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DEVELOPING A DISCIPLE MAKING PROCESS FOR
PORTLAND MEMORIAL MISSIONARY BAPTIST
CHURCH IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

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APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLE MAKING PROCESS FOR
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To my wife and friend, Odessa, who has encouraged and inspired me
to do what God has gifted me to do.

To our children Stephaine, Yauka, Denielle, Brandon, and Arthur, who give me joy each
and every day. May this work, make you proud.

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PREFACE

I thank God for the grace and salvation given to me through Christ Jesus my Lord and Savior. I was dead in sins and distant from God, but by His grace I was saved from a life of sin. My life is now dedicated to witness to the world who Christ is and what He is able to do if allowed in the life of the sinful.

This project is the result of a community of support that God has aligned for my success and His glory. I am so very thankful to my lovely wife, Odessa, and our children, Stephanie, Yauka, Denielle, Brandon, and Arthur. Their support and encouragement kept me focused and committed to the completion of this project. I am thankful for my parents, the late Rev. Arthur Smith and Jewell Smith, for the foundation of faith that was laid for me.

I want to thank both Mt. Hermon Missionary and Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Churches for their patience and participation in this project. It is my prayer that we will continue to be the disciples that make disciples for the kingdom of God. I am grateful to the faculty and staff of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for their support and assistance. Thanks to my faculty supervisor, Dr. Kevin M. Jones, and the late Dr. T. Vaughn Walker, Black Church Leadership Chair, for their commitment to my success.

Stephen Smith

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many African American Baptist churches are often ill-prepared to make disciples. In some instances, the church has either never fully understood or been taught or trained in the practice of making disciples. For that reason, I hope to add to the resources in the area of disciple making in the African American church. This project intends to create an effective discipleship ministry that spreads the gospel message while remaining true to the biblical text.

The Christian Church has been given a command to make disciples. This command is found in Matthew 28:19-20. For this reason, Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church seeks to develop disciples who makes disciples

Context

This ministry project took place in the context of Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church (PMMBC) in Louisville, Kentucky. PMMBC is a ministry located in an urban community. Four contributing factors relate to the ministry framework at PMMBC that are relevant to this project.

First, PMMBC is a 154-year-old church. Its ministry began at the close of slavery in America. PMMBC began its ministry with a few families and individuals that lived within the community. At that time, PMMBC was not concerned with how the church would reach or witness to the lost (unsaved). The lost lived within the community and most likely were a part of a family that attended the church. If one lived in a certain community, the one went to the church in that community. If a person grew up in a family that went to a particular church, then that person was under family obligation to

attend that church. As time has evolved, people have moved, and many no longer follow family traditions as it relates to church and faith attendance. Due to the loss of biological evangelism, there is a need to think about how to reach the lost with the intent of saving souls. Therefore, this ministry project focused on developing a plan with the intent and purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Second, PMMBC's core membership is older; therefore, the church functions under a traditional church model. The traditional model is comprised of a certain genre of music, set norms and rules, and a set of beliefs and practices. Within those beliefs and practices are limits and boundaries as to who could do what within the church. PMMBC has focused internally and not externally. PMMBC has focused on its people and programs that meet personal needs, and not focused on ministry that will reach the lost community. There has not been an intentionality to make disciples who then make disciples. Without intention, things just happen. It was the intent of Jesus to make disciples who make disciples. He sent the disciples out with the instruction to be intentional about the work He was sending them to do. Therefore, this ministry project focused on creating a sense of intentionality that would drive the church to be a disciple-making church.

Third, the congregation of PMMBC has practiced a ministry of imitation, but there was no dedication. In essence, people have imitated what they have seen others do without any dedication to the kingdom of God. The result is a lack of discipleship. The traditions and practices of PMMBC have been handed down from generation to generation. People at PMMBC have watched those who served in a position(s) before them serving without an intent to mentor a replacement. I have witnessed people model the behavior of those who went before them without any instruction as to why or how a particular thing was done the way it was done. This ministry project focused on improving the congregation's knowledge of what a disciple is and how disciples are made.

Fourth, this project developed a preaching and teaching component to define discipleship and the disciple-making process. For the more than thirty years PMMBC has used the slogan “Making Disciples.” While this is a worthwhile slogan, it was not a common practice within the congregation. There was talk of making disciples, but never a biblical model set. Many in the congregation have a shallow understanding of what a disciple of Jesus Christ is and how disciples are developed. Therefore, this ministry project focused on developing a preaching and teaching series to clearly define discipleship and how one can become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Rationale

PMMBC has been known for its transformative ministry and presence in the community by transforming the lives of individuals through the gospel of Jesus Christ and the work of the church. This project was necessary to ensure that transformative ministry continues to take place through Christian discipleship. The church must establish efforts in the area of discipleship. In addition, to maintain a continuous ministry of Christian discipleship, the church must be trained.

It was my hope and desire to continue the transformative work that PMMBC has done with the people and in the community. The former pastor, Arthur Smith, had a vision to train disciples who make disciples for Christ. The church had become complacent in its work as it relates to discipleship. It was imperative to refocus on the work that the church has been assigned to do.

PMMBC must address the previous contextual factors related to discipleship in an effort to be a church that makes disciples that makes disciples. First, because so many in the church are unclear or confused about what a disciple is and how disciples are made, it is imperative that an intentional effort be made to increase the level of knowledge about discipleship.

Second, based on the level of knowledge about discipleship, it is necessary that a four-week preaching and teaching curriculum be developed and implemented to achieve the desired goals. The membership of PMMBC has proven to be amenable to teaching.

Third, there has been an absence of intentionality as it relates to making disciples at PMMBC. To be a church that makes disciples, the church must become a part of the culture and DNA of the church's ministry and practice.

Fourth, many churches do not have a process for making disciples. PMMBC is no different in this area of ministry. PMMBC has not had a clear, simple, and defined process for making disciples. It was necessary to develop that process to ensure that discipleship can be tracked and measured.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to guide Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church to be a church that makes disciples who then make disciples.

Goals

The following were goals necessary to accomplish this project.

1. The first goal was to increase the knowledge of Christian discipleship at PMMBC.
2. The second goal was to develop a four-week preaching and Bible study series on disciple making.
3. The third goal was to increase involvement in the ministry of discipleship.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a process for making disciples at PMMBC.

Research Methodology

The research for this project was based on a qualitative approach. It included pre-and post-series surveys. A pre-series survey was administered to students in the Sunday school classes and those in attendance for Wednesday Bible study. The survey determined the level of understanding of Christian discipleship among the attendees.

The first goal was to increase the knowledge of Christian discipleship at PMMBC. This goal was measured by administering a pre-series survey on Christian discipleship.¹ Included in the survey were questions regarding discipleship, how it is done, and who is to do it. A pre-survey was administered to the Sunday School classes and to the Wednesday night Bible Study group.

The second goal was to develop a four-week preaching and Bible Study series on disciple making. The original plan was to develop an eight-week curriculum to address this goal; however, due to Covid-19, a more condensed plan was developed because of CDC and state mandated requirements.² The second goal helped to facilitate the first goal. This goal was measured by a panel consisting of three local pastors, one faculty professor of discipleship, evangelism, or missions, one denominational leader, and one director discipleship ministry. The panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series.³ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 80 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The third goal was to increase involvement in the ministry of discipleship. This goal used the pre- and post-series survey to measure the level of participation in church ministries.⁴ This goal would prove successful when the number of persons involved in discipleship ministry pre-study series is lower than compared to the number involved in discipleship ministry post-study series.

¹ See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the project.

² Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, "Healthy at Work," accessed February 26, 2021, <https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthy-at-work>.

³ See appendix 2.

⁴ See appendix 1.

The fourth goal was to develop a process for making disciples at PMMBC. This process covered outreach, conversion, and assimilation. This goal was measured by three ministry leaders, two deacons, and two congregants utilizing a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope, and applicability of the document.⁵ The goal was considered successfully met when 90 percent of the panel considers the document to meet a sufficient level of understanding.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Certain terms used through this ministry project are defined below to aid in the reader's understanding of the subject.

Ministry. *Ministry* refers to the work of the church, its service to the world, proclamation of the gospel, and administration of the sacraments. It can refer to the activities of the whole people of God or equally to individuals with specific vocations (e.g., teacher, pastor, priest, evangelist, bishop, prophet, etc.)⁶ *Christian ministry* is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the power of God's Spirit and to see people converted, changed, and grow to maturity in the gospel. *Ministry* is the work of planting, watering, fertilizing, and tending the vine.⁷

Assimilation. *Assimilation* is the process of leading new members in the process of learning what God expects from them, what the church expects from them, how the church functions, and where they fit in.⁸

⁵ See appendix 2.

⁶ Martin Davie et al., eds., *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2016), 573.

⁷ Collin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias, 2009), 8.

⁸ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 311.

Conversion. *Conversion* is the process of turning or returning of a person to God.⁹

Discipleship. *Discipleship* is the ongoing life change of one being a follower, student, or mentee. It is the Christian experience of following Christ.¹⁰

Evangelism. *Evangelism* is the active calling of people to respond to the message of grace and commit oneself to God in Jesus Church.¹¹

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys were dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of discipleship within the church. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents were promised that their answers would remain nameless. Second, the effectiveness of the sermon series and mid-week Bible study series was limited by the constancy of attendance. If the participants do not attend all of the Bible study series, then it would be difficult to measure how beneficial the Bible study was. To mitigate this limitation, each week of the sermon series and mid-week Bible study was scheduled around their schedules.

Three delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed discipleship at Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church. Discipleship at Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church includes raising the level of understanding about the process. Second, the project was confined to a six-week timeframe. This timeframe gave adequate time to prepare to preach and teach the four-week Bible study series and conduct the post-series survey after sessions were complete. Finally, this project intended to impact the disciple-making process of the Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church.

⁹ Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman. 2003), 335.

¹⁰ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2006), 35.

¹¹ Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 518.

Conclusion

Discipleship is vital to the church. When discipleship is not done, the church is impacted because there is no multiplication. PMMBC has struggled with discipleship. While PMMBC has had times of sporadic growth, it was not because of a discipleship process being in place. To continue transformational ministry, Portland must have a plan and practice of disciple making. A clear plan of discipleship ensures continuation of ministry and increases the opportunity of church growth and health.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL APOLOGETIC FOR MAKING DISCIPLES

This chapter presents a biblical foundation for making disciples based on Old Testament and New Testament passages. Whatever the ills of the twenty-first-century church, the Bible has a relevant word or solution. Passages such as Exodus 24:13; 1 Kings 19:19-21; Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-42; Acts 16; 1 Timothy 1:2; and 2 Timothy 3:10-15 establish for the reader an understanding of the call to be a disciple, the development of a disciple, and the work of a disciple. The church is called to make disciples of all who come into the kingdom of God through the gift of Salvation. Robby Gallaty, “We must make Jesus’s last command our first work.”¹

Thom Rainer presents the argument that the Western church has been guilty of making “members” and not “disciples.” He identifies members (membership) as those who see themselves as privileged with perks, and church members do not see the church as a place to serve, but a place to be served.² Within the Black church, it has become a pattern of behavior for members to look and or expect handouts instead of a hand up. For example, some families expect the church to cover funeral expenses of the deceased. The church cannot afford to bury each member. This is not to say that this pattern of behavior is not true of the Western church. This project focuses on making disciples at PMMBC.

Thom Rainer writes, “Many churches are weak because they have members who have turned the meaning of membership upside down.”³ Based on Rainer’s

¹ Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship Making Jesus’s Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), front cover.

² Thom S. Rainer, *I Am A Church Member* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 10.

³ Rainer, *I Am A Church Member*, 6.

statement, the church needs to redefine and redirect the definition of membership to provide a better understanding of discipleship. The misunderstanding regarding discipleship is in large part due to the lack of biblical teaching on the subject. Some of misunderstanding about discipleship may come from the statements made when people unite with the church. In the Missionary Baptist church, when an individual unites/joins the church, the pastor or a deacon may say, “You now have all rights and privilege’s as a member of this church.” Members look at their “rights and privilege” while disciples lean into their roles as a disciple.

Rainer suggests that there needs to be a new or renewed attitude about church membership and what it means to be a church member.⁴ The attitude that Rainer alludes to is that of privilege. Privilege within the church comes from new converts doing what they have observed the older members do. Eric Johnson, in his book *Where Are the Men of the House*, writes that the Black church has not had much written material on discipleship. He also says that the black church has relied more on the oral tradition.⁵ To Johnson’s point, the black church has deficient written material on the subject of discipleship. Jesus took the time to explain things to His disciples (Mark 4:34). Because PMMBC and many other churches have not provided a clear practice and plan of discipleship there exists a misunderstanding of how to grow disciples. The church may benefit from doing discipleship the way Jesus did it. Jesus taught His disciples how to be disciples. The Gospels show what He taught. He called them to “follow” Him and learn from Him so that they could go and do likewise.

Defining “Disciple”

The best place to begin learning what something is and how it is done is from its source. The Bible serves as a primary source for understanding what a *disciple* is and

⁴ Rainer, *I Am A Church Member*, 6.

⁵ Eric Johnson, *Where Are the Men of the House?* (Jeffersonville, IN: B. K. Royston, 2013), 14.

the function of the call to make disciples. The Old Testament provides some examples of discipleship in the relationship of Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and David and Solomon. Each of these relationships is an example of men discipling other men to continue the work of the kingdom of God. The New Testament provides the examples of Jesus and the twelve, and Paul and Timothy. The word *disciple* is more commonly used in the New Testament. It denotes those who had a special and intense relationship with the earthly Jesus.⁶ A *disciple* is a follower of Jesus, especially the commissioned twelve who followed Jesus during His earthly ministry.⁷ The Latin root of *disciple* means “learner” or “pupil.”⁸ The term *disciple* appears approximately 261 times in the New Testament.⁹ The Greek word *mathetes* (“disciple”) is from *manthano* (“to learn”). The term was used by the Greeks to designate one who learns.¹⁰ Francis M. Cosgrove, Jr. provides a list of eleven essentials of a disciple:

1. A Disciple is a learner
2. A Disciple puts Christ first
3. A Disciple is committed to a life of purity and is taking steps to separate from sin
4. A Disciple has a daily devotional time and is developing in his prayer life
5. A Disciple demonstrates faithfulness and a desire to learn and apply the Word of God through hearing it preached and taught, reading it frequently, Bible Study, Scripture memory, and meditation on the scripture.

⁶ David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. “discipleship.”

⁷ Robert T. Sloan, “Disciple,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 425.

⁸ Sloan, “Disciple,” 425.

⁹ Robby Gallaty, “Equipping the Local Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciplemakers” (lecture given at Discipleship Blueprint Conference, Hendersonville, TN, March 5, 2019), unpublished notes from the conference lecture.

¹⁰ Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, ed., *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 2:128.

6. A Disciple has a heart for witnessing, gives his testimony clearly, and presents the gospel regularly with increasing skill.
7. A Disciple attends church regularly to worship God, to have his spiritual needs met, and to make a contribution to the body of believers.
8. A Disciple fellowships regularly with other believers, displays love and unity.
9. A Disciple demonstrates a servant heart by helping others in practical ways.
10. A Disciple gives regularly and honors God with his finances.
11. A Disciple demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit by an attractive relationship with Christ and his fellow man.¹¹

John Piper offers his interpretation of what a *disciple* is. He provides a lens by which one can see what it is and what it means. He suggests that discipleship starts with conversion, followed by baptism, and is developed through teaching. During an “Ask John” episodes, Piper states,

The word *discipleship* never occurs in the Bible. The term is ambiguous in English. It can mean my discipleship, in the sense of my own pattern of following Jesus and trusting him and learning from him. Or it can mean my activity of helping others be disciples in that sense of learning from him, growing in him. . . . It can mean preach the gospel so that people get converted to Christ and become Christians and, thus, disciples. For example, Acts 14:21 says, “When they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium.” So that “make disciples” is one Greek word there, and it means “get them converted to Jesus.”¹²

Robby Gallaty, during one of his podcasts, says that “discipleship begins at salvation and continues to death.”¹³ Gallaty says, “The Christian church makes salvation about the point of accepting Christ and that is it.”¹⁴ Gallaty goes on to say, “Salvation is

¹¹ Frances M. Cosgrove, *Essentials of Discipleship: Practical Help on How to Live as Christ Disciples* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1980), 15-16.

¹² John Piper, “What Is Discipleship and How Is It Done?” *Desiring God*, January 25, 2016, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-discipleship-and-how-is-it-done>, emphasis original.

¹³ Robby Gallaty, “#45 Why Is Our Evangelism Not Working?” *Making Disciples: Lifeway Leadership Podcast Network*, March 25, 2019, <https://replicate.org/why-is-our-evangelism-not-leading-to-discipleship/>.

¹⁴ Gallaty, “#45 Why Is Our Evangelism Not Working?”

both a process and a point in time.”¹⁵ At that point in time people are saved and then salvation is developed through discipleship.

The Bible provides the model for discipleship. Joshua believed God and followed His precepts as he followed Moses teaching and leadership (Num 27:18). Elisha believed God and followed the leadership and teachings of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19-21). Discipleship is often referred to as a New Testament model, but the practice and model of discipleship was present in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. As a racer passes the baton off to the next racer in a relay race, so has God ordained that His servants pass off the baton and train the next disciple.

The Old Testament Model of Discipleship

Moses and Joshua

The Old Testament provides a few examples of discipleship. The first example is that of Moses and Joshua. Moses was the God-chosen man to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God knew Moses’s path and how far Moses could carry the Paton. God had promised the children of Israel a land of Promise. “A land that would flow with Milk and honey” (Exod 3:17).¹⁶

God knows the human temperament. God also understands that humans struggle to follow a spiritual leader. Therefore, God provides a human disciple to disciple other humans. Scripture provides God’s plan for succession discipleship and the transfer of disciple-making. Before Moses closed his eyes, God had already chosen Moses’ successor. Joshua is introduced after the Israelites cross the Red Sea. God had chosen Joshua to succeed Moses (Deut 31:2-3). It can be assumed that Joshua had given his life over to God. To be a disciple, a person must surrender to the disciple-maker. Moses prayed (Num 27:15-23), and God responded with Joshua. This suggests that God had

¹⁵ Gallaty, “#45 Why Is Our Evangelism Not Working?”

