notes taken from the focus group indicated a tense environment at the first session and there was very little dialogue between the participants, but as the sessions continued they became more relaxed and less timid in each other's presence and began to share experiences. They spoke candidly about their knowledge of Christ and how they really did not know Him as well as they thought they did. One participant commented on reading the Bible about Him as a youth, but it was nothing like what

¹⁸⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*: 182.

¹⁸¹ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*: 151.

she learned in the sessions. The other four participants agreed and added the information about the tools of discipleship.

. The pre-survey results revealed that all participants in the “R” (group receiving the DTG), selected the “No” column while all the participants in the “B” (group not receiving the DTG), selected the “Unsure” column, when responding to number thirteen, “The discipleship training taught me how to know Jesus and His place in my life,” (see Appendix G). The answer to this number of the pre-survey was expected to be “NO” because all the participants did not receive the guide at this juncture of the research.

Pre-Survey Entries for Experimental and control groups	Yes	No	Unsure
13. The discipleship training taught me how to know Jesus and His place in my life.		R 5	B 5

Table 1:8 Pre-survey of number 13.

The excerpt below is taken from a similar question, “My faith has increased and I know more about Jesus than was revealed in the Pre-Survey Assessment at the beginning.” The post response is “Yes” for the group receiving the DTG and “No” for the group not receiving the DTG (sees Appendix I). Both groups had not received any training initially, but the control group was unsure about this entry and gave it the benefit of the doubt, whereas the experimental group was adamant about the “No” response in their answer to being taught and trained. The possibility that the entire control group answered “Unsure” to number thirteen is because some of them attend this researcher’s Bible study class, where discipleship is mentioned and the works of the disciples in the Bible are discussed. Evidently, all the members of the experimental group answered the question on “face value,” knowing they had not seen it.

Post-Survey and questionnaire Entries for Experimental and control groups	Greater	Same	Less
5. My faith has increased and I know more about Jesus than was revealed in the Pre-Survey Assessment given at the beginning.	R 5	B 5	

Table 1:9 shows results of post-survey number 5.

All the participants in the group that received the DTG, selected the “Greater” column, while all the participants in the group not receiving the DTG, chose the “Same” column. The post-survey indicated a “Greater” response to knowing Jesus than the pre-survey responses for the experimental group.

Analysis of Focus Groups with Questionnaires and Surveys

The notes taken by the researcher and the facilitator from session one through session six consisted of focus group interactions, group activities and videos that show the apprehension of this concept (Review of field notes for Session Two). The video of Billy Graham’s twenty minute sermon excerpts, “Who is Jesus?” gave a rousing review of the character, ministry and suffering of Jesus. The five participants took notes and listened intently to the sermon excerpts. This researcher added to the message with scriptures and a proactive activity on knowing Jesus.

Summary of Results

An all-encompassing summary of the results of this research revealed a number of factors that contributed to the analysis of the data retrieved from this project. This researcher noted that it was during the stages of research that she began to understand all of the preparatory work assigned to each course taken before the final work began. The results indicated that the randomly chosen questions prescribed the design for interpreting the graphical analysis of the data retrieved from the project and would be the determining factor that would connect the dots and make sense of what was taking place. Therefore the researcher approached the results by addressing the themes from the collected data. Sensing suggests that when the researcher

categorizes the theme, they are framing the data in a particular manner, making it difficult to see the data outside the frame.¹⁸² Looking at the themes in the context of a frame allowed this observer to see the church through the minds and hearts of the participants.

Theme Number One: Knowing Jesus

This theme appeared fifty-three times in the results of the questionnaires and surveys. The participants were thirsty for knowledge of Christ; therefore they submerged themselves in the videos and activities related to the theme. There was an atmosphere of awe where they absorbed every word that fell from the lips of the narrators in the videos. Obviously, some participants were hearing these Scriptures from the narrators for the first time. Knowing Christ became the dominant theme in the research because, at every opportunity a participant received, the name of Jesus was summoned as a means to further a concept of spiritual discipline involving growth in faith, love, understanding, and service.

Knowing Jesus was introduced to the participants by the researcher through Scriptures from the Old Testament (Gen 1:26). The researcher believed that by going first to the Old Testament and establishing Jesus' presence there and bringing Him through some of the other books where the old prophets spoke of His presence in the New Testament, would validate His presence throughout the Bible (John1:1-4). According to Daniel R. Hyde, when people know who Jesus is, they conclude that He is essential in their lives. Those who know him want to gain more knowledge of Him. Those who do not know Him will come to a time and place in their lives when they will want to know Him so they can grow a personal relationship with Him.¹⁸³ Furthermore, this researcher's plot of the occurrences of themes show that "Knowing Jesus" is

¹⁸² Sensing, *Qualitative Research*: 202.

¹⁸³ Daniel R. Hyde, *God with Us: Knowing the Mystery of Who Jesus Is* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021), 10, ProQuest Ebook Central.

the number one theme whose occurrence was found in all the sessions. All six sessions highlighted the steps and strategies of knowing Jesus.

Theme Number Two: Recognizing the Exit

. Recognizing the exit was barely mentioned in the sessions as reason young adults were leaving the church. The interview had questions that touched the heart of the problem of why young adults were leaving GLMBC without directly asking or making the question known. Several answers were related to the exit. A plot of the recurrence of this theme appeared only five times during the sessions. A plot of the pre- questionnaire and survey revealed that these participants were not intimidated or reluctant to reveal the truth as they saw it. The participant felt free to write and speak about the leadership, the lack of preparation and the impartation of spiritual tools to entice or teach young adults. They spoke without any thought of apprehension or hesitation as the words were transcribed from the questions given to them. They felt secure because the consent forms validated their security and assured them that conversations spoken, written, or recorded would be protected from the public and their identities would not be revealed. Similar comments were seen in the post-questionnaires and the post-surveys which opened the door to realizing why young adults were leaving the church. The surveys and questionnaires revealed that they were leaving because they felt that the staff and the individuals responsible for the spiritual and physical growth of the church were not adequately prepared to teach basic discipleship concepts. The pre and post-questionnaires opened the door for the church to overhaul its mission and core values and offer classes for the leadership on church revitalization. The study enabled the church to recognize the tools of discipleship and understand how they can be used to redirect GLMBC and place it in a position to correct the errors cause by the ignorance of not knowing how to teach and prepare the young adult population to be future

leaders of GLMBC. Some of the important outcomes retrieved from the research analyses are: the research revealed the spiritual gifts of some of the young people who are using them in the operation of the church and at Bible study.