¹⁶ All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

gifted Joshua for the job. The text says that was Joshua had a “spirit” of leadership (Num 27:18-21). God told Moses to lay hands on Joshua (Num 27:22-23), which might suggest the transfer of power and spirit; the transfer of the mantel of leadership. Moses had to be willing to pour himself into this student that he might grow into the leader he is later called upon to be. Because of Moses’ leadership and direction, Joshua was more than ready to receive the mantel.¹⁷

God also tells Moses to have Joshua stand before Eleazar the priest and commission Joshua before the people (Num 27:19-21) to show the people who God has ordained to lead them into the “Promised Land.” Moses does as God told him to do and “he laid his hands on and commissioned him” (Num 27:22-23). This ritual is a sign to the people that something has been transferred from one person to the other. Whether it was a blessing, a spirit, or a role. This act is a sign of a transfer from Moses to Joshua.¹⁸

Joshua proved himself to be both obedient to the command of his leader and a fighter (Exod 17:9). He is given the role and responsibility to fight Amalek, and he is successful. Charles Swindoll explains, “Whoever would lead them must be a strong leader, someone not intimidated by the memory of Moses's greatness.”¹⁹ Aaron, Moses’s brother, had been his assistant since the beginning of his ministry (Exod 4:14-16), but he was not the man to lead the people into the Promised Land. Joshua, along with Caleb, had served with Moses as the people of Israel traveled toward the Promised Land. Numbers 11:28 says, “Joshua had been with Moses since his youth,” which suggests that Joshua had been under the mentorship of Moses for quite some time.

¹⁷ Eugene H. Merrell, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 445.

¹⁸ David L. Stubbs, *Numbers*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 211.

¹⁹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Moses: A Man of Selfless Dedication* (Nashville: W Publishing, 1999), 320.

Moses says to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek” (Exod 17:9). God gives Moses a word to speak to Joshua in Exodus 17:14. Moses gives him the charge, a task, and an assignment. Joshua must have had some military skills that God could utilize at this time,²⁰ and he is the selected soldier.²¹ Joshua is entrusted with a great task. God chooses those persons that He has given the gift to lead and serve in His kingdom. God has already gifted Joshua and now puts it on the heart of Moses to call him into service. Disciples have within them God-given gifts that can be utilized for the kingdom of God.

In Exodus 24:13, God calls Moses to a higher place on the mountain. Moses takes Joshua with him, which suggests that disciples are often taken to an enter sanctum. Joshua accompanies Moses up to Mount Sinai and a cloud covered the mountain for six days. For six days the glory of the Lord was present on Mount Sinai. On the seventh day, God spoke. God gives Moses instruction and a message concerning His people and His sanctuary.

After God had given Moses the stone tablets bearing the Ten Commandments, Moses and Joshua descended the mountain and were met with a noise of war (Exod 32:17). As they are descending from the mountain Joshua hears shouting and says to Moses, “There is a noise of war in the camp. Moses then replies; that is not a sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but singing I hear” (Exod 32:17). In that moment Joshua learned the weight of leadership.

Joshua heard for himself the people’s reaction to Moses’ absence. Joshua saw firsthand how quickly followers can lose site of the intended destiny when their leader is not visible. Disciples will often learn things in the moment. In this instance, Joshua witnessed the importance of the leader’s being amongst the people.

²⁰ Harry Donald Maurice Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds., *Leviticus Numbers*, The Pulpit Commentary, vol. 2 (McLean, VA: MacDonald, 1985), 77.

²¹ Spence and Exell, *Leviticus Numbers*, 79.

Moses declared Joshua as his assistant (Exod 33:11), which backs up previously mentioned Numbers 11:28: “Joshua was an assistant to Moses from his youth.” Joshua was present; he did not leave Moses’s side. Joshua appears to be present, attentive, courageous, and teachable, all which are all fundamental and vital characteristics of a disciple. Joshua gives his best to Moses. Likewise, Moses offers all he has to Joshua. What Moses possessed was to be transferred to Joshua. Moses was not just pouring himself into Joshua, but he developing what God had already put in. Moses laid his hands on Joshua and he receives the Holy Spirit (Deut 34:9). This was a sign that God was with Joshua.

Discipleship is a call to be present, attentive, courageous, and teachable. Scripture shows that Joshua was on the job and readily learning from the one who would disciple him. One cannot be questionable in attendance in the discipleship process and also be faithful to the calling of discipleship. The student must be present for all class sessions for he knows not what sessions are essential. Joshua appears to be where he was supposed to be at times he was supposed to be there.

Exodus 17:14 suggests that Joshua was attentive: “The Lord said to Moses, write this as a memorial in the book and recite it in the ears of Joshua.” This lesson was for both present and future purposes. The written message Moses memorialized in the book was for Israel to remember the power and the promises of God. The message recited to Joshua was a lesson for him to absorb during his discipleship training. This example of discipleship shows the transfer of power, information, and spirit. Moses, directed by God, blesses the one who is to follow him to continue the work God has given.

Elijah and Elisha

Another Old Testament discipleship example is found in 1 Kings 19. In this chapter, Elijah calls Elisha into a position of disciple. Martin Hengel, in his book *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, suggests that the aforementioned men have a

discipleship relationship.²² Some question this idea, while others have challenged and called it a mentor to mentee relationship. Hengel notes how Josephus describes Elisha as a disciple of Elijah. Josephus used the Greek word frequently used for disciple in the New Testament.²³ Hengel also sees the Elisha/Elijah call narrative as a clear analogy to Jesus' own calling of his disciples.²⁴ He further notes that Elijah and Elisha "are frequently used among the rabbis to exemplify the teacher-pupil relationship."²⁵

First Kings 19:19-21 is the call of Elisha by the prophet Elijah. Elisha must become a companion to Elijah so that he may succeed him. The call is so urgent and pressing that Elisha must decide right here and right now.²⁶ This example of discipleship demonstrates both the urgency and commitment necessary to be a disciple in training. The individual that is willing to be discipled must be willing to leave something in order to be committed to the discipleship process. Discipleship calls for the student to give full attention to the instructor. David A. Zucker writes,

Four hundred years after the time of Moses, Elijah the Tishbite (mid-ninth-century BCE) serves as the greatest religious leader and prophet of his generation, often patterning his acts on the deeds of Moses. Moses had mentored Joshua, who then succeeded him. Joshua replicated some of Moses' miracles. Elijah mentors Elisha ben Shaphat, who then succeeds him. Elisha in turn replicates some of the acts of Elijah, and by extension, some of the acts of Moses and Joshua.²⁷

The Old Testament model suggests that God's plan for discipleship could be duplicated. A look at the call to discipleship reveals the similarities of the call from Old Testament to New Testament.

²² Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1996), 16-17.

²³ Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, 16.

²⁴ Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, 16.

²⁵ Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, 17.

²⁶ Ronald S. Wallace, *Elijah and Elisha: Expositions from the Book of Kings* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 55.

²⁷ David A. Zucker, "Elijah and Elisha: Part I Moses and Joshua," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (October-December 2012): 225-30.

God has a hand in the discipleship selection process. God has the blueprint for the success of His people. Neither Moses nor Elijah selected their disciples. Neither of these men knew who was to follow them. The same holds true today: disciples, followers, and eventual successors are already known and set in motion by God (Rom 8:28-30). Elisha is placed in the path of Elijah.

When Elijah encounters Elisha, Elisha is plowing—he is attending to the family business. To be a disciple of Elijah, he must leave this work to do a greater work. All are asked to leave something in order to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Elisha’s leaving his family’s business suggests that one of the tenants of discipleship is self-denial. Elisha leaves job. He left oxen and ran to follow Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19-20). The twelve teams of oxen suggest that Elisha was leaving a prosperous family. Elisha requested the opportunity to kiss his father and mother goodbye (v. 20), which is a sign that he is willing to leave family for commitment to this service. He also bids farewell to his community (v. 21), which suggests that he is willing to leave all that he is familiar with.

David Zucker writes, “Elijah not only appointed Elisha ben Shaphat as his successor, but for about five or six years (or longer) he was Elisha's mentor. Elisha repeats many of Elijah's acts.”²⁸ Zucker adds, “Although Elisha follows the path of his direct exemplar, Elijah, he takes some time finding his prophetic footing. Elijah had a special cloak which he had thrown over Elisha's shoulders when he delegated him as a disciple (I Kgs.19:19).”²⁹ Elijah placing the cloak or mantel over Elisha is the passing of the mantle, which is the investiture of the prophetic office upon to the apprentice.³⁰

The teacher to pupil transfer in the discipleship process is a transfer of knowledge and power. Elisha was given the power that Elijah possessed. He is able to

²⁸ Zucker, “Elijah and Elisha Part 1 Moses and Joshua,” 226.

²⁹ David J. Zucker, “Elijah and Elisha Part 2 Similarities and Differences,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (January 2013): 19.

³⁰ Peter J. Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 143.

stand, as did Elijah. He is now able to speak prophetically as did Elijah and represent God with full authority and spirit. God directs Elijah to anoint Elisha, and Elijah carries out this work of commissioning his student disciple for the work of the kingdom of God.

The New Testament Model

Jesus and the Twelve

Matthew 4:18-22 describes the calling of Jesus' first disciples. Jesus begins His calling of disciples as He walks along the Sea of Galilee (v. 18). He does not look among the corporate elite or the well-established; instead, He looks among common men to fill a kingdom agenda. Jesus looks for men who are busy at something. As an example, Jesus sees Peter, along with his brother, Andrew, performing the duties of fishermen. Jesus calls to them, "Come follow me" (v. 19). Stanley Hauerwas writes, "A leaving signaling the sacrifices that the disciples will have to undergo in order to recognize who it is they follow, for the kingdom born in this man, requires a transformation that all his disciples must undergo."³¹ Jesus informs Peter and Andrew that He will transform them into "fishers of men." The text states that they "immediately" left their nets and occupation. Jesus walks a bit farther and sees James, and his brother, John, in the boat with their father. They were in the boat with their father. Jesus extends a call to them as well and they immediately left their boat and their father and to follow Him. Jesus asks these men to give up everything and follow Him (Matt 19:20). God is looking for people who will put Him first; God is looking for people that will sacrifice their lives to follow Him.

Mark 1:16-20 provides Mark's account of the call of disciples. It affirms Matthew's account that the men, when called by Jesus, left their occupation and boats to immediately to follow Jesus. This passage shows that the disciples were asked to leave something (their lives) to go to something (discipleship). These men were asked to leave

³¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 56.

their jobs, family, hopes, and dreams to pursue a greater calling on their lives. The call to discipleship, was a call to follow Jesus and learn from Him. Jesus called these men into a process that would ultimately develop them for the life and work of discipleship.

Discipleship is a process of growing. Mark's gospel reads, "Come follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people" (Mark 1:17). Luke 6:13 says, "When morning came, He called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles."

It appears that these men immediately left everything and followed Jesus. David Platt suggests that to follow Jesus is to make a radical abandonment for His glory.³² Similar to those who were discipled in the Old Testament, these men left something. The Luke passage, like the Matthew passage, shows that a disciple is called to leave something (their lives) to go to something (discipleship).

John 1 presents a different narrative of the call of these men. John 1:35 explains that John the Baptist was with two of his disciples when they saw Jesus. John points Jesus out and says "look, the Lamb of God." From John's narrative was the beginning of the discipleship ministry. Robert Coleman, in his book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, says, "Jesus was not concerned with the programs to reach the multitude, but with the men whom the multitude would follow."³³ Individuals who are to be disciples must first be willing to be discipled, and these men were willing to follow Jesus as disciples.

John 1:35-42 suggests that this was not their first encounter with Jesus. In Matthew 4:19, Jesus extends an invitation to follow Him. At first glance it would seem that these prospects for discipleship left immediately. When connecting John's encounter with Matthew's encounter it can be observed that the men had time to consider the call on their lives. Both Old Testament and New Testament accounts would strongly suggest that

³² David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 80.

³³ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 2nd ed., abridged (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 27.

God does not call the idle. Joshua was a youth Hebrew, Elisha was at work plowing, and these men were at work fishing. Anna Case-Winters, “The call is unexpected, disruptive, and intrusive. The disciples are called from other good and important things—from work that sustains them and from families that love them. This new commitment may not break these relationships and obligations, but it will now take precedence.”³⁴ These men are asked to leave everything and follow after Jesus.

John F. O’Grady explains, “The Disciples are those who freely choose to follow the Lord, to be with Him, and to accept His mission.”³⁵ Mike Breen, in his book *Building a Discipling Culture*, writes that “discipleship is an intentional pursuit.”³⁶ These men are invited to follow Jesus—the Scripture does not suggest that Jesus in any way forced them to follow Him. Jesus calls and the men respond. The Gospels illustrate the first steps in the process of discipleship: step 1 is introduction; step 2 is invitation. These men responded to the introduction and received the invitation.

Paul and Timothy

The apostle Paul’s relationship with Timothy is a model for discipleship. Paul meets Timothy while on his second missionary journey (Acts 16). Paul visits Lystra, and while there, the believers in Lystra speak well of a young man by the name of Timothy. As stated, discipleship starts with an introduction and moves to an invitation. Second Timothy 1:5 states that Timothy’s mother and grandmother introduced him to a relationship with Christ. Paul wanted to encourage the young man and take Timothy along with him. Paul, like Jesus, wanted to teach someone to carry out the work of spreading the gospel after his own life and work were done (Acts 16:1-5). Paul may have

³⁴ Anna Case-Winters, *Matthew*, Belief: A Theological Commentary on Bible (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 57.

³⁵ John F. O’Grady, *Disciples and Leaders: The Origins of Christian Ministry in the New Testament* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 67.

³⁶ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011), 20.

felt that there would be some challenges to about Timothy's dual citizenship. Timothy was not circumcised, so Paul circumcised him. Even though Paul taught that circumcision was not a requirement to belief, he wanted to be sensitive to the Jewish audience.³⁷

Timothy leaves all to accompany Paul on a journey to spread the gospel. Paul's desire to take Timothy with him is an act of evangelism. Evangelism often opens the door to discipleship. They traveled from town to town delivering the guidelines that had been set by the church leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 16:4). It is clear here that Paul is discipling Timothy. Paul was a teacher to Timothy as they traveled from city to city. Paul disciplined Timothy. Second Timothy 2:2 gives evidence of that teacher student exchange. Paul reminds Timothy of what he has heard from him. Paul also instructs Timothy to teach others. A disciple is not just a student, but also one who will one day teach. A disciple should not just take in, but also emulate, imitate, and teach. Paul calls Timothy his "true son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2) because Paul and Timothy developed a discipler to disciple relationship.

Paul was like a spiritual father to this young man. The discipler must take seriously the work of discipleship. The discipler is to invest in the life of the one being disciplined. Jesus took great care and concern for the life of His disciples. Discipleship involves caring for and being responsible for the growth and development of the student in one's care. There needs to be a strong bond between discipler and disciplee.

Paul was also an example of how to live (2 Tim 3:10). Paul reminds Timothy of how he lived before him and how he is to live before others. Paul does not give Timothy any false hopes that things will go well; there will be persecutions (v. 12). Paul tells Timothy to "continue in what you have learned" (v. 14).

³⁷ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Acts*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 219.

The Call to Be a Disciple

The disciple is called to “follow” the instructor. Matthew 4:19 provides the invitation that Jesus extended to those who were on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus called them to follow Him. Jesus extended an invitation to faith and obedience. The disciple is asked to make a life-long commitment. John had a community of casual and constantly changing hearers. Jesus is calling constant followers.³⁸ Jesus called men that would ultimately make a commitment to life-long service.

Sakenfeld and Balentine writes, “The Gospel of Matthew draws a parallel between Jesus who embodies the reality of God’s Kingdom, and the expectations for the disciples.”³⁹ Matthew compares the mission of Jesus to the mission the disciples are expected to perform.⁴⁰ The disciple is expected to model the life and work of Jesus, teach as he has been taught, and model the life that has been modeled for him. A student is to take into the world the lessons he has learned and apply them wherever necessary.

The idea of discipleship began with Jesus’ selection of those who would later be called disciples. Jesus called men to follow Him and to duplicate the work He was about to do. He took them through an intense process of learning. Jesus modeled for them how discipleship is done (Matt 6:5-15; 8:14-17; 8:23-27), talked with them about what He was doing, and then allowed them to experience kingdom work and talk about their experience (10:5-15). Jesus eventually taught them what they would later teach others.

In Matthew 19:27, Peter asked, what is the return or reward on this investment?⁴¹ Following Jesus means abandoning something in order to be with Him, which is a challenge. He wanted to know the reward for leaving all behind. For many, it

³⁸ Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Minneapolis: James Family, 1978), 49.

³⁹ Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 2:130.

⁴⁰ Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 2:130

⁴¹ R. T. France, *Matthew*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 291.

is difficult to yield to the call to discipleship. It is hard for an individual to leave what he knows and is familiar with to follow what he does not know or is unfamiliar with. Something inspired the disciples of Jesus to leave all and follow Him.

Matthew 4:18-22 provides a picture of the call to discipleship. These verses provide a look into how the men were called to discipleship and an idea of the changes necessary for a disciple's life. Some believe that Jesus summoned these men with an irresistible authority, and their response was radical obedience.⁴² Others believe that the call to discipleship took place after a relationship was built between Christ and those potential disciples.⁴³ Relationships can lead to discipleship. Relationship building is a necessary ingredient in disciple making. The process began with Christ making Himself known to those who He would eventually invite to leave all and follow Him. Jesus' example is an applicable approach to disciple-making. People need to know and trust those they are to follow. John Phillips suggest that John, Andrew, and Peter had already spent time with Jesus (John 1:35-42) but had not made a commitment to follow Him,⁴⁴ when they encountered Him in Matthew 4.