An example of the acquisition of spiritual gifts exemplified throughout the research was an obvious increase in faith of one of the young men in the research. He was reluctant to speak or share in the discussions, but after listening to Billy Graham and observing the effect his voice had on all the participants and completing the focus group activity “Who is Jesus” designed by this researcher, his entire appearance changed. He gained an unsurmountable sense of courage to speak out and answer questions with a newfound authority that moved the other members and visitors to clap their hands at his responses. Two weeks after the program was completed, this researcher gave a dinner and presented all the participants with a framed Certificate of Completion in Discipleship Training. This same young man gave a summary of all the sessions. The participants and leadership give him a rousing applause. He has joined this researcher’s home Bible study group and the intensity of his spiritual authority is still forceful. Some who were initially timid have grown in their beliefs and are exercising their newly found faith. Some are beginning to read their Bibles and are spending more time in prayer and meditating on God’s Word. This is evident because they have been coming to Bible study. One young man has decided to become a minister and has asked this researcher to become his mentor. Whether the guide will increase the retention of young adults is yet to be determined, but those young adults participating in the sessions were excited and enthused after the last session and have committed themselves to become involved disciples. The fact that this theme did not show up in all the sessions, does not indicate its shortcomings. It, instead, reveals much about what was not openly discussed. Its hidden presence spoke volumes about the state of the affairs at GLMBC. It allowed

months of built-up tensions, to finally come out openly without the church knowing who these individuals are. It also allowed those individuals who spoke truthfully about the situation to feel empowered that they secretly played a role in helping the leadership recognize the exit. This researcher is reexamining herself prayerfully to determine her weaknesses. Being a biblical leader takes courage, faith, love and commitment. Paul invokes leaders saying: Do not grow weary when doing well, for at the right time you will gather a bountiful harvest if you do not give up (Gal 6:9 ESV).

Theme Number Three: Receiving Training in Spiritual Discipline

Training in spiritual disciplines received the second highest reoccurrences in the post-questionnaires and post-surveys sessions. It ranked thirty-three times of reoccurrence among the other themes. Spiritual disciplines are the backbone of discipleship; without it, the affairs and structure of the church are void and empty. Paul admonishes Timothy to train himself for godliness. He said that “While training the body is admirable, training in godliness is more admirable because it reveals a promise that is yet to come” (1Tim 4:7-8 ESV). The questionnaires found in the text and the survey found in the appendices revealed that the participant’s knowledge of receiving and understanding spiritual disciplines are valid and are substantiated by the visualization of the graphs found in the text and the charts themselves (see Appendix M) Spiritual disciplines were discussed and utilized in every session; such as prayer, reading Scriptures, meditation, fellowship, service, gratitude, Bible study, journaling generosity, and celebration (see Appendix G, numbers 5 and 11; Appendix J number 1; Appendix L number 9). Furthermore the tools of discipleship listed in the text are examples of spiritual disciplines.

The plot revealed the experimental and control groups increased, but the experimental group improved significantly over the control group.. Prayer, a spiritual discipline, provided a

source of understanding, peace, comfort and love among all the participants. All the session in this research opened and closed with prayer. Adele Calhoun asserts that the discipline of prayer is a spiritual tool that helps Christians to get through the day by opening them up to receive communication with the trinity.¹⁸⁴

Theme Number Four: Aligning Faith and Service

Sensing writes that there are four avenues of demonstrating faith in research projects: faith relating to others, which is communal faith; faith shaping identity, which is theology as a formative activity; faith seeking understanding in practice, which is theology as a critical activity; and faith expressing itself in the marketplace: faith as a public activity.¹⁸⁵ The avenue of faith that is investigated by this researcher is communal faith and theology as a formative faith. The focus was to get the participant to relate to the faith of others in chartering their own faith and to understand the dynamics of faith through practice. The theme, aligning Faith and Service, had a recurrence of twenty-five times in the sessions. Most young adults in the experimental group experienced an increase in their faith since the beginning of the sessions. They felt comfortable with all the group members. The faith of young adults in the experimental group increased while the faith of young adults in the control group remained unchanged (see Appendix M, number 5).

¹⁸⁴ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 355.

¹⁸⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*: 11.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Several churches across America and beyond have a problem with disciplining young people. This researcher discovered that the leadership team at GLMBC has not provided the necessary tools of discipleship tailored to the unique needs of its young adults. As a result, there is a mass exodus of young adults from the researcher's church. Young adults are leaving for various reasons, but the primary result of their exodus is causing this church to suffer spiritually, physically, and emotionally. This demographic group of young adults is the future church; and without their presence, the church as it is known will not survive to carry out the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Great Commission assigned to every church in the world.

GLMBC has experienced this exodus within its young adult membership and the lack of full participation in its youth ministry. Therefore, the purpose of this research project is to develop a Discipleship Training Guide to train and equip the leadership of GLMBC to disciple young adults. The purpose is a result of the problem: GLMBC is struggling to sustain the attendance of young adults because the leadership lacks the tools and training to disciple them. Young adults at GLMBC were the first to recognize the struggle. They were also the first to recognize the exodus because they have determined that there are problems with the leadership of the church that has created a stalemate whereby no one can gain adequate biblical knowledge in the training and teaching of the Scriptures. Therefore, they left to search for a church where they could be taught biblical truths.

This stalemate is not directly attributed to the present leadership or the young adults presently in membership. It originated several years ago under the former leadership and a former church. GLMBC is the result of the dissolution of a church whose former administration did not see the necessity of training its youth according to the Bible which admonishes parents

and the church to train its youth in a righteous way and as they grow old, they will not leave their trainings (Prov 22:6). As a result of the neglect of its youth, several young adults have left the church at a time when the church is in dire need of their support. Therefore, the present leadership inherited the residue of neglect and is experiencing the sting of the young adults mixed emotions. The actions taken by the present leadership is to salvage what is left of the church through the implementation of the Discipleship Training Guide.

The basic initiative of increasing retention and activating human development and spiritual growth in young adults lies in their need of knowing Jesus. Just as young adults were used by God in biblical days to further the cause of spiritual growth and human development, the need is even greater today. There should be a reciprocal approach to teaching spiritual disciplines among young and old members. Churches should start their training programs for its members at an early age. When children are taught the Bible by older adults who are passionate about Christ, young people will remember and retain what they have learned.

After the revelations of the outcomes of the research, GLMBC has taken a second look at the leadership of the church and has begun to make correction in its teaching, training, and Christian education formats. The leadership concluded that when young and older people place Christ at the forefront of their strategic planning program, the membership will grow, faith will increase, and wholesome relationships will form. These visible changes will occur in the church and the community when the church leadership decides to develop intimate relationships with Jesus to disciple their membership. Making the changes has begun.

The ethnicity of Greater Love is traditionally Baptist with a cultural heritage stemming from family ties and historical roots. The church has a congregation that is multigenerational .The greatest percentage of the makeup of its membership consists primarily of young adults,

ages eighteen to twenty-nine, and older adults past fifty-five. The remaining percentage of the membership is youth, whose ages range from six to seventeen. The design of the guide has taken these facts under consideration. Therefore this Discipleship Training Guide is developed for a church with a unique demographic as GLMBC and has a greater need to fulfill its discipleship mandate. The primary theme of the guide is “knowing Jesus.” The conceptual framework is based on the premise that no one can effectively train, teach or model the life of Jesus Christ without having an active personal relationship with Him. Any remote training other than acknowledging this concept is futile.

The discipleship guide will teach the present young and old adults about the tools of discipleship so they will be equipped to disciple other young adults. The guide will train present young adults at GLMBC and point them to God. Young adults will learn the love and salvation offered through their Lord and Savior

Review of the Theological Framework

A review of the theological framework connects the theme of knowing Jesus from the Old Testament to the New Testament to the present time. It traces the path of Jesus through Scriptures and comments written in theological commentaries by scholarly authors. It focused on examples of young adults and their work in promoting the life of Jesus Christ through mentorship, discipleship, training and the application of spiritual disciplines. It provides examples of the areas in which young adults were actively involved in carrying out the commands of God and Jesus Christ. The Old and New Testaments promoted the activation of the skills, talents, and works of young adults throughout the Bible. Their strength, knowledge, and faithfulness were beyond reproach. Luke demonstrates the importance of the application and leadership of youth in discipleship in the community, church and family structure. Then there

was Timothy, a young man, trained in the Scriptures by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois (2 Tim 1: 5-7). Paul requested him to join him on his missionary journeys (Acts 19:21).

Furthermore, Paul mentored Timothy and advised him in the pastoring of his first church. He taught him how to minister to the older men and women of his church through the bonds of love and humility. He also mentored Silvanus, and Titus (2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1, and Gal 3:1). Paul used young people in his work for the ministry of Jesus Christ to ensure that the acts of discipleship were imitated in the church community and that it would continue throughout many generations to come. This act supports young adults carrying the future torch of leadership in their church and the community in session six of the *Discipleship Training Guide*. The participants were shown a video on the Great Commission which discussed the role of discipleship, and the duties disciples are assigned in the church and surrounding communities. It also showed present day disciples in the church going into the homes and communities compelling men and women to follow Christ.

An activity such as “The Great Commission and Me,” written by this researcher, was completed by the participants. The activity consisted of a discussion question where the participants were asked, “Where are you going from here as you carry the Commission of Christ?” One participant’s answer was evangelizing and carrying the gospel of Christ into the church community, and among friends. Engaging young people in the early movement of Christianity and discipleship was no strange occurrence. The Old Testament utilized their strength, youthfulness, skill, and knowledge of the Spirit of God, while the New Testament included them in the plan of salvation through the transference of discipleship and the furtherance of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Old and New Testaments included examples of the benefits of training, teaching, modeling and mentoring young men and women.

Review of the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research indicates that the theoretical models involving faith, spiritual disciplines, and a sense of belonging of young adults are substantiated in these models of discipleship programs and subsequently are actively engaged in this researcher's project. One model is the discipleship curriculum program developed by Andrew Burggraff, based on a model written by Dick Carey and Carey called the *System Approach Model* that involves ten steps of discipleship training. Burggraff improved this model by including additional activities. The entire training guide was written by individual church leaders.¹⁸⁶ Another model is *Holy Habits* by Andrew Roberts, a Methodist minister. Butler uses this model to develop a discipleship program. This model is based on biblical teaching, fellowship, prayer, giving, service, generosity eating together, worship and making disciples as demonstrated and modeled in the Scriptures (Acts 2: 42-47). These practices were observed throughout the six sessions (see Appendix K). It includes the participation of individuals from all age levels from the youngest to the oldest. This model suggests commonality between theological action research and collaborative processes working together to renew theological practices found in the Scriptures."¹⁸⁷ This model generated positive outcomes that consolidated the members generationally and theologically.¹⁸⁸ These practices were observed in this researcher's project (See Appendices J, L, and M).

¹⁸⁶ Andrew Burggraff, "Developing Discipleship Curriculum: Applying the Systems Approach Model for Designing Instruction by Dick, Carey, and Carey to the Construction of Church Discipleship Courses," *Christian Education Journal* 12, no. 2 (2015): 397-414.

¹⁸⁷ James Butler, "The 'Long and Winding Road' of Faith: Learning about the Christian Life and Discipleship from Two Methodist Congregations," *Practical Theology* 13, no. 3 (2020): 277-289.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 277-289.