Two of these prospective disciples may have been disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35). Jesus may have previously met Simon after using his boat. One can draw from both Matthew 4 and John 1 how to cultivate a relationship that will lead to an invitation to discipleship. Simon allows Jesus to use his boat and Simon watches this Man and how He is able to communicate to the mass, speak to their state and condition, and calm their anxieties and fears. The gospel presents a picture of a Man worthy of following. I can only imagine being there and seeing these things and being compelled to follow Him.

⁴² Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 30.

⁴³ Hare, *Matthew*, 109.

⁴⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew, The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 81.

Jesus' call of "follow Me" is literally a call to "come behind me."⁴⁵ To come behind is to follow and to learn from the one who is leading. The disciples were invited to follow Jesus like others were following rabbis. Some argue that these men had qualities or skills that are essential for being a disciple, but Jesus called them despite who they were not because of who they were.⁴⁶ A rabbi had not selected them, so why would Jesus select them? The Messiah chooses four men who are of lower class, rural residents, uneducated, not well respected, culturally deprived, narrow minded, and full of Jewish prejudices.⁴⁷ David Platt says that these men do not warrant Jesus' pursuit.⁴⁸

I would surmise that these men have the same aspects about them as men of today. It is not what a person has, but what a person can be become, because of what God has ready invested in him. God has called many people not because of what they have or what they are, but because of what He can do with them. These men were not suited for rabbinical school, but they were suited for teaching by the one who is able to teach all things. John 15:2+ says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

The Messiah selected these men to learn from Him those things that only He can teach. It was customary for rabbinical students to seek a master and then choose to learn from him.⁴⁹ These men did not choose but were chosen. It is still true today that people do not choose God, but God chooses to reveal Himself to mankind so that the world might know and follow Him. Jesus chooses these men to be taught so that they might teach others.

⁴⁵ Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew*, 109.

⁴⁶ David Platt, *Follow Me* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 36.

⁴⁷ Platt, *Follow Me*, 36.

⁴⁸ Platt, *Follow Me*, 36.

⁴⁹ Hare, *Matthew*, 30.

Matthew 4:19-25 reads, “And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The Greek text does not mention Jesus by name, but other translators do so for clarity.⁵⁰ Jesus discerns that these men have reached a point (invitation) in their relationship (that leads to discipleship) that He extends to them an invitation to the discipleship class. To follow a teacher was not a new phenomenon for Jews. Jewish rabbis had disciples—men who would follow them and observe their actions and listen to their words.⁵¹ The men were being called to walk a new walk, learn a new lesson, and live a new life. There had not been such a teacher who would lead men in such a way, to a new life, that would change the person and their surroundings.

Jesus was not just asking these men to follow behind Him, but to be engaged in the process of being made into a disciple. Discipleship is about engaging people in a new lesson and teaching process. It is a process that grows the mind, but also the person. It is coming along and seeing how discipleship works. They were being called to learn and grow as they went along with Jesus. Jesus did not just want to teach them, but to grow them as well. He wanted them to grow into disciples so that they could later disciple others. The work of disciple making ought to be more than an invite, but should teach and grow people to be disciples and disciple makers themselves.

The men that ultimately followed Jesus were described this way: “The men that followed Jesus were “hearers” as well as followers. They followed the Master around like students and trainees.”⁵² John Mac Arthur writes, “Those twelve were people just like you and me. They weren’t distinguished for their natural talents of intellectual power. They were prone to mistakes, wrong attitudes, lapses of faith, and bitter failures. They came mainly from ordinary occupations that never would have suggested they were

⁵⁰ Barclay M. Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 98.

⁵¹ Newman and Stine, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*, 98.

⁵² D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 148.

candidates for spiritual success.”⁵³ These men entered an apprenticeship program in which Jesus would model the things that He would later send them to do.

The Development of a Disciple

With most things in life, people grow into that which they want to become. Some people have natural abilities, gifts, and talents, but for others it takes some work and time to develop into that which they want or desire to be. The disciples that Jesus selected were no different. They were not the disciples Jesus purposed them to be when He called them, but were shaped into the men they were called to be. I started pastoral ministry twenty-five years ago. I was not then who I am today—I grew to this point.

As one journeys to a closer walk with Jesus there are challenges along the way. A closer walk with Jesus can be strenuous. It calls for the individual to face challenges that they may have never faced or were not willing to face. To get fit for a challenge, one may have to endure physical training. The same can be said for spiritual development. One will have to endure spiritual training to grow spiritually. With training comes discipline and with discipline comes development. Paul writes to Timothy, “Discipline yourself for the purpose of Godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). Godliness comes through discipline.⁵⁴

Discipline is the training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental facilities or moral character of an individual.⁵⁵ The men that Jesus chose were not yet disciples. They needed to be molded, corrected, and developed into the disciples that He called them to be. For one to become a disciple of Jesus, he must go through a process of discipline. He must be willing to be shaped, trained, and guided into this new way of life.

⁵³ John MacArthur, *Christ Call: Our Response Follow Me* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 1.

⁵⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 17.

⁵⁵ Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Versailles, KY: Publisher, 2016), s.v. “discipline.”

Part of the discipleship process is the discipline of prayer. Jesus taught the disciples how to pray (Matt 6:5). Luke 11 suggest that the disciples, after seeing Jesus pray, asked Him to teach them to pray as John taught his disciples. Matthew includes this prayer in the teachings of Jesus. Prayer seems to be an expectation of a disciple. When speaking to His disciples in Matthew 6:5, Jesus says, “And when you pray . . .” Jesus is giving His disciples a lesson on prayer. He is instructing them to seek God’s attention versus that of man. Then in verse 6 He says; “But when you pray . . .” Jesus continues the same taught from verse 5 as it relates to reward, explaining that, if individuals maintain a secret devotion, God will reward them with answered prayers. The pattern is continued in verse 7: “When you pray . . .” Now Jesus is addressing the wordiness of praying. Jesus is teaching on the avoidance of verbosity and prattling and the necessity of singleness of mind attentiveness to God.⁵⁶

Matthew seems to draw attention to the lesson Jesus is teaching on the coming kingdom and the disciples’ need for preparation. This would include seeking forgiveness and being mindful of one’s own behavior. For the disciples to experience this kingdom they must connect with its King. Jesus continues to instruct the disciples on how to pray in verse 9: “Pray like this . . .” Jesus was not instructing them to use His exact words, but to use the clauses that He established. Pray to your Father in Heaven; hold His name in honor; pray for the advent of His kingdom; pray for the Father’s will to be done on earth; pray for daily provision; pray for release of debts; and pray for deliverance from the final test, which is the tribulations, but save us from the evil one.⁵⁷ Lessons on prayer are a part of a disciple’s training. Jesus provided the disciples with instruction on how to pray.

Discipleship is the spiritual development process of the Christian believer. Jesus developed His disciples through His teachings and the spiritual life He lived before

⁵⁶ Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “prayer.”

⁵⁷ W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 26 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 75.

them. Therefore, the church must teach the lessons Jesus taught and live the spiritual life Jesus lived in an effort to develop disciples.

The Holy Spirit's Role in Discipleship

In Matthew 4:18-20, Jesus calls four men to follow Him through the process of becoming disciples. These men had no idea of the journey that awaited them. They had witnessed the Rabbi taking young men through the discipleship process. Now, Jesus would take them through a similar process. This process would take one from infancy to maturity.

In John 14, Jesus informs his disciples that He is about to leave them. No doubt they experienced fear upon hearing that Jesus was about to leave them. They had left everything to follow Him; their lives were now dependent upon Him. They had come to trust Him and had learned so much from Him. What would they do without Him?

These men had grown under the leadership and teachings of Jesus. What were they to do now that He was about to depart from them? Jesus begins this conversation: “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (John 14:1). Jesus seeks to give them comfort during this time of transition. Though Jesus is about to leave, He ensures them that their growth and development would continue through the help of the One He would send to them: “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:26-27).

One should notice what Jesus says to them: “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” Jesus knows they are afraid; He knows that their fear may disrupt their learning. First, Jesus informs them that they have no need to worry, but should “trust in God” (John 14:1). Second, He informs them that God will send someone to help them to

continue this process (John 14:26). Third, Jesus informs them what the Holy Spirit will do for them (John 14:26).

As stated previously; first Jesus wanted to calm any fear and anxiety that these men may be experiencing. The beginning of the discipleship journey can be a bit overwhelming, and these men were about to lose the only one to ever disciple them. That would cause fear and anxiety. Jesus tried to comfort them by telling them where He was going and why He was going there.

Second, Jesus tried to further calm any fear and anxiety by telling them what the Holy Spirit would do. No doubt they began to question, “where do we go from here?” Peter asked, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” (Matt 19:27). If Peter had difficulty with the hard teaching of Jesus, then can one imagine how he and the others must have felt at the words of Jesus’ departure. Jesus tries to reassure the disciples that the process will continue with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Third, Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things and bring to remembrance all that He (Jesus) had said to them. The Holy Spirit would bring clarity to the things that Jesus had said and taught them at the right time. Luke 12:12 says, “The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” Jesus had said so much to the disciples, and the Holy Spirit would bring it all back to remembrance and provide the clarity they needed in the right moment.

The Holy Spirit is a necessary component in the discipleship process. Craig Etheredge, in his blog post “Know the Spirit’s Role in Discipleship,” writes, “The Holy Spirit is the one who causes spiritual growth to happen. Without Him, you can’t make someone grow any more than a farmer can make a crop grow.”⁵⁸ Etheredge also asserts,

Once a person is a believer, the Spirit’s job is not over; in fact, he’s just getting started. The Spirit lives in every follower of Jesus (Romans 8:9-11). He actually takes up residence in our lives (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). He leads us, teaches us, comforts us, and grows us to look more and more like Christ (Romans 8:4; John

⁵⁸ Craig Etheredge, “Know the Spirit’s Role in Discipleship,” December 7, 2017, <https://discipleship.org/blog/know-the-spirits-role-in-discipleship/>.

14:26; John 14:16; Titus 3:5-7). He helps us in our weaknesses, guides us into truth, empowers us to serve God, gives us courage to tell others about Christ, and produces lasting change in our lives (Micah 3:8; Romans 8:26; John 16:13; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22-23). As we abide in Christ and keep in step with the Spirit, he works through us to produce lasting spiritual fruit that will remain forever (John 15:4-5; Galatians 5:25; John 15:8). In reality, it is the Spirit who does the work of growing every believer toward maturity and fruitful living. You may ask, “If that’s the case, then why don’t we see more people fully mature and following Jesus?” The answer to that question lies in our part of the spiritual growth process.”⁵⁹

Etheredge believes that the Holy Spirit is essential in the growth and development of the disciple, and he is not alone in this belief. Tim LaFleur writes, “Because the Holy Spirit lives within the disciple, He is a constant comfort and helps the disciple to follow Jesus in his walk and his witness.”⁶⁰ Both men echo the message that Jesus was trying to convey to His disciples.

The Work of a Disciple

The Gospels present what Christ said to the disciples and the teachings within those words. The Gospels help provide an understanding of what He meant in His sayings (teachings). Matthew 28:19-20 provides a starting point for understanding what Christ meant when He said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.” Within this passage is a command to do a particular task. To better understand the command it is important to understand the passage in its context. Jesus gives the disciples His rationale: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (Matt 28:18). He has been given *authority* to send whom He wills to do what He plans. He has the authority to send whom He wills to go do what He wants done. He sends them to do the work that He has empowered them to do. The disciples had been taught the gospel, and now it is time for them to go and spread the gospel. Jesus sends them into all the world with a message of hope and salvation.

⁵⁹ Etheredge, “Knowing the Spirit’s Role in Discipleship.”

⁶⁰ Tim LaFleur, “The Disciples’ Power: The Holy Spirit,” February 27, 2020, <https://replicate.org/the-disciples-power-the-holy-spirit/>.

It is important to look closely at the first command. To “go” is the command Jesus gives these men. Matthew frequently uses “go” as an introductory participle rightly translated to coordinate with the main verb here: “go and make.” Jesus sends the disciples, but He also tells them to do something in the process of “going.” They are to make disciples of the people they meet. The making of disciples is the main command that He gives. He sends them to make duplicates of themselves. Jesus made the disciples as duplicate of Himself. One of the goals of discipleship is to develop replacements. These men would one day disciple others as they had been disciplined.

Part of the disciple-making process is to go into all nations. They were not to stay in the area or region in which they were already located, but to go beyond the borders of Galilee. In the current context of ministry, people leave their homes, family, and way of life to travel a great distance to do the work of missionaries. Jesus required the same of the disciples—to go where they have not gone before. Next, they were to baptize those they encountered in other nations.

Baptism was a sign of the individual’s new life and new birth. John’s baptism of Jesus was an example for the disciples to follow. Jesus says in John 3:3: “No one can see the kingdom of God unless that are born again.” He is addressing the need for a spiritual renewal in the life of the baptized. Jesus sends the disciples into the world to reach (evangelize), teach (discipleship), and baptize (new birth) all nations.

Now Jesus speaks of His authority in heaven because that is where it was granted.⁶¹ The end of Jesus ministry is similar to that of Moses. Just as Moses at the end of his life commissioned Joshua both to go into the land populated by foreign nations and to observe all the commandments in the Law, and then further promise his successor God’s abiding presence, similarly, Jesus, at the end of His earthly ministry, told his

⁶¹ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge, 2012), 483.

disciples to go into all the world and to teach the observance of all the commands of the new Moses, and further promised his assisting presence.⁶²

As did Moses upon his departure and commission to Joshua, Jesus does the same with His disciples. The disciples had spent time with Jesus and now it was time to put into practice all that He had labored to teach them. They receive their orders to do as He commanded. They had trial runs (Matt 10:5-15; Luke 10:1-24), and they were able to experience the work of the kingdom in the presence of the King. Now Jesus sends the disciples without His presence. However, He said that He would be with them—He declares that He has the power to do in them what He is sending them to do. Unlike Moses, who says the presence of God will be with Joshua (Deut 31:7-8). Jesus is offering them the third Person of the Trinity. Jesus is sending them along with a part of Him. Donald Hagner explains, “Now the resurrected (not resuscitated!) Jesus who appears before the disciples is one who takes on a new order of existence and who here anticipates His glorious exaltation at God’s right hand and indeed the *parousia* itself.”⁶³ The glorious identity of Jesus is revealed. He insures them that He has the power from God and is giving them this power to go forward with the task they are being sent to do.

The disciples are armed with God-given power and the assurance of His presence for them to complete a task for which He has prepared them. Time spent with Jesus was to prepare the disciples for the work of the kingdom of God. They are sent to “make disciples.” Jesus gives them universal authority to establish a universal church. He sends them to all nations. It is mind blowing to see the land from which these men were launched and know that He was sending them outside what was familiar to what is unfamiliar. They had spent time with Jesus as students and are now being sent out to make disciples that make disciples. “Go” is the launch, and “make disciples” the work—

⁶² William David Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1997), 680.

⁶³ Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Dallas: Word, 1995), 886.

Jesus is sending them into the world to make disciples who will make disciples. They are not just sent to the Jewish nations, but to all nations.

Conclusion

To be a disciple one must be willing to leave all and follow Jesus. Whether Joshua, Elisha, the twelve, or Timothy, they all left something to grow and to gain something greater. A young man once asked Jesus if he could accompany Him and His disciples and Jesus said, “If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt 16:24) To be a disciple of Jesus Christ the believer must be willing to leave something.

To be a disciple one must be willing to be taught. Both Old and New Testament examples present a teacher to student relationship. Moses taught Joshua how to lead the people of God. Elijah showed Elisha how to administer the Word and the Spirit of God. Jesus taught His disciples how to show the Love of God. Paul taught Timothy how to endure like a soldier of God. A disciple is a student who learns to do the things that God calls them to do.

Mark 10:28-31 is written,

Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (ESV)

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL BASIS FOR MAKING DISCIPLES

Discipleship is critically important to the life and growth of the local church. The Western church is currently experiencing declining and plateauing congregations. This chapter will look at the current state of the church as it relates to discipleship and church growth and its need to refocus to do what was commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20. The church was established and built by the Jesus Christ (Matt 16:18), more than two thousand years ago. Christ later gave the church a command to go make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19-20). Based on Matthew 28:19-20, the church of the post-modern era may be guilty of insubordination. The church has come up short in fulfilling Jesus Christ's command to "go." Robby Gallaty writes, "His last Words ought to be our first command."¹

The State of Discipleship in the Western Church

The church that was originally established to go and grow currently stands in decline. Numerous reports and studies show this decline in the Western church. In October 2019, the Pew Research Center published an article titled, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at a Rapid Pace." The research concludes,

The religious landscape of the United States continues to change at a rapid clip. In Pew Research Center telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their religious

¹ Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus's Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), front cover.

identity as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.²

In an article written in the *Baptist News Global*, Bob Allen writes, “In 2018 the Southern Baptist Convention recorded the fewest baptisms in a year since World War II, according to statistics released last week by LifeWay Christian Resources.”³ In March 2019, LifeWay Christian Research reported a change in US church attendance over the last three years: “In many congregations in the United States, new faces in the pews have become rare. A new study from Exponential by LifeWay Research found 6 in 10 Protestant churches are plateaued or declining in attendance and more than half saw fewer than 10 people become new Christians in the past 12 months.”⁴

America was once thought of by many as a Christian nation,⁵ but the landscape has changed. Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowry write, “While Gallup polls and other statisticians have turned in the same percentage - about 40 percent of the population—of average weekend church attendees for the past 70 years, a different sort of research paints quite a disparate picture of how many Christians in American attend a local church on any given Sunday.”⁶

C. Kirk Hadaway Penny Long Marler, and Mark Chaves, authors of the “National Congregations Study,” have discovered the presence of what researchers call “the halo effect,” which is “the difference between what people tell pollsters and what

² Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” October, 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

³ Bob Allen, “Southern Baptist Baptisms at Lowest Level in 74 Years,” *Baptist News Global*, May 28, 2019, <https://baptistnews.com/article/southern-baptist-baptisms-at-lowest-level-in-74-years/#.Xp2bflNKjow>.