Review of Precedent Literature in Chapter Two

A general evaluation of the literature in chapter two suggests that young adults are the first to recognize the exit in their churches.¹⁸⁹ They are the first ones to recognize the exit because their population is the one who is affected by factors that are causing the exit. Young adults at GLMBC experience dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in leadership, lack of tools of discipleship, and loss of faith in the leadership. A thorough examination of the pre-surveys and pre-questionnaires suggests that the participants believed that their faith in the church was dwindling (see Appendix I, 7-12) Beard argues that pastors and church leaders are losing this generation of young adults while they sit by “watching it all unfold.”¹⁹⁰ Samuel Wells and Sally Hitchiner argue that faith brings young adults to the church through the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit, working through them to promote changes in their lives whereby they will affect the lives of other young adults.¹⁹¹ Preston Sprinkle, a biblical scholar, speaker, and a New York Times bestselling author, argues that church leaders are teaching discipleship without including the basic tool: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. .¹⁹² The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the central tool needed to effectively teach, model, mentor and train individuals to become effective biblical disciples. Knowing and applying these tools will increase the faith, service, and other spiritual disciplines of young and old adults in the church. ”¹⁹³ Young adults at GLMBC have experienced several hardships over the past years; such as the onset of COVID-19 which touched every home

¹⁸⁹ Seversen, *Not Done Yet*: 159-160.

¹⁹⁰ Tony Beard, *Let No One Despise You*: ix.

¹⁹¹ Samuel Wells and Sally Hitchiner, *Being With Leaders' Guide: A Course Exploring Christian Faith and Life* (La Vergne: Hymns Ancient & Modern, 2022), 24. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁹² Preston Sprinkle, *Go: Returning Discipleship to the Front Lines of Faith* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2016), 29. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁹³ McFarland, Alex, and Jason Jimenez, *Abandoned Faith*: 44.

and family in this county and state. Then, there was a lock-down which lasted for approximately a year. The lock-down affected, homes, schools, churches, businesses, metropolitan offices and local governmental buildings. Young adults were devastated. Many fell into a deep depression, while others faced disillusion and hypocrisy. Hypocrisy has created a wedge that has kept churches in the dark for ages. Misconceptions, falsehoods and improper tools of discipleship have been the guiding force leading the church for years. False leaders are forced to recognize their short-comings. The lack of young people in the church pews is making a general statement without their physical presence. Times of neglect and improprieties are making changes in the church. Leaders are forced to recognize the exit or they will be exiting the church themselves.

All these comments line up with the comments made by former members of Greater Love. They found dissatisfaction in the leadership because they were not receiving the proper tools of discipleship or training and teaching that exemplified the teachings of Jesus Christ (see pre-survey I, numbers 8 and 10). Consequently, as the end products of the data collected from the various sources, comparisons of the projected research of the thesis project proposal with the projected results of the implemented research project concur with much of the information found in the literature review, especially the theological and theoretical foundations. The projected participant's journals reviewed by the researcher suggested the following results:

1. All participants enjoyed searching the Scriptures and relating them to the problem and purpose of the research.
2. Several participants expressed a desire to evangelize in the community after reading about the ministry of Jesus Christ and how He related to the people in the community.
3. Theological principles and theoretical practices were factors in producing positive outcomes.
4. Participants identified with the plight, suffering and ministry of Jesus Christ.

5. Participants related to the need for the tools of discipleship that were deficient in the church.
6. Participants applied the tools of discipleship throughout the church ministry.
7. Participants felt a sense of belonging.
8. The faith of the participants in the experimental group increased.
9. Some participants came in with weak faith and left with renewed faith.
9. The Bible study class has increased because of the training.
10. The five participants in the experimental group have developed traits of spiritual authority.
11. Three of the participants failed to understand the person of Christ in the Trinity, but they do now and can show where He is found in the Old Testament.

The projected study validated the purpose by providing substantiated data to support the thesis with efficacy. The efficacy of the research achieved its intended outcome which stated that the purpose of this project is to design a discipleship training guide to train and equip the leadership of GLMBC to disciple young adults. It also validated the premise of the thesis which stated that if the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults. This process is presently in operation at the time of this writing. Two of the leaders took a part in the research, while one served as a facilitator.

These leaders are presently planning classes for the children so they will know Christ at an early age. Some of the young men are preparing to become substitute teachers in this researcher's home Bible Study class for adults. One of the participants is planning a workshop on love, and another participant is planning a women's conference in the summer and using local

women in the community as key note speakers; instead of women, who are well known, but knows nothing about the plight of women in this city. Her strategy is, if women in this city can see other women they know talking about how Christ is changing their lives, then more women in this church and city will know Christ and will want to follow Him. The findings identified with concepts in the literature review. An example is the sense of belonging and the desire to be used in the area of sharing Christ with other individuals in the community. There was also a sense of connection with other participants at all age levels. Those participants who had a new found faith, gravitated toward each other. Finally, this research may be replicated by other churches with similar needs, demographics, and problems like GLMBC. More study is needed to answer the question; why the exit? No one reason could be substantiated. There were diverse answers that related to job opportunities, spiritual growth, and the need to grow in faith to compete with the worldview definitions of Christianity and biblical leadership. Essentially more study has to be conducted with other demographic groups.

Research Implications

The implications of this project may be related to the retention of young adults attending a church with demographics and leadership deficiencies like GLMB This church grew out of the remains of its parent church; First Corinth, whose pastor died while in office, it has maintained its integrity, spirit and core value, while encountering internal hardships, the COVID-19 pandemic, and most recently, the exodus of its young adult leadership and followers. It has experienced several changes that could have destroyed the very core of the foundation of its existence. It has undergone tremendous stress in the organizational structure of its constitution. Despite these struggles and oppositions, GLMBC still exists. Therefore, this research has tremendous implications for churches, like GLMBC who have experienced similar results and

are in the process of rebuilding the biblical rudiments of the culture of its young and older adults.

This research also has implications for churches that are deficient in designing action-level discipleship tools that will motivate, energize and impact the faith formation and human development of its young adult population. In essence, this research program may also be implemented by other churches with problems of retention by modifying some of the activities, or supplementing some of the videos that were activated in the *Discipleship Training Guide*. The young adults who participated in this research were excited about the guide. They thought they knew everything about Jesus; but once they understood that He was already here in the beginning, His mission in coming in the flesh, His suffering and the ultimate sacrifice He made for humanity, the wall that they had built up over the years began to crumble.