⁴ Aaron Earls, “Small, Struggling Congregations Fill U.S. Church Landscape,” Lifeway, March 6, 2019, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/03/06/small-struggling-congregations-fill-u-s-church-landscape/>

⁵ Hugh Heclo, “Is America a Christian Nation?” *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 1 (2007): 61.

⁶ Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowry, “7 Startling Facts: An Up Close Look at Church Attendance in America,” *Outreach Magazine*, April 10, 2018, <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html>.

people actually do. Americans tend to over report socially desirable behavior, like voting and attending church, and under-report socially undesirable behavior like drinking.”⁷

Ed Stetzer reports similar findings: “24.5 percent of Americans now say their primary form of spiritual nourishment is meeting with a small group of 20 or less people every week. About 6 million Christians meet weekly with a small group and never or rarely go to church. There is a significant movement happening.”⁸ People are becoming disenfranchised with traditional communities of faith and are forming alternative ways to connect and grow spiritually.

Thom S. Rainer, an American writer, researcher, speaker, and former president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, who now leads The Rainer Research Group, published a report in March 2019 called “Major New Research on Declining, Plateaued, and Growing Churches from Exponential and Lifeway Research.” These are the findings from Exponential and LifeWay Research.

1. 70% of churches are subtracting/declining or plateauing. Only 30% are adding/growing based on Exponential’s categorization of churches which is defined above. This data is largely consistent with other research we have done. The period covered is three years.
2. There are relatively few reproducing churches. The research categorized only 7% of the churches as reproducing (Level 4). The numbers of churches considered multiplying (Level 5: multiple generations of church plants) was 0% in the sample, indicating a negligible number in the total U. S. church population.
3. The majority of Protestant churches had less than 10 people commit to Jesus Christ as Savior in the past 12 months. That’s fewer than one person per month. That’s not good. That’s not good at all.
4. Smaller churches are at severe risk. Among those churches with an average worship attendance under 50, only 20% are growing. That is the lowest of any of the categories of churches and is an indicator that these churches are at the greatest risk of dying.

⁷ C. Kirk Hadaway, Penny Long Marler, and Mark Chaves, quoted in Barnes and Lowry, “7 Startling Facts.”

⁸ Ed Stetzer, quoted in Barnes and Lowry, “7 Startling Facts.”

5. Larger churches have a much lower risk of dying. Among the churches with an average worship attendance of 250 and more, 42% are growing. That is, by far, the largest number of growing churches in any category.⁹

Rainer's research looks at the current state of the churches surveyed. His aim seems to encourage the church to think about how the church might begin to work toward revitalization and revival. Not all sections of the Protestant faith are having the same experience. Some historically African American congregations are reporting a different experience.

An article in the *Religious News Service*, by Adelle Banks, reads,

A recent Pew Research Center survey found that Christians are losing their share of the U.S. population, dropping to 71 percent in 2014, down from 78 percent in 2007, with young people leading the exodus. But historically black denominations have contradicted that trend, with consistently numbers of members and attendees steady percent of members during that same period.¹⁰

If this report is true, that Black churches may not be experiencing the decline that white churches are experiencing, then what is the cause? Adelle Banks, in an August 2015 article for the *Religious News Service*, suggests, "There are numerous reasons why some Black churches retain their members, but, most prominently, the church has played a historic role in black life that has fostered a continuing strong black Protestant identity."¹¹ Marsha Foster Boyd adds to this debate that the Black church has been a major source of influence and independence for the Black community and family.¹² Vicki Phipps endorses Boyd's view as well:

The role of the church in every African American community played a major role in the Civil Rights Movement, but the role of the church began long before the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was born. It began with slavery.

⁹ Thom Rainer, "Major New Research on Declining, Plateaued, and Growing Churches from Exponential and Lifeway Research," March 6, 2019, <https://churchanswers.com/blog/major-new-research-on-declining-plateaued-and-growing-churches-from-exponential-and-lifeway-research/>.

¹⁰ Adelle M. Banks, "Black Churches Bucking the Trend of Decline," *Religion News Service*, August 13, 2015, <https://religionnews.com/2015/08/13/black-churches-bucking-trend-decline/>.

¹¹ Banks, "Black Churches Bucking the Trend of Decline."

¹² Marsha Foster Boyd, "The African American Church as a Healing Community: Theological and Psychological Dimensions of Pastoral Care," *Journal of Theology United Theological Seminary* 95 (1991): 17.

African American churches still pray the same way today, with a spirit that comes from deep within the souls of their ancestors, the slaves. Oppression, rejection and segregation leave a human being with no one to turn to, but God. Hope came alive from spiritual songs, which were sung in the heat of Southern plantations long ago. Without that old hope, the change to move to Civil Rights could not have come. It was hope that created the churches which were raised by faith, and it was the church that produced Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. It wasn't about religion, but the spirit of so many souls who remained faithful to hope.¹³

The Black church may hold a more significant role in its community versus that of the white evangelical church. Some report that the Black church was and still is where the Black community realized and or expressed its identity.¹⁴ Phipps adds,

Today the churches in African American communities continue to play a role in changing our society. The African American church is actively seeking to improve the urban communities and provide safe havens for African American children. They take on the issues of gang violence in the same way they ended slavery, with constant hope and amazing faith.

Not everyone agrees with this position, however. Carl Ellis, Jr. writes,

Because today's core concerns remain unaddressed, increasing numbers of African Americans are looking for theological answers. The church is strategically positioned to meet this challenge. While the traditional church has played a key role in the Black experience, it is not equipped for the task before us in its present state. It will continue to be unable to connect with those who are seeking answers to their theological questions. Addressing these concerns requires new models of the church – models able to appreciate the old traditions yet armed with theology that is biblical, cognitive and applied to addressing legitimate African American cultural core concerns.¹⁵

Both Phipps and Ellis make valid points regarding the roll the Black church has played and can play in the Black community. Ellis points out that there needs to be a new approach to the questions now being raised as to how the citizen in the Black community survives. The Black church was once the center for Black survival, but the current day Black church is working hard to survive itself.

¹³ Vicki Phipps, "The Role of the Black Church in the Civil Rights Movement," *The Westside Gazette*, January 10, 2013, <https://thewestsidegazette.com/the-role-of-the-black-church-in-the-civil-rights-movement/>.

¹⁴ Phipps, "The Role of the Black Church."

¹⁵ Carl Ellis, Jr., "The African-American Church: Past, Present, and Future," *Christianity Today*, July 11, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/july/african-american-church-in-america-past-present-and-future.html>.

Some reports give a different picture of Black church attendance. Richard Vara writes in the *Houston Chronicle*, “The continuing loss of members—especially young adults—will be among critical issues facing thousands of lay leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church during its worldwide meeting (July 24, 2005).”¹⁶ Carl Davis, co-chair of the local host committee for the 29th Biennial Convention of the Connectional Lay Organization says, “The assembly will deal with several critical issues, including declining membership, financial problems in the denomination's 10 universities and colleges and the lack of a computer network linking the denomination's 3,000 churches.”¹⁷

In the same article, Leo Griffin, pastor of Wesley AME Church in the Third Ward, said, “Most denominations are losing members. . . . If the laity doesn’t come together to find ways to enhance our church from a growth standpoint, we will die.”¹⁸ The AME church reported it had more than two million members during the 1990s.¹⁹ Griffin goes on to say; “The church is losing adults between 25-35 years of age. Young adults are less likely than their elders to stay in traditional denominations, Griffin said. They are increasingly attending large, nondenominational churches.”²⁰

There seems to be inconsistency in reporting church attendance and decline. Banks reports that not all protestant groups are experiencing decline. “Some black congregations are seeing growth, not decline.”²¹ Richard Vera, Carl Davis, and Leo

¹⁶ Richard Vara, “AME Church Convention Will Address Decline in Membership, School Finances,” *Houston Chronicle*, July 23, 2005, <https://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/AME-Church-convention-will-address-decline-in-1946669.php>.

¹⁷ Carl Davis, quoted Vara, “AME Church Convention.”

¹⁸ Leo Griffin, quoted Vara, “AME Church Convention.”

¹⁹ Vara, “AME Church Convention.”

²⁰ Griffin, quoted Vara, “AME Church Convention.”

²¹ Banks, “Black Churches Bucking the Trend of Decline.”

Griffin, report from the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) side of view that the black church is declining. The difference in numbers may be attributed to other variables.

One possible reason for the different reports is a lack of resources. The Black church has not adequately tracked its church membership; many Black churches do not have adequate staffing to keep track of the numbers. Several of the Black Church Conventions rely on volunteers, while predominantly White Conventions have paid staff.

Something is driving the exodus from the church building and organized religion. Some argue that such a decline is due in part to postmodernism. Others hold to the belief that with the dawn of the postmodern era has come a change in worldviews. Postmodern thought challenges the traditional Christian worldview. Rick Richardson explains, “Unfortunately, most of our approaches to proclaiming the gospel are still aimed at the modern scientific, analytical, individualistic mindset. We are ineffective in part because we are building our communication bridge to a mindset and an age that are passing away, or at least being radically transformed.”²²

Many believe that doing church according to an old paradigm is one of the major reasons for church decline. The decline has caused the Christian church to take a closer look at its community and landscape. Barnes and Lowry write,

These changes are taking place across the religious landscape, affecting all regions of the country and many demographic groups. While the drop in Christian affiliation is particularly pronounced among young adults, it is occurring among Americans of all ages. The same trends are seen among whites, blacks and Latinos; among both college graduates and adults with only a high school education; and among women as well as men.²³

One major reason for this decline may be that the church has not followed the plan it was given by its chief architect when He spoke His command to the disciples. Architects know what it takes to build a structure. They know about offsets, dimensions, and zoning regulations. They have been trained in the area of design and construction. Simply, they

²² Rick Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 42-43.

²³ Barnes and Lowry, “7 Startling Facts.”

know how to build. It takes skilled people to build strong structures. A look at Genesis 1 reveals God’s knowledge of design and build. John 1 supports the understanding that Jesus was a part of creation and that He now is a vital part of building the church.

Church Revitalization That Leads to Discipleship

The North American church needs to be restructured and revitalized. R. Albert Mohler, in his book *A Guide to Church Revitalization*, notes and emphasizes the need for replanting churches. He asks the Southern Baptist Convention and its churches an unavoidable question: “Do we have the courage and conviction necessary to replant churches?”²⁴

Church decline is not germane to the United States; it is a global issue. Many congregations worldwide within the Christian faith are experiencing a decline in attendance. Harriett Sherwood wrote an article in *The Guardian*, confirming that Europe is experiencing a decline in people showing up in the pews:

Europe’s march towards a post-Christian society has been starkly illustrated by research showing a majority of young people in a dozen countries do not follow a religion. The survey of 16- to 29-year-olds found the Czech Republic is the least religious country in Europe, with 91% of that age group saying they have no religious affiliation. Between 70% and 80% of young adults in Estonia, Sweden and the Netherlands also categorize themselves as non-religious. The most religious country is Poland, where 17% of young adults define themselves as non-religious, followed by Lithuania with 25%.²⁵

Mohler suggests,

The secularization of Britain is not a new development, with church attendance falling for decades. But a new tipping point has been reached: the Church of England now has an official ‘Closed Churches Team’ that make decisions about what to do with abandoned church buildings. . . . The same will soon happen in the United States of America. In downtown Louisville, Kentucky, former church buildings now house doctors’ offices and other businesses—but the problem is no longer limited to the inner cities. Churches are closing in the suburbs as well.²⁶

²⁴ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *A Guide to Church Revitalization* (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2015), 8.

²⁵ Harriett Sherwood, “‘Christianity as Default Is Gone’: The Rise of a Non-Christian Europe,” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/21/christianity-non-christian-europe-young-people-survey-religion>.

²⁶ Mohler, *A Guide to Church Revitalization*, 7.

Matthew 16:18 reads, “And on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Jesus was laying the foundation for His church. Jesus knew what it would take to build His church. He knew the type and character of workers needed for the task. He knew He needed individuals that were willing to leave everything, every comfort, convenience, and control, to follow Him. He knew He would have to teach the disciples the necessary lessons involving selflessness, sacrifice, and surrender so that they would then teach others who would follow Him.

Discipleship: The Purpose of the Church

God does not do anything haphazardly. God had a purpose and plan for creation (Jer 29:11). Creation did not just happen but was planned by God. Life has continued to grow and go because God started it. God gave Adam and Eve a command to go:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. (Gen 1:27-28 ESV)

Jesus gave the command to His disciples to go make disciples. Their work in disciple-making would ensure church growth and progress. The church would then bless the lives of those whom God had created. Life exists and progresses in large part because of what God started in the Garden. God planned for the population of the world to worship Him. God has a plan in mind, but when humanity does not follow the plan, humanity will not see the benefits of following God.

Ernie Kroeger and Mary Kroeger write, “God had a wonderful purpose in mind when He began to reveal His artistry and wisdom in the creation of the universe.”²⁷ That purpose and plan have been unfolding since the creation began. Scripture gives insight into God’s plan. Author explains,

²⁷ Ernie Kroeger and Mary Kroeger, “God’s Purpose for All His Creation,” accessed June 17, 2019, <http://thegoodseed.org/insights/purposecreation.html>.

In Ephesians 1:8-10 the apostle Paul gives us a rare insight into God's wonderful plan, not only for humanity but for all creation. "In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth."²⁸

Discipleship is part of God's divine plan for His people and church. The plan of discipleship includes Jesus's lesson plan: "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20 ESV). People grow in the image of God and the likeness of Christ through the ministry of discipleship. Through discipleship, the church grows to be the institution that God intended it to be.

In *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, Thom Rainer looks at how some churches have lost their purpose, focus, and awareness of God's intentions for them. Rainer writes, "The church stopped reaching and caring for the community."²⁹ In *Breakout Churches*, Rainer and his research team report on thirteen churches that turned around in attendance and church health.³⁰ The churches that survived had moved from being self-serving and inward-focused.³¹ They previously were not focused on the "Great Commission," which is the purpose of the New Testament Church. In *Breakout Churches*, Rainer interviewed churches that were dying or had died to identify or explain the reason for their decline or death.

In *The Purpose Driven Church*, Rick Warren says, "A Purpose Driven Church is committed to fulfilling all five tasks the Christ ordained for the church to accomplish."³² The five purposes are (1) "Love the Lord with all your Heart," (2) "Love your Neighbor as Yourself," (3) "Go and make Disciples," (4) "Baptizing them," and (5)

²⁸ Kroeger and Kroeger, "God's Purpose for All His Creation."

²⁹ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 27.

³⁰ Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 22.

³¹ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 33, 35, 36.

³² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 103.

Teach them to obey.³³ Saddleback Community Church, the congregation Rick Warren pastors, began to see growth when it began to ask the right question. Too often church leaders ask, “What will make our church grow?” Warren suggests that the church should begin to ask, “What is keeping our church from growing?”³⁴

Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, in their book *Simple Church*, write, “Simple is in. People are hungry simple because the world has become so complex.”³⁵ Churches can sometimes make accepting Christ and assimilation into the church difficult and convoluted. Rainer and Geiger make the point that people are looking for a clear and simple path into the church and process for growth once they become a part of the church. The absence of clear and simple discipleship methods may be the reason that many churches are not seeing or experiencing growth. When assessing church growth it is important to look at the processes the church uses for attracting people, but also the health of the church. Warren suggests that a healthy church will grow naturally.³⁶ Mark Dever writes, “A healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God’s character as his character has been revealed in his Word”³⁷ People may be attracted to a church that resembles its creator.

Warren makes clear how God’s church could begin to grow God’s way. The book suggests that myths have impeded the growth of many churches. These myths have caused fear, envy, and ignorance around church growth.³⁸ Many churches have grown through the transfer of members, which is not a healthy model for evangelism,

³³ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 103-6.

³⁴ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 16.

³⁵ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 8

³⁶ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 17.

³⁷ Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL. Cross Books, 2007), 40.

³⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 48.

discipleship, or church growth. Matthew 28:19 is clearly a command to reach those who have not yet been reached with the gospel message.

The way to get people back in the pews begins with evangelism. For the sake of clarity evangelism is defined as “the active calling of people to respond to the message of grace and commit oneself to God in Jesus Christ.”³⁹ Evangelism is essential to church growth. John Stott sums it up in his book *Men with a Message* that the marks of a healthy church include evangelism.⁴⁰ If the church is to make disciples, it must first reach the people. Matthew 28:19 begins with the word “go.” This word given by Jesus to His disciples includes a command to evangelize.

Evangelism That Leads to Discipleship

Evangelism is the first step to discipleship. If a church is to be a disciple-making church, then it must first reach the people it wants to disciple. The way to reach the lost is through the ministry of evangelism. Not only is the church called to make disciples, but the church has been given a plan (discipleship) make disciples effectively. The church must follow the directions Christ gave to His disciples (Matt 28:19-20). The church must follow the directions that Christ gave by evangelizing persons who have no relationship with him. Evangelism is a part of what Jesus told the disciples to do. Jesus sent the disciples to reach the world and then teach the world what he had taught them.

For many years, the Black church has used preaching as the mode and method of evangelism. “The major form of evangelism and discipleship within the Black church has been preaching and teaching from the Black pastor,” says Eric Johnson.⁴¹ The Black

³⁹ Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman, 1998), 518.