The videos aided in helping young adults see a Jesus that they had never seen before. They were eager to know more about Him and to form a personal relationship with Him. These are processes that will sometimes automatically occur in group activities. Communication processes occur when participants start to mingle with each other and listen to the testimonies of others in focus groups. These processes provoke individuals to empathize with each other. Sensing states that recognizing important processes that occur in research are the underlying set of ideas that can be later used in describing research.¹⁹⁴

Therefore, describing these processes is the key to promoting love, understanding, and togetherness which describes the proper use of the tools of discipleship. These tools, when used effectively, have the potential to develop moral responsibilities, growth in faith and other spiritual disciplines within the minds of all members of the church. The tools of discipleship are powerful, because they are Christ-oriented. They will awaken an inquisitive character, lying dormant within the minds of young and old adults thirsty for knowledge and wisdom.

¹⁹⁴ Sensing, Qualitative Research: 210.

The most encouraging fact about these tools is that they are all found within the Scriptures. No one needs to go out and purchase them; it's just a matter of earnestly searching the Bible for spiritual truths. If the implications of this guide can move these young adults to change their hearts, then, it has implications to move the hearts of other churches and their youth ministries to grow, attract, and retain their youth demography.

Research Applications

Research applications of this project may apply to churches whose leadership strategies are lagging in structure, productivity, leadership, and the implementation of action packed tools of discipleship. Writing this *Discipleship Training Guide* has revitalized the leadership and membership of GLMBC. This researcher perceives this discipleship guide activating the membership of churches whose young adults have “shut down and given up on the church.” There are countless numbers of young adults whose mass exodus have left churches across America empty of their presence. Knowing Jesus and the introduction of the tools of discipleship that Christ used in teaching, modeling, and mentoring His disciples are the keys that will open the eyes of the younger generation so that they will rise and recognize their responsibilities to God, the church, themselves, and the future of Christianity.

This researcher dares not speak for every church in America, but she knows what has happened to the young adults and older adults attending GLMBC. Therefore, any comments suggested in reference to this research are based primarily on the young and old adults presently attending GLMBC. The young adults involved in the experimental group received intensive training on knowing Jesus from His presence in the Old and New Testaments. They know His role as an advocate in this present and future generation and were taught how they could affect the future direction of Christianity by teaching others what they have learned.

The outcomes received from this research will be used to train and teach the membership of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church how to become a biblical disciple. The *Discipleship Training Guide* will be used to train and teach all members of the church so they will know Jesus and apply the principles of love, fellowship and faith toward each other, themselves and members of the local community. The same tools of discipleship gleaned from the Scriptures will be used as teaching instruments to steer the leadership and members in the foundational path of Christianity. These outcomes will be used to develop classes in biblical leadership Christian Education, and discipleship that will:

1. Promote evidence for the existence of Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures.
2. Validate the manifestation of Jesus in designing and carrying out the plans of His father;
3. Review the plan of God to send His Son into the world to redeem humanity.
4. Promote further investigation of the role of the church in rejecting and accepting Christ;
5. Review the purpose of Jesus choosing the twelve disciples.
6. Implement the strategies Jesus used in training His disciples.
7. Revisit the processes of the Great Commission.
8. Evaluate the cost of discipleship.
9. Review the tools of discipleship, and
10. Provide opportunities for the membership to exercise the tools of discipleship in the church and the surrounding community.

The primary focus of these future classes is to develop workshops to identify and activate the tools of biblical discipleship so that young adults at GLMBC will no longer be deficient in spiritual knowledge. Implementing these classes will increase the Christian formation and spiritual growth of young and old adults presently in membership at Greater Love, The outcomes

from this research will provide opportunities for seminars, workshops, and activities for young and old adults to know Jesus and form a personal relationship with Him.

Research Limitations

The first limitation this researcher noticed was the relatively small number of participants taking part in the research. Originally, this researcher was hoping to engage at least twenty to thirty participants, classified as young adults, but that number was not present within the church membership at the time. The greatest age group present now is individuals between the ages of thirty-five to eighty-two; the second age group is members between the ages of eighteen to twenty-seven. This researcher eventually settled for ten individuals who were faithful and committed to the church and did not miss a single session of the research. They were prompt, cordial and helpful. The limitation this researcher thought would affect the research had no bearing on the progress of the project. The time element could have been a problem because of the adverse weather due to the low freezing temperatures during the latter part of December and mid-January. The researcher was able to make up the missed days by scheduling a session two times in one week. Previously, this was a problem for one of the participants at first, but eventually, he was able to rearrange his time to the weekend instead of a week-day.

Another limitation that was doubtful at first was time for this researcher to complete the data analysis. This researcher thought she would not have enough time after the research to get all the data together because she decided to analyze all the results manually instead of waiting until the research was over. Working on the data daily proved to be beneficial and productive. The element of procrastination was eliminated by analyzing the data daily instead of waiting till the following week. This researcher was able to develop a system where coding and formulating codes and themes were simple enough to fully understand the process.

Although the process was tedious and time consuming, this researcher learned much about action-related research that she would never have learned by letting an online company analyze the data. There was paper on the bed, desk, floor lap, chairs, and just about everywhere there was an open space. The lessons and experiences gained from working manually is beyond words. This was a momentous feat, but this researcher was determined to complete it.

Further Research

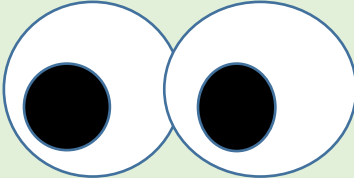
Although, the results of the research could not definitely determine whether the *Discipleship Training Guide* will stop the exodus of young adults from leaving other churches, it revealed some of the inner problems of the leadership that would not have been exposed. The guide was beneficial in pointing young adults to Christ by incorporating videos with time elements that could be coordinated with the time elements of the sessions. It was also beneficial in teaching them about the tools of discipleship and proved to be helpful in developing spiritual disciplines that will increase their spirituality, but further research will have to be incorporated into the design of the guide to absorb the lack of an adequate number of participants and other deficiencies in reaching a workable solution for the exodus of young adults. This researcher realizes that designing the *Discipleship Training Guide* was a tedious process, but the excitement, collaboration, and fellowship observed from the participants was more than words could express.

This researcher recommends the following actions for future research that she and her young adult population will embark upon in the future. Writing individual guides to reflect the other themes is an imminent possibility. Consequently, future research should include implementing the following suggestions.

1. Churches whose memberships are greater in number may consider implementing this guide with their congregations.
2. Similar churches, searching for a *Discipleship Training Guide* may use this guide with deletions or additions as needed for their young adult demographic.
3. The Discipleship program should be repeated with more diverse demographic groups where there are ample subjects to represent the effects of cultural differences upon a church's viability to change.
4. Further research should be explored to study the effect of the guide upon different methods and processes of retaining instruction, such as mentoring, teaching, coaching, etc.
5. Further research should be explored in the other themes to determine their efficacy to attract and retain young adults.
6. The sessions on "Knowing Jesus" proved to be rewarding and gratifying for several of the young adults in the research program. Two participants have devoted their lives to Christ. One is reading his bible daily and understanding what he is reading and one young man is in training to become a minister.
8. Further research should be explored to complete all of the remaining themes
9. Further research should be done using software to compare results done manually.

APPENDIX A

FLYER

Look  **LOOK**
LOOK!!!

Members of the church

- Who? If you are between the ages of 18 - 40**
- What? A Research Project**
- When? Information given Tuesday, next week
at 5:30 PM**
- Where? GLMBC Fellowship Hall**

Be the first to volunteer for a 6 - 8 weeks, 120 minutes/week, research project whose purpose is to develop a proactive Bible-Based Discipleship Training Guide to increase the retention of young adults at GLMBC.

There is no cost to participate

You will receive several benefits, awards, and cash \$\$\$\$ for your participation.

For more information, contact Secretary Chris

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the John Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am directing a project as part of the prerequisites for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to design a discipleship training guide to train and equip the leadership of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church to disciple young adults. If the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

Participants must be current or former members at Greater Love Missionary Church and 18 years of age or older. They will need to be current members of the church for at least the past 5 years. It is important that all participants will have been members of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church for an extended period of time to witness the decline of the church and be aware of the cultural transformation in the surrounding community of the church.

Participants will be asked to complete a pre-training *survey* and questionnaire that should last no more than an hour. Selected participants will receive theological and/or practical training sessions, which will last between 1.5 to 3 hours.

Finally, participants will complete a post-training/assessment survey and a questionnaire that should last no more than an hour. Your participation will be completely unknown, and no personal, information will be expected from you. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please contact me at [REDACTED]. A form of consent is enclosed to this letter. The form contains additional information about my project. If you decide to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return the document to me within two weeks.

Sincerely,

Rev. Frances W. Cox
Candidate for Doctor of Ministry
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
Liberty University [REDACTED]

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT LETTER FOLLOW-UP

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the John Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project to design a discipleship training guide to train and equip the leadership of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church to disciple young adults as part of the requirement for a doctoral degree.

Two weeks ago, a letter was sent to you inviting you to participate in a project study. This follow-up letter is being sent to remind you to sign and return the consent document if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is _____.

Participants must be current or former members of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church. They will need to have been current members of the church for at least the past five years. It is important that participants have been members of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church for an extended period of time to witness the decline of the church and be aware of the cultural transformation in the surrounding community of the church.

Participants will be asked to complete a pre-training disciple survey and a questionnaire that should last no more than an hour. Selected participants will receive theological and/or practical training sessions, which will last between 1.5 to 3 hours. After the training sessions participants will complete the post-training/assessment survey and questionnaire that should last no more than an hour.

To participate, please contact me at [REDACTED]. A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my project. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me within two weeks.

Sincerely,

Rev. Frances W. Cox
Candidate for Doctor of Ministry
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
Liberty University
[REDACTED]

APPENDIX D
PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER DOCUMENT

October 26, 2023

Mrs. Barbara Reeves Kay
Board Chairperson
Greater Love Baptist Church
805 Leon Drive
Anderson, SC 29621

Dear Mrs. Kay,

As a graduate student in the John Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my project is Developing a Discipleship Training Guide at Greater Love Baptist Church for the Retention of Young Adults. The purpose of my project is to design a discipleship training guide to train and equip the leadership of Greater Love church to disciple young adults. If the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

I am writing to request permission from the board to conduct my project at the church and contact members to invite them to participate in my project. Participants will be asked to respond to a survey and a questionnaire regarding the history of Greater Love, specifically the decline of membership during the past five years. The participants will also attend theological and practical training sessions. The topic of changing community landscape around the church and its effect on the church's membership and attendance will be part of the project. The participants will be provided with consent information form before taking part in the project. Participation is wholly voluntary, and the participant can discontinue at any time.

Thank you for considering my request and if the board approves it, then please provide a signed statement on an official church letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Rev. Frances W. Cox
Candidate for Doctor of Ministry
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
Liberty University

APPENDIX E
CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Developing a Discipleship Training Guide at Greater Love Baptist Church for the Retention of Young Adults

Principal Investigator: Frances W. Cox, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate, you must be a current or former member of Greater Love Baptist Church and at least eighteen years of age. Taking part in this project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this project is to design a discipleship training guide to train and equip the leadership of Greater Love church to disciple young adults. If the leadership is trained and equipped with a discipleship tool tailored to the unique needs of the church, then they will be able to disciple the current young adults.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. You will complete a pre-training survey and questionnaire that should last no more than an hour.
2. You will be included in one of two groups:
 - a. The first Group will receive eight sessions of training in discipleship in the church. All eight sessions can be conducted either in person or over Zoom for about 1.5 hours.
 - b. The second Group will not receive any training.
3. You will complete post-training/assessment survey and questionnaire that should last no more than an hour.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study will include spiritual and physical knowledge, of the Scriptures, and an understanding of why Christ came into the world. Participants will be empowered to follow and imitate the ministry and life of Jesus Christ and carry the ministry into the community in hopes of reaching and encouraging

the diverse community to join the discipleship ministry of the church. Diversity and evangelism will be important vehicles in helping the church to grow in membership and attendance.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this project and all your responses will be kept private. Published reports will not include any personal identity information and project records will reflect anonymity when used in future project studies. Project records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data will be stored in a locked drawer and after 3 years, all hardcopy records will be shredded.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

As the pastor of the church I understand that I am in a position of influence, but I will make a verbal declaration that I will not influence the study. I will make it clear to the research participants that their decision to participate will not affect their current or future relations with Greater Love church or with me, their pastor.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Frances Cox. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or email her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Alfonse Javed, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX F
POWERPOINT DISPLAY

PROBLEM

The problem is that Greater Love church is struggling to sustain young adults' attendance because the leadership lack the tools and training to disciple them.



PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to design a discipleship training guide to train and equip the leadership of Greater Love church to disciple young adults.



PLAN

The plan is to implement the Four themes in the guide with special emphasis on Knowing Jesus.

- 1. Discipleship, Knowing Jesus**
- 2. Recognizing the Exit**
- 3. Receiving Training in Spiritual Disciplines**
- 4. Realigning Faith and Service**

APPENDIX G
PRE- DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING SURVEY

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Please circle one response per comment:

1. I have been a member at Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church for 3-5 years.

YES NO UNSURE

2. I am familiar with all the ministries at Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church.

YES NO UNSURE

3. Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church has a working discipleship program.

YES NO UNSURE

4. I am a member of the discipleship program at my church.

YES NO UNSURE

5. I attend church regularly and set time aside to pray and meditate on God.

YES NO UNSURE

6. I believe that God sent Jesus, His Son, into the world to save humanity.

YES NO UNSURE

7. Young Adults at Greater Love are vigorously taught the rudiments of discipleship.

YES NO UNSURE

8. The leadership at Greater Love trains and teaches its members about evangelism.

YES NO UNSURE

9. The Discipleship training helped me to mature spiritually and emotionally.

YES NO UNSURE

10. The leadership of GLMBC exhibits maturity in the spiritual segments of their lives.

YES NO UNSURE

11. The discipleship training taught me how to love and serve my neighbors as myself.

YES NO UNSURE

12. The discipleship training will help disciples grow in every aspect of their lives.

YES NO UNSURE

13. The discipleship Training taught me how to know Jesus and His place in my life.

YES NO UNSURE

14. The discipleship training taught me the marks of a disciple.

YES NO UNSURE

15. The discipleship training taught me the marks of a biblical leader.

YES NO UNSURE

16. The discipleship training taught me how to recognize a true disciple.

YES NO UNSURE

17. I believe the cost to follow Christ is denying myself of worldly things.

YES NO UNSURE

APPENDIX H**PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE**

QUESTIONNAIRE: *Please answer the following questions to your best knowledge: If you need additional space, please use the blank sheet attached to this survey.*

1. What is your definition of discipleship?
2. Describe your relationship with Jesus Christ?
3. Why should a disciple evangelize in his/her surrounding community?
4. Why do you believe disciples should be good stewards of the church?
5. Explain the role of Jesus Christ in the Trinity?
6. Give an example of Jesus in the Old Testament.
7. Why do you believe that your church should have a discipleship program?
8. How will you support a discipleship program at your church?
9. Explain why you are a disciple or not a disciple?
10. How do you believe the discipleship guide will help with spiritual formation of young adults?
11. Why should a disciple know Jesus Christ?
12. Why should a disciple have a relationship with Jesus?
13. Can you name three tools of discipleship?
14. What is the duty of Jesus in the Trinity?

APPENDIX I

PRE-DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING SURVEY RESULTS FOR EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

R = red group (experimental) B = Blue group control)

Pre-Survey Entries for Experimental and control groups	Yes	No	Unsure
1. I have been a member of GLMBC for 3-5 years.	R 5 B 2	B 3	
2. I am familiar with all the ministries at GLMBC.	R 5	B 3	B 2
3. GLMBC has a working discipleship program.	R 3	R 2 B 1	B 4
4. I am a member of the Discipleship program at my church.	R 5	B 5	
5. I attend church regularly and set aside time to pray.	R 4	R 1 B 5	
6. I believe that God sent Jesus, His Son into the world to save humanity.	R 5 B 1	B 3	B 1
7. Young adults at GLMBC are vigorously taught the rudiments of discipleship.	R 2	R 3 B 3	B 2
8. The leadership at Greater Love trains and teaches its members about evangelism.	R 1	R 4 B 3	B 2
9. The discipleship training helped me mature spiritually and emotionally.	R 2	R 3 B 1	B 4
10. The leadership at GLMBC exhibits maturity in the spiritual segments of their lives.	R 2		R 3 B 5
11. The discipleship training taught me how to serve my neighbors as myself.		R 4	R 1 B 5
12. The discipleship training will help disciples grow in every aspect of their lives.	R 3		R 2 B 5
13. The discipleship training taught me how to know Jesus and His place in my life.		R 5	B 5
14. The discipleship training taught me the marks of a disciple.		B 5	R 5
15. The discipleship training taught me the marks of a biblical leader.		R 5	R 5
16. The discipleship guide taught me how to recognize a true disciple.		B 5	R 5
17. Greater love needs a discipleship training program	R 5		B 5

APPENDIX J

Post-Questionnaire

Questionnaire: *Answer the following questions/comments to your best knowledge. If you need additional space, please use the paper that is attached to this post-survey.*

1. List three tools of discipleship.
2. Please discuss how the *Discipleship Training Guide* increased your faith and knowledge of Jesus.
3. Please discuss how the Discipleship Training Guide will help to increase your participation in future evangelism?
4. Explain why you believe the young adult membership may grow if the leadership is trained with tools of discipleship tailored to meet the needs of the younger generation.
5. Explain if you believe the Discipleship Training Guide will help with the spiritual formation of young adults.
6. Discuss why you believe that the Discipleship Training Sessions will be beneficial in retaining young adults.
7. Explain how the Discipleship Training Sessions will increase the faith of young adults.
8. What session did you receive the most benefits from? Why?
9. What is one, specific discipleship skill you would like to improve over the next year. Please elaborate on your answer.
10. Explain the role of Jesus Christ in the Trinity.
11. What is a tool of discipleship used for?
12. Give an example of a tool of discipleship.
13. What is an example of Jesus in the Old Testament?
14. Will a Discipleship guide improve attendance?