⁴⁰ In his first published book, *Men with a Message*, John Stott summed up the teaching of Christ to the churches in the book of Revelation: “These then are the marks of ideal Church—love, suffering, holiness, sound doctrine, genuineness, evangelism and humility. They are what Christ desires to find in His churches as He walks.” John Stott, *Men with a Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 163-64.

⁴¹ Eric A. Johnson, *Where Are the Men of the House?* (Jeffersonville, IN: BK Royston, 2013), 16.

pastor has preached many sermons on “The Great Commission.” Thomas Kilgore, Jr., in book *Challenging Preaching*, writes, “We as evangelists and believers have a commitment to seek, love, care for, and witness to the unsaved and the unchurched.”⁴² Discipleship with the pastor as chief, priest-king, and unifier of all the different tribes and languages is no longer an effective model.⁴³ Both Johnson and Kilgore agree that the message of evangelism and discipleship have been preached, but there has been little or no execution of the message? Lee N. June and Matthew Parker explain,

Many Black pastors were truly great preachers, yet despite the majestic and theological depth of their preaching and the mighty movement of the Spirit, there was weakness in the ability to throw out the net and call people home to Jesus. Instead, they opened the doors to the church and called people to membership in the institution.⁴⁴

The church is guilty of ineffective evangelism. Evangelism requires more than the preached Word. Evangelism is effective when people respond to the preached Word. The church needs a people who will bring the lost to the place the Word is preached.

Evangelism includes personal contact and persuasion. Jesus sent His disciples into the world with the Word. The discipleship process begins with evangelism. Zac Poonen writes, “Evangelism that does not lead to discipleship is an incomplete job.”⁴⁵

Jesus sends the disciples into the world to spread the gospel to bring the lost to salvation (Matt 28:19-20). For people to become disciples they must first be reached with the gospel message. The effort is called *evangelism*. *Evangelism* is a strategy to accomplish what Jesus sent His disciples to do.⁴⁶ Jesus laid out a strategy for evangelism for His

⁴² Thomas Kilgore, Jr., *Challenging Preaching* (Washington, DC: Progressive National Baptist Press, 1992), 18.

⁴³ Kilgore, *Challenging Preaching*, 16.

⁴⁴ Lee N. June and Matthew Parker, *Evangelism and Discipleship in African-American Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 34.

⁴⁵ Zac Poonen, “Evangelism Should Lead to Discipleship,” November 25, 2012, <https://www.cfcindia.com/wftw/evangelism-should-lead-to-discipleship>.

⁴⁶ Robert E. Coleman and Roy J. Fish, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2003), 139-40.

followers to execute once He was gone.⁴⁷ It is imperative that the church rediscover the plan and strategy that Jesus set forth.

People have to be reached before they can be taught. Matthew Parker, President of the Institute for Black Family Development, says, “The local body of believers must be the source of evangelism and discipleship.”⁴⁸ The Black church has to execute its own method of evangelism. The Black church has seen its days of evangelism, but has failed to keep up the pace. June and Parker also write, “In the late 1940’s, when some young African-American began to get interested in evangelism, they felt that the only way they could have credentials and authentically do the work of evangelism was to be hired by white agencies. They never saw they could reach their own people with the truth of Christ on their own.”⁴⁹

The people who sit in the pews have access to the people he is trying to reach. The average church member intersects with thousands of people each week. Many of the contacts, such as co-workers, family members, neighbors, and social media connections, are the result of a close relationships. Those points of contact are opportunities for evangelism. Church members often leave it to the pastor or some member of the evangelism ministry to evangelize the lost. Rainer speaks to this particular methodology:

Members of smaller churches perceived that number of baptisms [fifteen to twenty per year] to be a significant evangelistic harvest. Unless the pastor was persistent in his attempts to train and recruit others for witnessing, the responsibility of soul winning remained primarily with him. The congregational attitude of ‘that’s what we pay him for’ often resulted in little church-wide enthusiasm to develop relationships with the lost.⁵⁰

Many pastors preach sermons and lectures on evangelism but often see little execution and minimal results. The congregation must take what they have heard and

⁴⁷ Coleman and Fish, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 141.

⁴⁸ June and Parker, *Evangelism and Discipleship*, 7.

⁴⁹ June and Parker, *Evangelism and Discipleship*, 35.

⁵⁰ Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 18.

share it with those who need to hear it. The church has what the world needs to address its ills. The church sees the gospel as a cure to the world's sin. Evangelism is the way to get the gospel to the people. Bill Hybels and Mark Mittleberg, in their book *Becoming A Contagious Christian*, give a formula for evangelism: HP (High Potency) + CP (Close Proximity) + CC (Clear Communication) = MI (Maximum Impact).⁵¹ They argue that evangelists must have High Potency (HP); High Potency is having a strong concentration of Christ in the life of the believer so that the believer can influence the life of others.⁵² The next part of the formula is Close Proximity (CP), which suggests that the believer must get close enough to people in order to draw them to Jesus.⁵³ CP approximates the church being the salt found in Matthew 5:13—believers must be close enough to enhance the lives of those they choose to witness to. Only then can the believer hope for the final component of the formula to take place. The next part of the formula is Clear Communication (CC) of the gospel.⁵⁴

The message about evangelism must be clear. For many, the Bible is complicated, and people may need real-life illustrations. Evangelists must be knowledgeable of the Scripture they are trying to share. Hybels and Mittleberg provide a formula for effective evangelism.⁵⁵ Evangelism is not just a word, but a lifestyle. Evangelism invites people to Christ and informs people about who Christ is so that they can make a decision of whether or not to follow Him.

Matthew 4:18-22 presents when Jesus extended the invitation for potential disciples to follow Him and learn. Matthew 4:20, 22 says that they immediately left their

⁵¹ Bill Hybels and Mark Mittleberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 40-42.

⁵² Hybels and Mittleberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, 42-43.

⁵³ Hybels and Mittleberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, 43.

⁵⁴ Hybels and Mittleberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, 46.

⁵⁵ Hybels and Mittleberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, 47.

nets, occupations, and families to follow and learn from Him. Something must have appealed to them that would draw them to Him. For evangelism to be effective, people need to be introduced to Jesus. They must be introduced to the same thing that the original disciples were introduced to. Discipleship in the current context must present the same view and possess the same attractive qualities as it did with the original disciples.

It is also imperative that the church be about the work of evangelism. For many churches, the work of evangelism has all but ceased. George Barna, in *Evangelism That Works*, suggests that the church needs to show God's love in order to share the Truth (God's Word) with the world. Barna says that the church has been "anemic" in this area. He further argues that the church is less emphatic about communicating and demonstrating that love. The churches failure in this responsibility is in large part due to a misperception of circumstances and misinterpretation of responsibility.⁵⁶ Barna writes, "Most Christians believe (incorrectly) that evangelism is meant to happen primarily during the Sunday morning worship. Amazingly, just one-third of all adults contend that they personally have any responsibility or obligation to share their religious views with other people."⁵⁷

Barna's point explains why most believers do not engage in personal evangelism. They feel that as long as the doors to the church are open, evangelism is taking place somewhere in the building. The work of evangelism is supposed to get people to the door and in the door. Too often, the members of the church rely on the church at large to do what each individual is charged to do at work, in their neighborhoods, and among family and friends. The central tenets of evangelism have already been given through the Word of God.⁵⁸ Barna further states that the same

⁵⁶ George Barna, *Evangelism That Works* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1995), 22.

⁵⁷ Barna, *Evangelism That Works*, 23.

⁵⁸ Barna, *Evangelism That Works*, 26.

principles that applied to Peter, John, Matthew, James, and the rest of those who followed Jesus still apply today. Here are those principles:

The message is God's (Give people the Word). . . .

God can a will use anyone who is open to being used to convey the gospel. . . .

We are called to take advantage of opportunities to share our faith in Christ and to make the most of those opportunities. . . .

The most attraction to a non-believer is seeing the life of someone who has been transformed by the reality of the gospel. . . .

The most effective evangelists are the most obedient and committed Christians. . . .

Evangelism is the bridge we build between our love for God and our love for people. . . .

We cannot give away what we do not have. . . .

Effective out-reach always involves sincere and fervent prayer. . . .

Knowing, trusting and using God's Word is central to leading a person to a lifesaving faith in Jesus. . . .

It pleases God when we share our faith with non-faith. . . .

Every Christian must be ready at all times and in all situations to share their faith in Christ with those who do not have a relationship with Him. . . .

Evangelism is not limited to our human convenience or preference. It is done in obedience to God, through our faith in God. . . .

The most effective evangelistic efforts are those that are simple and sincere. . . .

Evangelism that starts at the non-believer's point of felt need and ties the gospel into that area of need had have ? the greatest capacity for capturing the mind and heart of the non-Christian. . . .

Outreach efforts that take advantage of the credibility, accessibility and trust of an existing friendship have a better chance of success than does "cold call" evangelism.⁵⁹

Barna argues that believers have a responsibility to share their faith and the gospel message with the world. He further argues that love and obedience to God and love for God and his creation must be the motivation.⁶⁰ Ed Stetzer writes, "It's high time we start sharing the gospel with the people around us."⁶¹ Stetzer also suggests that people

⁵⁹ Barna, *Evangelism That Works*, 28.

⁶⁰ Barna, *Evangelism That Works*, 28.

⁶¹ Ed Stetzer, "Evangelism: Just Do Something," *Christianity Today*, July 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2018/july/evangelism-just-do-something.html>

often complain about how evangelism is done—many feel that is outdated. He believes the church has bottomed out as it relates to evangelism. Stetzer suggests that each church needs to find a method of evangelism that works best for its ministry context. He believes the church should do something versus just throwing up its hands and doing nothing.⁶²

Robby Gallaty, in a Making Disciples podcast titled “Why Is Our Evangelism not Leading to Discipleship;”⁶³ addresses the question, “Why Evangelism in not leading to Discipleship. He states that many churches have reduced salvation to a climactic event. The podcast looks at how the church preaches salvation but abandons the continuation of the process of salvation that leads to discipleship. He goes on to argue that the church has not addressed the production of fruit that comes as a result of being saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Discipleship: The Goal of the Great Commission

In the Great Commission, Jesus instructs His disciples to “go” into the entire world with the gospel that He had given to them. It was a daunting task for them to undertake. The task is no less daunting for the current culture and climate.

The church has not been obedient to the command given by the Savior Himself. Most churches have all but stopped evangelizing and discipleship. With the passing of time, people have forgotten Christ’s command to “go make disciples.” It is time to get excited about the fact that the Co-author of the universe (Jesus Christ) has called His church to work for the kingdom of God.

So, why should the church make disciples? First, because it has been commanded of to “go make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). Jesus gives the command to His disciples to move throughout the world. He sends them with the gospel

⁶² Stetzer, “Evangelism.”

⁶³ Robby Gallaty, “#45 Why Is Our Evangelism Not Working?” Making Disciples: Lifeway Leadership Podcast Network, March 25, 2019, <https://replicate.org/why-is-our-evangelism-not-leading-to-discipleship/>.

message that He had given them to share with others. They are to teach others what He had taught them. The command did not die with the original group but was supposed to transfer to every group of disciples that came after them. The command remains transferable.

Second, Jesus expects His church to make disciples. Because He demanded it, the church should be doing it.⁶⁴ Jesus selected the disciples for training. His aim was to prepare them for sending. He expected them to obey His command to go and make disciples. He expected them to do great work (John 14:12). Jesus knew what He had given the disciples—He knew the effectiveness of the gospel. He expects the church to follow His command.

Third, the church should be doing discipleship because it makes mature disciples. Geiger explains, “Mature disciples intuitively tell others about the Jesus who has transformed their lives.”⁶⁵ Mature disciples evangelize others with the same gospel that liberated and empowered them. Without maturity, one is limited in his or her ability to disciple others.

Fourth, the church needs a discipleship process that produces leaders. Geiger asserts, “One of the most tragic realities in the present-day church is that she is lacking in spiritually mature leaders.”⁶⁶ Any church that is making disciples has addressed the subject of spiritually mature individuals that can help lead the church.

When a church is at work making disciples, the church will be at work doing the work of God’s kingdom. When the church is at work making disciples, it will see lives changed. The church will see households transformed when it is at work making disciples. That church is less likely to see their pastor burned out. That church will have a

⁶⁴ Eric Geiger, *Disciples Path* (Nashville: Group Ministry, 2015), 12.

⁶⁵ Geiger, *Disciples Path*, 12.

⁶⁶ Geiger, *Disciples Path*, 13.

ready team of workers when one team or group is off the scene when the church is making disciples.

Discipleship moves people from a working knowledge of Jesus to a committed life in Jesus.⁶⁷ Discipleship connects people to Christ. They are drawn closer to Him and their connection with Him leads to a commitment to Him. Discipleship connects people to the local church through baptism. Once a person makes a decision to follow Jesus, they go public with their decision. Baptism is a way of announcing one's decision to follow Jesus. Baptism is a way to tell others that a person is now following Jesus and connected to the local church. Discipleship connects people to Jesus. When the disciples started following Jesus, they joined Him on the mission to save others. They watched Him as He did ministry so that they could later replicate that same ministry. When one is connected with Him and goes public with a commitment to Him, then that person can join in the "cause" to serve and witness to others for Him.⁶⁸

Discipleship

Scholars define discipleship in different ways. For example, Len Wood says, "A disciple is a person who follows Jesus, to know Jesus and His teaching; to *grow* more like Jesus; and to *go* for Jesus, serving others and making new disciples."⁶⁹ John Putman and Bobby Harrington in *DiscipleShift* describe discipleship: (1) a person who is becoming spiritually mature; (2) a person who cares for the lost; (3) a person who is doing life with others; (4) a person who loves the poor and marginalized in Jesus' name; (5) a person who has come to understand what righteousness is and is being sanctified so

⁶⁷ Craig Etheredge, *Invest in a Few* (Colleyville, TX: DiscipleFirst, 2016), 39.

⁶⁸ Etheredge, *Invest in a Few*, 39-40.

⁶⁹ Len Woods, *Rose Guide to Discipleship* (Carson, CA: Rose Publishing, 2016), 5.

that they live differently in the world; and (6) a person who is a witness for Christ in every way.⁷⁰

In *Essentials of Discipleship*, Francis M. Cosgrove, Jr. gives his assessment of what *discipleship* means. Cosgrove says,

A disciple is a learner, a disciple puts Christ first in all areas of their life, a disciple is committed to living a Godly life, a disciples spend time daily in pray and study of God's Word, a disciple demonstrates faithfulness to learn and apply God's Word to their lives, a disciple has a heart to witness to the world about God, and a disciple fellowships regularly with other believers.⁷¹

Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, in *Discipleship that Fits*, write, "A disciple is the kind of person who becomes the kind of person Jesus would be. . . . A disciple hears and obeys Jesus, leading to a lifestyle that reflects Him well to the watching world."⁷² Harrington and Absalom continue, "Discipleship can be better understood as Disciple-Making."⁷³ Their aim is to convey that both discipleship and dsiciple-making are interchangeable. Their book attempts to deliver the message that "Disciple Making is helping people trust and follow Jesus."⁷⁴ In *Kingdom Disciples*, Tony Evans suggests that "A *disciple* is a person who has decided that following Jesus Christ takes precedence over everything else."⁷⁵ Evans also says, "A Disciple looks and acts like the one he or she follows. A disciple intentionally chooses Christ and His will over their own, even at their personal expense."⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *DiscipleShift* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 43.

⁷¹ Francis M. Cosgrove, Jr., *Essentials of Discipleship: Practical Help on How to Live as Christ's Disciple* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1980), 15.

⁷² Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 16-17.

⁷³ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 18.

⁷⁴ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 19.

⁷⁵ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Disciple* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 20.

⁷⁶ Evans, *Kingdom Disciple*, 20-21.

In *Transformational Discipleship*, Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation present another look at the description of *disciple*. They present the argument that “everyone is a disciple of something.”⁷⁷ They argue that a *disciple* is a pupil and apprentice and also assert that a disciple is a student or a learner. Geiger, Kelley, and Nation also suggest that in today’s context *discipleship* is based on a follow-ship of Jesus.⁷⁸

Greg Ogden, in his book *Discipleship Essentials*, gives this definition of *discipleship*: “Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside others in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the Disciple to teach others as well.”⁷⁹ Ogden presents the idea that *discipleship* involves presenting the Truth of God’s Word, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform relationship through this process, and having mutual accountability each to the other.⁸⁰ To Ogden’s point, the Truth must be the foundation upon which the discipleship process is built. The Truth is what is used to draw people to Christ and discipleship. That same Truth coupled with the Holy Spirit fuels those who are sent out in the field to seek the lost. There is struggle about the relativity of truth. Many question the truth the believer presents. Not only is the Truth (God’s Word) essential for discipleship, but so is the work of the Holy Spirit. Ogden believes that if the church would allow the Holy Spirit to guide relationships, then the church will experience a reshaping of self, family, and community. Likewise, people grow better and stronger when they are in a community that makes disciples. Ogden goes on to suggest that people find accountability in the community that makes disciples. He argues that accountability is

⁷⁷ Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 7.

⁷⁸ Geiger, Kelley, and Nation, *Transformational Discipleship*, 8.

⁷⁹ Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 17.

⁸⁰ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 9-10.

important to the development of disciples. Accountability helps individuals stay the course on the journey to discipleship. Accountability is a covenant between the disciple-maker and the disciple. Accountability is where each person holds the other to his or her role. Accountability happens when each person fulfills the expectations that make this relationship.

These definitions provide similar understandings. They all speak to a person surrendering to be a follower, learning to grow, and walking in faith to be led by the Spirit. As people become who God has called them to be, they develop into what God called them to become—disciples.

The work of the church is to call people to a life of discipleship. The church is to support people as they experience this new life. The church has a responsibility to lead people as they travel on this journey of faith. The church must be willing to make the long-term commitment to walk with individuals until they are ready to reproduce other disciples.