APPENDIX K

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING GUIDE: KNOWING JESUS

Session 1: Knowing Jesus in the Old and New Testaments

- Scripture to learn----- (Isiah 53:5, King James Version)
- Prayer
- Lesson 1: Knowing Jesus in the Old Testament (Video: Jesus in the Old Testament)
- Lesson 2: Knowing Jesus in the New Testament (Video: Why Jesus came to Earth)
- Activity 1: Looking for Jesus in the Old Testament
- Activity 2: Verifying Jesus' Presence in the Old and New Testament

Session 2: Knowing Jesus: Why God Sent Jesus to Earth

- Scripture to Learn ----- John 3:16-17).
- Prayer
- Lesson 3: Jesus is sent to Return Mankind Back to God (Video: Who is Jesus?)
- Lesson 4: Jesus Begins His Ministry (video: The temptation)
- Activity 3: Focus Group Discussion
- Activity 4: Seek and Find

Session 3: Knowing Jesus: Jesus Chooses His Disciples

- Scripture to Learn. (Matt 16:24)
- Prayer
- Lesson 5: He Chose Common and Professional Men (Video: Jesus Chooses Disciples)
- Lesson 6: The Marks of a Disciple
- Activity 5: Fishing for disciples

- Activity 6: Counting the cost

Session 4: Knowing Jesus: How Jesus Equipped His Disciples

- Scripture to learn: Luke 4:18-19).
- Prayer
- Lesson 7: Jesus Used Parables to Reach the Common Man (Video: Parables)
- Lesson 8: Training: Teaching, Mentoring, Serving, and Modeling
- Activity 7: The strategies Jesus Taught His Disciples
- Activity 8: Focus Group Assignment

Session 5: Knowing Jesus in His suffering and Humanity

- Scripture to learn (1 Peter 5:10).
- Prayer
- Lesson 9: Jesus' Death, Burial, and Resurrection (Video: The Crucifixion)
- Lesson 10: The Human Traits of Jesus
- Activity 9: Seek and Find
- Activity 10: Focus Group

Session 6 Knowing Jesus: He Commissions His Disciples

- Scripture to know (Matt 28:18-19).
- Prayer
- Lesson 11: The Great Commission (Video: The Commission for Today)
- Lesson 12: Go, Teach, Baptize, and Make Disciples
- Activity 11: The Purpose of my Place in the Great Commission, Focus group
- Wrap Up Session (Post-survey, Post- questionnaire, and gathering of equipment)

APPENDIX L

POST DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING SURVEY

Name: _____ Date _____

Directions: *Please circle one response per question/statement or fill in the appropriate term*

1. What is your level of understanding of biblical discipleship after the discipleship training sessions?

GREATER SAME LESS

2. I believe Greater Love community is _____ biblical than I had imagined after participating in the discipleship session.

MORE NO MORE LESS

3. I have a (an) _____ understanding of the need for discipleship training after participating in the Discipleship Training Classes.

GREATER LESS UNSURE

4. *The Discipleship Training Guide* was _____ in understanding my role as a disciple.

HELPFUL NOT HELPFUL GREAT

5. My faith has increased and I know more about Jesus than was revealed in the *Pre-Survey Assessment* given to me at the beginning of the research project.

YES NO UNSURE

6. I can give my testimony as a result of training from the Discipleship Training Guide.

YES NO UNSURE

7. I believe that the church congregation will grow as a result of the openness and responsibilities of the church leaders to train its young adult members in discipleship.

YES NO UNSURE

8. I have a clear meaning of discipleship and how it fits in God's plan of salvation.

YES NO UNSURE

9. I have changed my opinion of my position to serve as a disciple in my church.

YES NO UNSURE

10. My faith is stronger as a result of the discipleship training.

YES NO UNSURE

11. I am totally committed to the teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ.

YES NO UNSURE

12. I know Jesus for the Savior that He is and accept Him for the pardon of my sins.

YES NO UNSURE

13. I will follow Christ as a result of the training and teaching received from the guide.

YES NO UNSURE

14. I believe in the leadership of GLMBC because of the training received from the guide.

YES NO UNSURE

15. Knowing Jesus Christ and how He died for my sins is the answer to all my problems.

YES NO UNSURE

16. The Discipleship Training Guide taught me the reason Jesus was sent into the world.

YES NO UNSURE

17. I believe the cost to follow Christ is denying myself of following after worldly things.

YES NO UNSURE

APPENDIX M

Post Discipleship Training Survey

R = Red group (experimental). B = Blue group (control)

Post Survey Answers for Experimental and Control Groups	Greater	Same	Less
1. What is your level of understanding of biblical discipleship after the discipleship training sessions.	R. 5	B 5	
2. I believe Greater Love community is ___ biblically than I had imagined after participating in the discipleship training.	R. 5	B 5	
3. I have a _____ understanding of the need for discipleship training after participating in the discipleship training classes.	R 5	B 2	B 3
4. The Discipleship Training Guide was _____ in understanding my role as a disciple.	R 3	R 2	B 5
5. My faith has increased and I know more about Jesus than was revealed in the Pre-Survey Assessment given at the beginning.	R 5	B 5	
6. I can give my testimony as a result of training from the guide.	R 5	B 5	
7. I believe the church will grow as a result of the openness of the church leaders to train the church in discipleship.	R 5	B 5	
8. I have a clear meaning of discipleship and how it fits in God's plan of salvation.	R 5	B 5	
9. I have changed my opinion of my position to serve as a disciple in my church.	R 3	R 2	B 5
10. My faith is stronger as a result of the training guide.	R 5	B 1	B 4
11. I am totally committed to knowing Jesus as a result of the guide.	R 3	R 2 B 1	B 4
12. I know Jesus for the Savior that He is and accept Him for the pardon of my sins.	R 5		B 5
13. I will follow Christ as a result of the training from the guide.	R 5	B 2	B 3
14. I believe in the leadership of GLMBC as a result of training from The guide.	R 5		B 5
15. knowing Jesus and how he died for my sins is the answer to all my problems.	R 5	B 5	
16. The Discipleship Training Guide taught me the reason Jesus was Sent into the world.	R 5		B 5
17. I believe the cost to follow Christ is denying myself of following after worldly things.	R 5	B 1	B 4

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 28, 2023

Frances Cox
Alfonse Javed

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23-24-898 Developing a Discipleship Training Guide at Greater Love Baptist Church for the Retention of Young Adults

Dear Frances Cox and Alfonse Javed,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

For a PDF of your IRB letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so.

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office