The Urgency

The disciples were sent to make disciples. Too many churches are discipleship-anemic. The decline in churches can be attributed to the churches' failure to make disciples. The church has failed to do what it was sent to do. Church members are called to be disciple-makers. The church has not followed the command given to it. If discipleship is going to start, it needs to start now.

Eric Johnson, "The church faces an enormous task in attempting to be true to the biblical imperative of being salt, light, transformative, and living sacrifice in a world saturated with cultural relativism and declining morality."⁸¹ Forces both inside and outside the local church challenge the work of discipleship. The world does not see the

⁸¹ Johnson, *Where Are the Men of the House?*, 1.

relevance. The church has not seen it practiced. Johnson makes the case that the church is competing people's time and energy.⁸²

How discipleship works. The point was previously argued that the church has been guilty of making church members and not true disciples of Jesus Christ. Biblical discipleship leads to transformation. Gallaty explains, "We have been guilty of getting people to the point of salvation and not continuing them to the path of discipleship. . . . It is imperative that we have a process that not only reaches the lost for Christ, but gets them to the place of accepting Christ as Savior, and also gets them growing in Christ."⁸³ Gallaty is speaking about a process of discipleship. The process of discipleship is first reaching other people (evangelism), then building a relationship (connecting), sharing the gospel (teaching), and guiding them into a commitment to accept Christ and follow Him (salvation). Discipleship does not end there. Gallaty goes on to ask those who have confessed a faith in Jesus: "What are you doing now?" Gallaty says that the church cannot just make salvation about a "punctiliar" moment. He explains that the church reduced salvation to a point in time and not a begging of life and work.⁸⁴

The church is faced with the challenge of making disciples of those who have made a confession of faith in Jesus Christ. In *The Disciple Maker's Handbook*, Bill Hull says, "All who are called to salvation are called to discipleship, no exception, no excuses!"⁸⁵ Disciple making comes with salvation and being made a disciple. Disciples are called to reproduce. C. S. Lewis states, "The church exists for nothing else but to draw men into to Christ, to make them little Christs."⁸⁶ Men and women who are saved

⁸² Johnson, *Where Are the Men of the House?*, 2.

⁸³ Gallaty, "Why Is Our Evangelism Not Working."

⁸⁴ Gallaty, "Why Is Our Evangelism Not Working."

⁸⁵ Bill Hull, quoted in Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple Makers Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 18.

⁸⁶ Harrington and Patrick, *The Disciple Makers Handbook*, 37.

are commanded to reach the world with the gospel and teach people the gospel, so that others can share the gospel.

If one has accepted Christ as Savior and Lord, then he is in fact a child of God and disciple of Jesus Christ. There is a Church Covenant in the Baptist Hymnal. One line in the Covenant reads; “We also engage . . . to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.”⁸⁷ The church body has a responsibility to one another to walk together on the journey of becoming disciples.

If the church is to make disciples that make disciples, then its people must live like they are true disciples of Jesus Christ. The church must show its faith and actively pray for those who are close to it.⁸⁸ Disciples must live in a way that invites others to join them in faith and practice. The disciple has an obligation to those who are close to them to see them saved. Witnessing to family and friends may not be easy; witnessing to family and friends can produce a great deal of anxiety. Randy Newman in his book *Bringing the Gospel Home*, writes, “My first attempts to witness my parents were met with stonewalled resistance.”⁸⁹ Newman also quotes his parents’ response to him: “We’re happy for you.”⁹⁰ Those who have been saved long to see those close to them saved, but it does not always happen according to the timeframe one desires. One cannot abandon the effort. Believers sometimes make the act of acceptance and the process of discipleship look more difficult than it is. The believer has pledged to seek the lost for Christ and to call them to salvation. The believer must honor their pledge.

⁸⁷ *The New National Baptist Hymnal*, 58th ed. (Nashville: National Baptist Publishing Board, 1977), vii.

⁸⁸ William C. Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey through the Church Covenant* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2002), 78-79.

⁸⁹ Randy Newman, *Bringing the Gospel Home: Witnessing to Family Members* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 15.

⁹⁰ Newman, *Bringing the Gospel Home*, 15.

Robert Coleman, in *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, says we must prioritize our lives around discipling men and women.⁹¹ He makes the point that The Great Commission is not a special calling or a gift of the Spirit, but a Command.⁹² Coleman has the conviction that “if Making Disciples of all nations is not the heartbeat of our life, something is wrong, either with our understanding of Christ’s church or our willingness to walk in His way.”⁹³ This thought means we must focus on the Command that we have been given so that we may execute the mission.

Jesus gave a command to His Disciples to go, and make disciples of all nations. They obeyed His command. They responded by being obedient to His instruction. Francis Chan, says “They reached out to the people around them, calling them to obediently follow Jesus.”⁹⁴

The church has struggled to make disciples. In *The Death of Discipleship*, Jim Putman states, “The church has been living in the middle of a discipleship crisis.”⁹⁵ Until recent years I have not heard a lot about discipleship. The church has made a strong push to get people into the church, but not to send them from the church to bring others back to the church. The Southern Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention, nor Cooperative Baptist Fellowship can claim to have had a good year or decade of disciple making. All denominational groups have noticed a decline in their efforts to win the lost to Christ. The Pew Research Center reports, “Both Protestantism and Catholicism are experiencing losses of population share. Currently, 43% of U.S. adults identify with

⁹¹ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 9.

⁹² Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 10.

⁹³ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 15.

⁹⁴ Francis Chan, *Multiply* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012), 29.

⁹⁵ Jim Puttman and Chad Harrington, *The Death of Discipleship: How Our Great Enemy Destroys the Purpose of the Church, and What We Can Do about It* (Brentwood, TN: HIM Publications, 2018), 68, eBook.

Protestantism, down from 51% in 2009. And one-in-five adults (20%) are Catholic, down from 23% in 2009.”⁹⁶ One can surmise that the church’s failure to make disciple is the root cause for this decline. The Western church has seen its day of success, but in recent years the church seems to have fallen on hard times.

True discipleship will grow the church. Warren suggests that people have tried to make the church grow versus finding out what God was up to and following that wave.⁹⁷ God has already established the way by which to grow His church. God has a proven method of growing His church. Warren gives eight myths about church growth.

According to Rick Warren there are myths about church growth. One of the myths is that “the only thing that large churches care about is attendance.”⁹⁸ Warren also says, “Attendance campaigns and advertising may bring people to your church once. But they won’t come back unless your church delivers on the goods. To maintain consistence growth, you must offer people something they cannot get somewhere else.”⁹⁹ People are looking for a positive message, a place to feel welcome, and a place filled with love and acceptance. People visit and stay at churches where disciples are being built, disciples are being trained, and disciples are being sent. Michael Smith writes,

Disciple-making in Southern Baptist churches was assessed by SBC entity leaders Kevin Ezell, David Platt and Eric Geiger during a forum at the 2017 SBC annual meeting in Phoenix. Ezell, Platt and Geiger agreed that one problem is a lack of understanding among Southern Baptists about what disciple-making truly is -- that evangelism and discipleship go hand in hand.¹⁰⁰

The largest Christian group in North America struggles with the idea and work of discipleship. The Ezell/Platt/Geiger report suggest that Southern Baptist churches have

⁹⁶ Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” October, 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

⁹⁷ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 13-18.

⁹⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 48.

⁹⁹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 48.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Smith, “Disciple-Making Addressed by Ezell, Platt Geiger,” July 19, 2017, <http://www.sbcannualmeeting.com/sbc17/news/85/disciplemaking-addressed-by-ezell-platt-geiger>

not fulfilled the Great Commission.¹⁰¹ The report also discusses the misunderstanding of the term *discipleship*. Ezell, Platt, and Geiger address the fact that the work of evangelism had not taken place.¹⁰² Within the state of Kentucky, two of the largest Baptist groups have struggled to make disciples. The Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC, a Southern Baptist Convention affiliate) and The General Association of Baptists in Kentucky (GABKY) give insight into this struggle. While the KBC has kept church attendance numbers, the GABKY has not fared so well. The GABKY records the number of delegates that attend its annual meeting, but not the number of baptism or other membership stats.

The Black church has struggled in the area of discipleship. According to Louis R. Jones, in *Evangelism in the African American Community*, “When presenting the Gospel message to African-American men, it has to be offered as a message of hope and liberation, and not a message of condemnation.”¹⁰³ Almeda M. Wright, in her book *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*, writes, “African American youth do not conceive of God or their Christian spirituality as responding to the larger, systemic ills that they experience and name in their daily lives.”¹⁰⁴ If the church cannot get people in the door, then it cannot expect to disciple them. The local church must adopt a model that will address the discipleship challenge so that it can make disciples.

Discipleship Models

Many churches struggle in the area of discipleship. Many churches have either not understood the process of discipleship or simply have not engaged in the practice of

¹⁰¹ Smith, “Disciple-Making Addressed.”

¹⁰² Smith, “Disciple-Making Addressed.”

¹⁰³ Louis R. Jones, *Evangelism in the African American Community* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2003), 58.

¹⁰⁴ Almeda M. Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans* (New York: Oxford, 2017), 2.

discipleship. Some churches have not adopted or developed a model of discipleship that works best for their particular church. Since discipleship is not new, there must be models that have been effective. This section looks at how discipleship has been done.

The Jesus model. Jesus' method of making disciples was common in that day. Because He and those who would follow Him lived in a Jewish context, He spoke a language they could understand and showed them a method with which they were familiar. Gallaty writes, "Jesus was a Jewish man, born to Jewish mother, raised according to Jewish customs, speaking to a Jewish audience, and surrounded by Jewish people."¹⁰⁵ Therefore it is understandable that Jesus would use a model or practice with which these men would be familiar.

Jesus used the same methods that the Rabbis used. The Rabbis normally taught in small groups and oftentimes held class under a tree. Jesus' disciples were accustomed to this model, and Jesus simply used what the men and the community were accustomed to. The local church may find it beneficial to use the same matrix and model Jesus used. Bobby Harrington, in *Discipleship in the Core Mission of the Church*, writes, "Discipleship, especially the relational model Jesus utilized is the timeless best methodology for discipleship."¹⁰⁶ Harrington's group calls this the "Intentional Relational Discipleship Model":

This focus doesn't measure the success of by how many people that come to the church, how much money is given, or how many converts are made. These things are worth measuring, but they are secondary. The model we advocate measures success by how many people are being loved and led into the way of Jesus. How many people are coming to Christ and learning to truly follow Him in the real world? It measures how many people are being transformed into Christ's likeness and are pursuing his kingdom reign.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Bobby Harrington, *Discipleship in the Core Mission of the Church* (Centreville, VA: Exponential Resources, 2012), 4, e-book.

¹⁰⁷ Harrington, *Discipleship in the Core Mission*, 4.

Others echo this understanding. Dann Spader explains, “Jesus was deeply committed to relational ministry.”¹⁰⁸ He suggests that Jesus spent the necessary time with the disciples for them to grow into an intimate relationship with the Savior.¹⁰⁹

Spader shares how to start a movement of disciple-makers. Jesus started with building relationships: “Jesus gave His Disciples time to get to know Him.”¹¹⁰ It is important that the one being disciplined has an intimate relationship with the disciple-maker. A deeper relationship creates a greater the level of trust. Jesus’ investment in a just a few men provides a model for small groups. The size of the group determines the level of intimacy. Discipleship was already part of the Jewish customs. The disciples had seen this approach of teaching and following used by rabbis.

Contemporary models. The Christian church is guilty of using measurements for growth that have led to its current state. The church has for too long focused on getting congregants in the seats instead of the maturity of those who sit in those seats. Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist is not exempt for that practice. Portland had a “discipleship” theme, but the practice and the process needed work.

Karl Vaters, in an article written in *Christianity Today*, asks question, “Does attracting a crowd make discipleship harder?” He points out that efforts to draw a crowd may not be the best way to start people on a path to discipleship.¹¹¹ Vaters believes that the practice of drawing a crowd in an effort to make disciples eventually hurts the effort to make disciples.¹¹² Vaters continues,

¹⁰⁸ Dann Spader, *4 Chair Discipling* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 14.

¹⁰⁹ Spader, *4 Chair Discipling*, 14.

¹¹⁰ Spader, *4 Chair Discipling*, 14.

¹¹¹ Karl Vaters, “Does Attracting a Crowd Make Discipleship Harder?” March 22, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2018/february/crowd-discipleship.html>.

¹¹² Vaters, “Attracting a Crowd?”

For at least a generation now, the predominant thinking in most of the pastoral training I've received has gone like this:

- Do whatever is needed to attract a crowd
- Use the opportunity to preach the gospel in a compelling way
- Know that a significant percentage of the crowd won't come back, but...
- If the crowd is big enough, the small percent who stay will be enough to grow your church
- Those who stay can be discipled"¹¹³

This method has not worked. In fact, the method is the opposite of how Jesus made disciples. Jesus often withdrew from the crowd so that He could invest in the few. Vaters writes, "Jesus drew crowds, but not because He was trying to."¹¹⁴ Churches in the current context have used many schemes and campaigns to recruit the crowd but have done little to keep them.

Ogden writes, "We are geared to herding people in mass through a program, and once completed we expect mature disciples to pop out at the other end."¹¹⁵ The modern church is looking for a microwave disciple. The church is often guilty of putting people into a program or a system and in a short period of time having what they want: a quick-made disciple.¹¹⁶ That is not how discipleship is done. Ogden argues that discipleship is like the long-term investment of a parent in a child. There are stages (infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) that the child must be nurtured through.¹¹⁷

Robby Gallaty, in his book *Growing Up*, talks about D-Groups, which are what Replicate Ministries suggests is the way to make disciples in the modern context. He explains the difference between D-Groups and Sunday school: "The D-Group is a closed group, rather than an open group. Sunday School classes and bible studies are usually

¹¹³ Vaters, "Attracting a Crowd?"

¹¹⁴ Vaters, "Attracting a Crowd?"

¹¹⁵ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 230.

¹¹⁶ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 230.

¹¹⁷ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 230.

open groups.”¹¹⁸ Gallaty also shares that the purpose of a D-Group is completely different from that of Sunday schools. D-Groups are for believers who desire a deeper walk with Christ. He also adds that D-Groups are not teacher led using a lecture style, but are a room filled with people who have made a commitment to being in a relationship that aids their spiritual growth.¹¹⁹ Contemporary models may often seek to lure a crowd, but they often do not get people to the place of discipleship that Jesus commanded.

Methodology. The first step in making disciples is to go where the people are and make connect with them. Inner-city missionary Mark Van Houten writes, “No matter how adept an exegete a theologian is . . . it is all for naught if he does not also understand his contemporary audience well enough to lead them to a correct understanding.”¹²⁰

Passages such as Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 5, and John 1 give a glimpse into the kind of relationship that is essential before the call to discipleship. Van Houten makes the point that the church must be ready to engage the community before it can invite the community into the process of discipleship. He lists the steps to engaging the community for the purpose of discipleship. The first step in making disciples is to engage (build relationships) those the church wants to invite.

The second step in making disciples is evangelism. Evangelism involves getting the message of God to those who need to hear it. The use of God’s Word is vital to leading people to a life of faith in God. One of the most effective ways to evangelize is to keep the gospel message simple. Evangelism also involves sincere and fervent prayer. Evangelism goes where the people are.

The third step in this process is for the unsaved to accept Christ as Savior and Lord. This step is about moving those who have accepted Christ from relationship to

¹¹⁸ Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up* (Bloomington, IN CrossBook, 2013), 37.

¹¹⁹ Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 37.

¹²⁰ Mark Van Houten, *God’s Inner-City Address* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 21.

commitment. This step involves the individual repenting and confessing their sins. John the Baptist went before Jesus and preached a simple message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near” (Matt 3:2; 4:17). John introduced his followers to Jesus who invited them to surrender their lives to God. Acceptance of Jesus as Savior and Lord allows Him to save a person from his sins and leads him into the Christian life.¹²¹

George Barna adds, “Evangelism starts at the non-believer’s place of felt need and ties the gospel into that area of need.”¹²² The felt need can be a person’s place of pain; Jesus encountered many people who had pain. A felt need can be life questions; many young adults have a felt need to have their questions of faith answered. Jesus addressed needs that ultimately led to conversations, which led to relationships. Jesus cultivated relationships and then called the disciples to follow Him. The church must have an intentional plan and practice of building relationships that opens the door for evangelism.

The next steps in discipleship are training, teaching, or mentoring. Spader writes, “Jesus invested early in a few.”¹²³ He suggests that Jesus’s investment was in the lessons He taught while the disciples were with Him. These lessons manifested themselves when he sent the disciples to go and make disciples of others. Spader continues, “He [Jesus] developed His disciples naturally and intentionally.”¹²⁴

Therefore, the church is to follow the example and model set by Christ. The process Jesus used to call and develop His disciples is (1) “Come and you will see” (John 1:39); (2) “follow me” (John 1:43); (3) “follow me and I will send you out to fish for people” (Matt 4:19); and (4) “Go and bear fruit” (John 15:16). Spader calls this “4 Chair Discipling”: “It is a simple and highly transferable model that helpfully depicts the

¹²¹ Van Houten, *God’s Inner-City Address*, 21.

¹²² Barna, *Evangelism That Works*, 27-28.

¹²³ Spader, *4 Chair Discipling*, 14.

¹²⁴ Spader, *4 Chair Discipling*, 41.

development of a disciple from before he or she meets /Christ until the point when they themselves become a multiplying disciple-maker who is bearing much fruit.”¹²⁵

Conclusion

Discipleship is critically important to the life and growth of the local church. For many years the subject of disciples and discipleship have been discussed at PMMBC, but there has been little or no efforts to make it work within the local church. Both the Evangelical and the Missionary Baptist Churches are experiencing decline, and neither the Evangelical nor Missionary Baptist Churches have fared well in the area of discipleship.

The church has a purpose—to make disciples the way that Jesus did. Discipleship is a vital part of the church’s purpose. The church has been commanded to reach as many as possibly with the gospel message about Jesus Christ. If the church would do what It has been sent to do, then it will see a different result.

Jesus was successful at making disciples. He called men to come be with Him. While they walked with Him, they built a strong relationship. He kept these men close to Him and He taught them everything they would need to grow in the faith. He taught them the lessons they would later teach others.

The church that Jesus built must return to its original foundation and format. That foundation was the Person of Jesus Christ. The format for building was the Word that Jesus taught His disciples. Jesus commands the church to “Go” reach the world with the gospel message, teach the world the Word of God so that the world may come to know Him, and then send those new disciples back into the world to repeat the process.

¹²⁵ Spader, *4 Chair Discipling*, 41.

CHAPTER 4

THE DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING AND PROCESS

The purpose of this project was to guide Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church to be a church that makes disciples who then make disciples. In the fall of 2016, my wife and I had the privilege of traveling to Israel with Dann Spader, Founder of Sonlife Ministries, and a local mission's group. This trip was a life-changing experience. After seeing the region from which a great movement was launched, I realized that the Christian church must continue the movement. The experience helped me visualize the calling, the making, and sending of disciples. From this very place, Jesus took twelve ordinary men and launched a movement that would impact the world.

After seeing how this Man impacted people's lives in a region that would ultimately have an impact on the world, I wanted to take a closer look at how Jesus made disciples so that His model could be duplicated at PMMBC. PMMBC has had as its slogan "Making Disciples." Though "Making Disciples" was the slogan, disciple-making was not the practice. PMMBC followed a traditional Baptist practice of getting people into the church based on personal relationship and personality of the pastor. There was little or no biblical evangelism, neither was there any genuine efforts to make disciples the way that Jesus made them. I feel the calling to be a pastor that leads the congregation to make disciples. If PMMBC is to be a church that makes disciples, then it must be knowledgeable about discipleship and how it works. If PMMBC is to be a church that makes disciples, its membership must be willing to study the Word of God so that they may be able to share the Word with others.

I informed Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church of my intentions and asked if the church membership would be willing to participate in this project's study and

development. The church was excited about the opportunity to participate in the project and how it might impact the church's ministry. I explained the time it would take and shared the goals I had set for Portland Memorial Baptist Church as it related to the project. The project then moved forward.

Focus Group

The project used as its focus groups the Sunday school classes and the Wednesday Night Bible Study. The focus groups were selected for optimal impact within the congregation. The preaching and teaching were conducted from October 11, 2020 to November 4, 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the teaching process was done through audio and video technology. Sunday school teachers helped facilitate the lessons by following up with students and addressing any questions. The goal of the project was to move the church forward in the practice of making disciples and to also create a culture of disciple-making at Portland Memorial Baptist Church.

Project Participants

For this project to be successful, there had to be church-wide training. In considering how to reach most of the membership, I concluded that the best way to reach a large segment of the congregation was through preaching opportunities, Wednesday night Bible study, and the Sunday school ministry. The Sunday morning services are the largest attended events that the church hosts each week. It was important that all groups received the same message. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic all worship services were livestreamed. Due to the worship restriction set by the governor's office, the Sunday sermons and the Wednesday night Bible studies were presented online.¹

The Sunday school ministry reaches the next largest gathering and is a cross-section of the church's congregants. The classes range from toddlers to the oldest

¹ Places of worship were expected to meet the "Healthy at Work" minimum requirements. In addition, places of worship had to follow the guidelines to reopen and remain open. Team Kentucky, "Healthy at Work," accessed December 7, 2020, <https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthy-at-work>.

members. Those who attend Sunday school have shown that they desire to learn more about the Word of God. They seem to exhibit interest to grow and become mature followers of Jesus Christ. During the pandemic, Sunday school classes convened through various digital platforms (Zoom, conference call, Google Meet, Go To Meeting).

Still thinking of how to ensure that the majority of the congregation was reached, it was suggested that the Wednesday night Bible study group be included in the discipleship training. This gathering provided an opportunity for me to speak on the subject matter and answer any questions that may arise. In considering how to best poll those attending both preaching and teaching ministries, I concluded that a survey of those in attendance during the Sunday school hour would provide the best sampling of the congregation. The Wednesday night Bible study was conducted online via livestream. The survey forms were emailed, mailed, and delivered to participants.

A four-week preaching and teaching training was designed and implemented to expose these three groups to the discipleship material. To qualify the efficiency of the training, a pre-training questionnaire was given to each participant. At the end of the training, the same questionnaire was administered to measure if the training had been effective. One week before the training, the pre-training questionnaire was distributed to both groups. The project was explained to the congregation and they asked questions. There was a sense of excitement in the air.

Project Implementation

This ministry project had four goals: increase knowledge of what a Christian disciple is, develop a four-week preaching and Bible study series on disciple-making, increase the involvement of disciples in ministry, and develop a process for discipleship.

The first and second goals were addressed during the four-week preaching and teaching sessions. These sessions aimed to increase the level of knowledge about Christian discipleship. The third goal was achieved as a result of the increased level of knowledge on Christian discipleship addressed in the preaching and teaching sessions.

The fourth goal was evaluated at the completion of the preaching and teaching session. Each participant received a printed process for how discipleship would take place at Portland Memorial Baptist Church.

Note: Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all sessions were moved to online. Because of social distancing recommendation set by the CDC and limits placed on people gathering during the Covid-19 pandemic, we were not able to meet in person for either the preaching or teaching portions of this project.

**Week 1, Sermon 1: “The Call”
(Matt 4:18-22)**

The project began with developing a lesson plan that would provide a clear and simple understanding of the call to discipleship. The first sermon addressed Jesus’s call of His first disciples and the focal text was Matthew 4:18-22. The supporting text was John 1:35-51. The first point made in the sermon was that Jesus personally invited those four potential disciples on that day by the Sea of Galilee. The emphasis was on the fact that the call is personal. Jesus called twelve individuals to follow and learn from Him so that eventually He could send them into the world to make more disciples (Matt 10:1-4).

The second point made was that something about Him must have compelled the disciples to follow Him. To reinforce these two points, I stated that the church must build relationships with individuals and have something that draws the lost to the Savior.

The point about relationships was supported by John 12:32. Jesus informs that when He is lifted up from the earth, He will draw all people unto Himself. His sacrifice and His return to glory are both drawing cards to the lost world. To call the lost to salvation, the church must present the Risen Savior in a way that the entire world may see Him for Who He is. In that lesson, I pointed out that the church is called by God first to salvation, then to grow in the faith, and lastly to witness to the world.

The objective of this sermon was to examine the call to discipleship. The call is to everyone. The call is to come follow Him. The call invites the follower into a new life.

Jesus called these men to follow Him. Next, I looked at the disciples' response to the call. These men, after meeting and hearing Him, decided to follow Him. I spoke on the fact that the world is extended an invitation to follow Jesus; Jesus invited the men to follow Him.

The next point I concerned the future disciples left behind to follow Jesus. The first four disciples left families, businesses, and personal lives to follow Jesus. I talked about how difficult it might be to leave what we know to follow someone we just met. I pointed out that the disciples' lives were changed as a result of following Jesus. The message's focus exposed the call that is placed on all to follow Jesus.

The sermon pointed out that these men were busy at something before they were called to the life of a disciple. An exegetical look reveals that Matthew's Gospel and John's Gospel show the call from two different perspectives. After the sermon, the Sunday school classes were encouraged to discuss the sermon. The instructors provided me with feedback from the classes.

Lesson outline:

The Call

Focus Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22

Introduction: All are called to do or be something.

Background: A look at the Call of Jesus on the life of the individual

Key points:

- God calls everyone to Salvation.
- God calls everyone to a new life.
- A response to God's call will lead an individual to a new work.

Conclusion:

All are called to salvation. The one who accepts the call to salvation will experience a new life in Jesus. The new life in Jesus will lead to a new work for Him.

Week 1, Bible Study 1: “What Is a Disciple?”

The first Bible study session focused on defining a “disciple.” The lesson aimed to facilitate a clearer understanding of a disciple. One of the goals of the project was to increase the knowledge and understanding of a disciple. Matthew 28:19-20 was used as the focal scripture for this lesson. If the church is to make disciples, then it must first know what a disciple is.

This lesson’s first objective was to help the students gain a clear and simple understanding of what a disciple is. A look at the pre-surveys revealed that many in the congregation could not clearly define a *disciple* or *discipleship*. The term has been a part of the church’s language for many years. During the pre-survey one of the congregants emailed a question: “What is a disciple?” That question informed me that there was a need explain discipleship. Many of the pre-survey responses supported that there was a need for clarity on the subject of a disciple. The lesson provided the students with a variety of definitions from various authors. By the end, they had a definition they could clearly understand.

The second objective of this lesson was to provide the students with a biblical understanding of a disciple. The lesson looked at the biblical models of disciple and discipleship. The lesson looked at Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the twelve, and Paul and Timothy, as discipleship models. The aim was to help the congregation understand that a disciple is willing to follow, learn, and serve from the knowledge they have gained. This lesson showed the importance of following. Jesus called His first disciples to follow Him, and in following Him, they saw discipleship modeled. In Matthew 5–7, Jesus teaches the disciples lessons necessary for discipleship.

The third objective of this lesson was to explain how disciples grow. The pre-lesson survey revealed that some of the congregation believed that one became a disciple simply by membership within the local church. The lesson explained the disciple first as a student, second as a servant, and third as one who makes other disciples. The lesson

showed the disciples as students. As the disciples walked with Jesus, He taught them life lessons. Jesus also ministering to those who had needs. Jesus showed the disciples what faith looked like when He healed the servant of the centurion (Matt 8:5-13). Jesus again gives a lesson of faith when He calms the storm (Matt 8:23-27).

Lesson outline:

What is a Disciple?

Focus Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction: Defining Discipleship

Background: Jesus had led these men to be what they had never thought of being. They became disciples because they followed Him (Jesus).

Key points:

- Disciples are made not born.
- If one wants to be a disciple, they must follow first.

Conclusion:

A disciple is a student and follower. A disciple is one who will leave something to follow the one who leads.

Week 2, Sermon 2: “Being Made” (Matt 4:19; 5, 6, 7)

The second sermon looked at Jesus’s declaration to the disciples and the Sermon on the Mount. The sermon was taken from Matthew 4:19; 5, 6, 7. Jesus declared that they would become disciples if they followed Him. Jesus would teach them lessons that would prepare them to teach other future disciples. Jesus’s said to His disciples, “Come follow me,” “And I will send you out to fish for people” (Matt 4:19). Jesus calls them and tells them what will happen to them if they follow Him. Jesus prepares the disciples through His teachings.

The first lessons He taught them would prepare them for ministry. The aim of this sermon was two-fold. First, it pointed out the promise Jesus made to the disciples and

then expressed the importance of being a student to be a disciple. Jesus promised the disciples that He would prepare them to fish for people. These men were fisher men. Jesus was about to transform their live through His teaching.

Another point was made that Jesus used a method of teaching that would make them into disciples. The disciples were able to relate to the disciple-making process because it mirrored part of their culture. The disciples had seen the Rabbi take a few men and grow them through teaching. It was suggested in the sermon that many may overlook the fact that these men were in class. The points made during this sermon reemphasized that these men were students, and that Jesus was the teacher.

The sermon provided clarity on the subject matter taught by Jesus. The lessons Jesus taught were designed to develop the disciples for the ministry they were about to embark upon. Jesus knew that if one were to be a disciple, then he was to possess a kingdom attitude. A kingdom attitude always seeks God first, tries to fulfill God's purpose, is always on mission for the kingdom, and does what brings glory to God. The motive of a disciple is always selfless. For example, if the church wants to follow Jesus, then the church must take up its cross daily (Matt 16:24). Disciples should possess an attitude of multiplication. For example, making disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19).

The disciples had to go through the process as students to become teachers. The Beatitudes were the first lessons Jesus taught His disciples. The sermon looked at the Beatitudes, hoping that the congregation could receive the lessons the disciples learned. Too often, the church reads the Beatitudes at face value without a thorough exegesis of its message. The Beatitudes include the lessons Jesus taught His disciples so that they could later teach others. I pointed out the many valuable lessons Jesus taught the disciples in Matthew 5–7.

If the disciples were to one-day disciple others, then they had to have a Spirit that would deny worldly pride and receive the kingdom of God. If they were to one-day disciple others, then they had to mourn for their past life and receive the comfort of

God's Spirit. Jesus taught the disciples about kingdom meekness. He did not want them to develop a pride that would derail the ministry for which He was prepping them. If they were to one-day disciple others, then they would have to rely on the power of God and not their own strength or abilities.

If the disciples were to one-day disciple others, then they would have to realize that their righteousness comes from God and not-self. If they were to one-day disciple others, then they would have a heart for God that is filled by God. If they were to one-day disciple others, then they would have to have the peace of God within them. If they were to one-day disciple others, then they would have to experience the persecution that comes with the call. I made another point that the church grows in Christ through biblical teaching; the church also grows as disciples through biblical teaching.

Lesson outline:

Being Made

Focus Scripture: Matthew 4:19; 5, 6, 7

Introduction: The lesson we learn and the life experiences we have help shape who we become.

Background: A look at the lessons Jesus taught His disciples.

Key points:

- Jesus first told them who they were. Matthew 5:13-14
- Jesus taught them important lessons Matthew 5, 6, 7
- The lessons would sometimes be difficult to accept. John 6

Conclusion:

Any thing or anyone that is made into something has to go through a difficult process.

The making of disciples is no different. The good news is that God's Spirit and power will be with us through-out the process to ensure our success.

Week 2, Bible Study 2: “How Are Disciples Made?” (Matt 28:19-20)

The Bible study lesson was a continuation of the Sunday sermon and a review of the previous Bible study lesson with the addition of Matthew 28:19a. The repetition was intentional. To achieve the second goal of this project (increase knowledge and understanding), the lesson reiterated the already made points. It was clear that many of the members struggled with the concept of discipleship; many had heard of it, but few had a workable understanding. This lesson aimed to present the importance of being a student in preparation for growth and discipleship ministry. The lesson looked at the student’s attentiveness to the teacher, that teacher’s love for the students, and the growth and maturity of the students.

Disciples are made from the inside out. It starts from the heart and then flows through the life of the person being disciplined. There must first be a change of heart. Romans 10:9 says that “if a person declares with their mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believes in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

Disciples are made through teaching. Elijah taught Elisha—Elisha became a replica of Elijah through teaching. Elijah taught Elisha to walk in the Spirit of God, and Elisha learned while assisting Elijah (1 Kgs 19:21). Students grow to be teachers when they follow the model set before them. Paul took Timothy with him on his missionary journey (Acts 16:3). Paul teaching Timothy prepared Timothy to move from disciple to colleague, and then to disciple-maker himself.

In Matthew 28:20, the instruction is to teach what you have been taught. Part of the disciple-making process is first to reach others (Matt 28:19a). The disciples were instructed to go where the people were to make connections that would lead to relationships that would open the door for the invitation.

The next step in making disciples is to baptize them in the name of the Father and Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19b). The first step in the process of making disciples is to go where the potential disciples are. Then to build relationships with them

and invite them to surrender their lives to Christ. If one accepts the invitation to salvation, then the next step is for that person to be baptized (Matt 28:19b).

This is not the complete process of discipleship but are the beginning steps. The goal of discipleship is to get the lost to Christ so that He might save them. Next is to grow them in Christ through the teaching of the Word. Jesus assures the disciples that He would be with them throughout the process. The power of the Holy Spirit must guide the discipleship process. Disciples are made through the teaching of the gospel.

Lesson outline:

How are Disciples Made?

Focus Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction: Disciples are made from the inside out.

Background: These men were not born disciples, but they were called to be disciples.

Key points:

- The growth to discipleship begins with a response to the invitation.
- The journey to be a disciple continues through the learning of God's Word.
- Disciples are made as a result of the church's work.

Conclusion:

Disciples are made and not born. The church must reach the world in an attempt to invite them into a process that will lead to a disciple being made that will ultimately make disciples.

Week 3, Sermon 3: "The Cost" **(Matt 8:18-22)**

The third sermon in the series dealt with the cost of following Jesus. I shared with the congregation that everything has a cost. Matthew 4:20 says that Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew "left their nets and followed Him." Matthew 4:22 says that James and John, sons of Zebedee, "left the boat and their father to follow Him." In this sermon I

indicated that anyone who decides to follow Jesus must be willing to leave something in order to follow Him.

Great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his work *The Cost of Discipleship*, writes, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him to come and die.”² Bonhoeffer suggests that when the new convert or believer gives their lives to Christ, the new believer or convert must be willing to die to self that he may live in Christ. To become a disciple, one must be willing to leave some things and die to self.

In Luke 9:23, Jesus says that anyone who desires to follow Him must be willing to “deny themselves and take up their cross daily.” Those who desire to be disciples must be willing to die to flesh. In the current context of “selfies” and “uses,” it is hard making this point. Christ was not talking about a physical death, but a spiritual one. Galatians 2:20 and Galatians 5:24 support dying to the flesh and living in the Spirit of God.

Jesus died on the cross to defeat the sin that was killing the world. When believers die with Him, they allow the Spirit of God to conquer the sinful nature to the point that it kills the flesh that was killing mankind. The cost that a disciple must pay is a personal denial of one’s fleshly pleasures. In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus shares the cost with these disciples. The gospel ministry is not always glorious. Jesus wanted to make sure that these followers understood the cost in following Him.

The sermon ended with a challenging question: “What are we willing to leave behind to follow Him?”

Lesson outline:

The Cost

Focus Scripture: Matthew 8:18-22

Introduction: To be a disciple one must be willing to leave something in order to gain something greater.

Background: Jesus deals with the challenges of following Him.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 11.

Key points:

- In order to follow Jesus, one must leave something behind.
- In order to follow Jesus, one must make some sacrifices.
- In order to follow Jesus, one must understand that it may not be easy.

Conclusion:

Everything in life has a cost. If an individual is to follow Jesus, they must be willing to pay the cost.

Week 3, Bible Study 3: “Following Him”

Week 3’s lesson dealt with the sacrifice that one must be willing to make to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. This lesson aimed to have the students strongly consider the sacrifice to be made to follow Jesus and become a disciple. The focal text for this lesson was taken from Matthew 4:20-22. This text looked at four men who left their families and life’s work to become followers and students of Jesus Christ. The first point dealt with leaving one thing to follow Someone. I pointed out the need to leave something to follow Jesus. I asked the congregation to think about what they would be willing to leave to follow Jesus.

I asked of the class, “What would make you follow someone you barely knew?” I pointed out that something about Jesus had to cause these men to leave all to follow Him. John 1:29-34 suggests that when Jesus calls the disciples in Matthew 4, that there had been a previous encounter with Jesus. I then asked the following questions: (1) How were you invited to follow Christ? (2) What influenced your decision to follow Christ? (3) Did you have any prior knowledge of Christ before the invitation to a relationship?

I asked the class this question, is it possible to be a leader if you have not followed? Jesus is an excellent example of following. John 5:19 and John 9:4 suggest that Jesus follows after the Father and that He follows the will of the Father. I made the point that students follow their teachers, apprentices follow their master, and mentees follow their mentor.

The third point was that Jesus invited these men to come see the kingdom up close and personal. He gave the disciples the tour that they would later take others on. Jesus invited these men to see what He was doing so that they could duplicate the work.

The church should invite people to come see, learn, and grow. One of the goals of the church is to invite people to start a new life in Christ. The church is to invite people to take a spiritual journey. The church must have first taken the discipleship journey in order to lead others on it.

Lesson outline:

Follow Him

Focus Scripture: Matthew 4:20-22

Introduction: “What would make you follow someone you barely knew?”

Background: Jesus called these men to follow Him. He called them from one way of life to a new way life.

Key points:

- Abandonment to self-will
- Dependence on God
- Adherence to God’s Word
- Trust God’s plan
- Obedience to God

Conclusion:

If one is to follow Jesus to become a disciple, they must be willing to abandon their own will. They be obedient and dependent on God. They must also be willing to adhere to God’s Word and follow His plan.

Week 4, Sermon 4: “It May Get Hard” (John 6:22-71)

Sermon 4 aimed to present the challenges the disciples faced. The sermon illustration looked at the old TV series, *Mission Impossible*. These TV episodes always

began with the issue, the players, and the challenge. The tape recording would then say, “If you choose to take this mission.” Being a disciple is a mission, a life challenge, and discipleship is a life change. I wanted the congregation to leave the sermon knowing that if they take this challenge, then the Holy Spirit would lead them, teach them, and help them through this process.

Sometimes the Word of God can be hard to understand and hard to follow. The Word of God can also be hard to accept. Some of the disciples found the words that Jesus spoke to be hard to understand, hard to accept, and hard to follow (John 6:60-66). As a result of the hard message the disciple heard that day, many left from following Him. The church must be clear, simple, and honest with those who come into the fellowship that the church is intentional about discipleship and the discipleship process.

Lesson outline:

It May Get Hard

Focus Scripture: John 6:22-71

Introduction: Nothing in life is easy. Discipleship is no different.

Background: Those who followed Jesus sometimes found it hard to digest His teachings.

Key points:

- Some lessons Jesus taught were hard to digest because it challenged their cultural practices.
- Some lessons that Jesus taught challenged to religious community.
- Many the lessons that Jesus taught challenged the individual.
- The Holy Spirit will help you through difficult moments.

Conclusion:

The church should not present discipleship as something that is easily done. The church must present the challenges that an individual will face. The church must also inform the people that God will send the Holy Spirit to help with the process of becoming a disciple.

Week 4, Bible Study 4: “A Disciple-Making Church: How the Church Makes Disciples”

This lesson addressed goal 4 put forth at the onset of this project: to develop a disciple-making guide that the church can implement in its ministry going forward. One of the objectives of the church is to reach the lost and bring them to Christ (move people from a non-believer to a believer). This lesson’s second objective was to show the church how to move the new believer from believing to receiving (believer to a student). This lesson’s third objective was to move the student to be a worker (student to disciple-maker).

This lesson aimed to give the church a practical model on how to be a church that makes disciples. Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church has for thirty plus years used as its slogan, “Making Disciples.” While this is a noteworthy slogan, the product has not been so visible. It was the intent that this lesson would lay out how the church would begin to be a church that makes disciples.

Lesson outline:

A Disciple-Making Church: How the Church Makes Disciples

Focus Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction: Jesus sent the men He had disciplined to make other disciples.

Background: Jesus had taught them the lessons they would need so that they would become disciples.

Key points:

- What lessons have we learned?
- Can we teach the lessons?
- Can we duplicate the process?

Conclusion:

The last thing that Jesus said to His disciples was not a suggestion, but a command. The church is therefore commanded to go make disciples of all nations. If the church would follow Christ’s plan, it will make disciples that make disciples.

Implementation

This section would address goals 3 and 4. The third goal was to increase involvement in the discipleship ministry. The fourth goal was to develop a process for discipleship. These steps showed the congregation how the process of discipleship would flow when an individual makes a confession of faith and unites with the church. These steps also provided the church with a clear vision of how the discipleship process would work at PMMBC.

The Discipleship Plan: Steps to Discipleship

1. The Reach-Evangelism (Matt 28:19-20)
 - Go into the community seeking the lost. Get acquainted. Build relationships. Share the gospel.
2. The Invitation (Matt 4:19)
 - Calling/Asking
3. The Baptism (Matt 3)
 - What is baptism? What it represents?
 - Why Baptism? Is it a requirement for Salvation?
 - What is the difference between John's baptism and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?
4. The Lesson (Matt 28:20)
 - Teaching them...
5. The Launch (Acts 1:8)
 - Sending them...

I developed this process of discipleship after studying how Jesus made disciples. During the course of this project, I took note of how Jesus made disciples. I also examined the lessons Jesus taught His disciples and thought about how PMMBC can duplicate the work Jesus did. This plan gives the membership of PMMBC a simple and clear roadmap to disciple-making. This plan starts where Jesus stopped. Jesus's last words to His disciples was to go make other disciples of all nation. The first step in discipleship at PMMBC will be to evangelize the world with the message of Jesus Christ.

The next step in the process is to invite. Some PMMBC members have spoken about their difficulty of inviting people to church and Christ. I have stated and reiterated the simplicity of the invite and challenged PMMBC to "Just Ask." I ask the church to

“Just Ask” someone to go to church with you. I have challenged the congregation to “Just Ask” people if they believe in God, if they have a church home, and would they would be a guest.

These steps are currently being implemented at PMMBC for the purpose of making disciples. The process is clear and simple. It gives the membership a visual of how discipleship will work and the steps to be taken.

Conclusion

This project had four goals. The first goal was to increase the knowledge of discipleship at PMMBC. The second goal of this project was to develop a four-week preaching and teaching series. The sessions were written to help facilitate first goal. The third goal was to increase the involvement of PMMBC in the discipleship ministry. The preaching and teaching sessions were developed to motivate the church to be involved in the work of discipleship. The fourth goal was to develop a process for discipleship at PMMBC. This process was to be clear and simple for the membership to follow.

The initial implementation of this project went well. It was well received by the membership of PMMBC. Some students gained understanding about discipleship, and others received clarity on how to make disciples. It is my prayer that this process will become a part of the culture at PMMBC.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF PROJECT

Sometimes God puts in the hearts of the believer to do the things that He has previously spoken in His Word. The making of disciples is one of those things. A few years ago, during my prayer time, God reminded me that He had commanded the church to make disciples of all people. This project was the result of God's Word convicting me to be obedient to His Command.

The purpose of this project was to guide Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church to be a church that makes disciples who then make disciples. The methodology and implementation provided in chapter 4 showed the efforts made to reach the project's goals. This chapter will evaluate the project's purpose, goals, strengths, weaknesses, what I would do differently, theological reflections, and personal reflections. This chapter will serve as an evaluation of this ministry project. This chapter will also provide helpful insight for other ministry leaders and churches who seek plan, implement, or improve discipleship ministry in the local church.

PMMBC was guilty of making church members and not making disciples. For years, PMMBC brought people into the church and allowed them to sit in the pews, but did not lead them to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. It was my intention to lead PMMBC in the process of becoming a church that makes disciples. Robby Gallaty, president of Replicate Ministries, says, "The church cannot just make salvation about a 'punctiliar' moment." He explains that the church reduced salvation to a point in time and not a beginning of life and work.¹ The life of a believer goes beyond the punctiliar.

¹ Robby Gallaty, "#45 Why Is Our Evangelism Not Working?" Making Disciples: Lifeway Leadership Podcast Network, March 25, 2019, <https://replicate.org/why-is-our-evangelism-not-leading-to-discipleship/>.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

Again, the purpose of this project was to prepare the members of PMMBC to make disciples who make disciples. PMMBC has long talked about making disciples but had no clear plan for doing so. The former pastor, Arthur Smith, started the church on the path to making disciples, but his health failed, and he passed away before he was able to bring that vision to reality. While the former pastor did not see his vision and work become a reality, he set the foundation for the ministry on discipleship to take place at PMMBC.

PMMBC has as its slogan; “Making Disciples.” PMMBC is familiar with the word “disciple.” My concern was whether the church understood the work and ministry of discipleship. Because of the previous pastor’s initial work on the subject, it was easier to get the congregation engaged.

PMMBC had relied on personal relationships and walk-in traffic to draw people to the church. This project included a four-week preaching (Sunday Morning Worship) and teaching (Wednesday Night Bible Study) series on discipleship. All preaching and teaching sessions were conducted via Livestream. The curriculum for each session looked at the discipleship experience Jesus provided for the original disciples.

To determine the success of the project, I compared the pre-survey scores to the post-survey scores.² I also developed a curriculum on the subject of discipleship based on biblical models. The Gospel of Matthew (4:19; 28:19-20) was the primary focus due to the fact that Jesus called men to be His disciples. Other Old Testament and New Testament scriptures were used to support the curriculum.

Evaluation of Project Goals

This ministry project had four goals. These goals served to create a disciple-making culture that would result in disciples being made at PMMBC.

² See appendix 3.

Goal 1

The first goal was to increase the knowledge of Christian Discipleship at PMMBC. I administered a pre-discipleship training survey to assess the current level of knowledge on the subject of discipleship. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the surveys were mailed, emailed, and some church members picked up surveys from the church. I hoped to have anywhere between 30 to 50 participants to get a good sampling of the congregation. I received fifty-two pre-training survey responses. The number of congregants that participated in the post-training survey was sixty-five. The number of participants that completed both pre- and post-surveys were 32. This goal was considered successful when the post-surveys showed an increase in knowledge regarding discipleship.³

After reviewing the responses, I noted several interesting things about respondents' knowledge of discipleship. First, many respondents reported that they had some level of knowledge about Christian discipleship. Second, many respondents reported that they had some knowledge of how the discipleship process worked. Third, many respondents reported that they believed they were in the process of becoming disciples.

After the initial survey and training, I conducted a post-test of participants and had 32 paired surveys. A *t*-test showed that there was an increase in knowledge around the subject of disciples and Discipleship. The goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre-and post-training survey scores: $t(31) = -3.773$, ($p < .0001$).

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a four-week preaching and Bible study series on disciple making. The second goal helped to facilitate the first goal. This goal was measured by a panel consisting of three local pastors, one faculty professor of discipleship, evangelism, or missions, one denominational leader, and one director discipleship

³ See appendix 3.

ministry. The panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series.⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 80 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

Goal 3

The third goal was to increase involvement in the ministry of discipleship. This goal used the pre- and post-series survey to measure the level of participation in church ministries.⁵ This goal would prove successful when the number of persons involved in discipleship ministry before the series was lower compared to the number involved in discipleship ministry after the series. While conducting this training, an appeal was made to the congregation to consider serving in the discipleship ministry. Feedback from the congregation informed me that some of the congregation was ready to serve in the discipleship ministry. While conducting the preaching and Bible study series, I assembled a few members from three other ministries to form a discipleship ministry. PMMBC went from zero participants in the discipleship ministry to nine at its inception.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to develop a process for making disciples at PMMBC. This process covered outreach, conversion, and assimilation. This goal was measured by three ministry leaders, two deacons, and two congregants utilizing a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope, and applicability of the document.⁶ The goal was considered successfully met when 90 percent of the panel considers the document to meet a sufficient level of understanding.

⁴ See appendix 2.

⁵ See appendix 1.

⁶ See appendix 2.

Strengths of the Project

There were a few strong points of this ministry project. First, the ministry project created an atmosphere for disciple-making. The change in culture was gauged by some of the conversations around the whole idea of discipleship. I received feedback from Sunday school teachers and others who assisted me in this process. PMMBC knew the term disciple and had talked about discipleship, but there was no process or practice in place. Like with anything new, there was a sense of excitement in the air as well as some criticism (“We have never done anything like this before”). According to the pre- and post-surveys, many within the congregation learned more about the subject of discipleship. The discipleship ministry gained a few new workers.

The second strength of this project was the congregation’s response to the preaching and teaching sessions. It was hard to gauge the congregation during the training because all lessons were done virtually. I made a few calls to members that I believed talked to other members throughout the week. Their responses were encouraging. The lessons intended to move the people beyond merely talking about discipleship and to being disciples who make disciples.

The fourth strength of this project was the people’s motivation to be engaged in the disciple-making process. During and after implementing the project, the congregants talk more frequently about discipleship and how the discipleship model would work within the ministry of PMMBC. Because the ministry of discipleship brings people into close proximity, it served as a motivator for some of the congregation.

The fifth strength of this project was the development of discipleship groups. These groups are meant to support spiritual growth and development through relationships. My wife started a small group for women, and I started a small group for men. My wife has taken three young ladies and I have taken three young men that have joined the church during the pandemic to meet weekly in an attempt to keep these new converts connected.

The intent of these groups is to get new converts reading the Bible and connected to the faith community. Each week there is a Bible verse to read and memorize to achieve Bible verse memory. Each session begins with prayer and then we talk about the message that was preached the previous Sunday. Then, my wife and I lead them in reading other passages of Scripture. The young disciples have expressed their gratitude for the support and guidance during this process. This is an example the model of discipleship that PMMBC is trying to achieve.

Weakness of the Project

There were a few noticeable weaknesses of this project. The first was the length of the curriculum, which was one of my initial concerns. I did not want the curriculum to be so long that I would lose the congregation's attention in the midst of the study, nor did I want the length of the curriculum to be too short and not cover enough information. As I wrestled with the length, I also faced the fact that we were in the midst of a global pandemic. The time to teach the curriculum was limited due to the pandemic. I chose four weeks to teach the curriculum and felt that this timeframe would fit the current circumstances with which we were faced. While the post-survey showed an increase from the pre-survey, I feel that given more time with the curriculum the congregation could have gained a greater understanding of the material.

The second weakness of this project was that much of the utilized written material was based on western Christian ideology and resources were not consistent with the black communal culture, biblical traditions, and principles. Most of the literature used was written by authors with a Western influence. This abundance of Western resources on discipleship that often make an erroneous implication that there is only one methodology in healthy and multiplying discipleship is inconsistent with the Black church's understanding of how communal discipleship is accomplished. The lack of Black resources creates a challenge in the current racial climate. Many young Blacks push back on the idea of the "White Man's Religion." The limited number of Black

voices that can speak on the subject makes discipleship less appealing to the younger Black community.

Lastly, the project was severely limited by Covid-19 protocols. The Covid-19 protocol called for a limited number of people in any space and for sufficient spacing for all participants. The protocol suggested that persons with underlying conditions not attend in-person gathers. Because of restrictions on in-person gatherings, I was limited in how to conduct the training. I wanted to have interpersonal contact with participants to better engage in the process of teaching and learning. Often, video or Livestream gatherings leave open the door for so many distractions. One participant shared, “I found myself easily distracted at home by all the things that vie for our attention at home.”

What I Would Do Differently

After completing the project and assessing its strengths and weaknesses, I noticed a few areas of the project that I would change. The first thing I would do differently would be to address the length of the curriculum. I would add two weeks to the curriculum. The addition of two weeks would allow for more attention to be given to areas that may present challenges. Some students struggle with the idea of surrendering one’s life to the care and influence of Jesus Christ to become disciples. Matthew 28:20 reads, “Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” One hindrance to discipleship is obedience to instruction. Obedience is a major component of discipleship.

Second, I would endeavor to engage the whole congregation a bit more. While the project surveyed a nice sampling of the congregation, the whole congregation needs to be aware of the practice of discipleship to ensure consistency in creating a culture of discipleship at PMMBC. Since one of the project’s goals was to increase the involvement in the discipleship ministry, the entire congregation needs first to know why this particular ministry is necessary.

Third, the congregation would need to be informed about how the ministry works. If the entire church were engaged in the process and program, then the chance for

greater success increases. I plan to seek ways to keep the idea and image of discipleship before the people. The more the church hears and sees discipleship, the more they will be mindful of discipleship.

Theological Reflection

This ministry project helped me grow as a pastor in the area of discipleship. My growth came as a result of the exegesis of the Gospels. I cannot say that I was well-versed in discipleship's subject matter before I endeavored to do this project. After reading Scripture and researching other written material on the subject of discipleship, I realized my need to know more about how Jesus made disciples. An in-depth look at some of Jesus's teaching revealed to me how He was preparing these men to take the work Jesus had begun in them and do it with those whom they would encounter.

While visiting Jerusalem, I was amazed at how one man led twelve men to take on a movement that would change the world. As a result of this project, I see the importance of discipleship in the local church. These men were sent on a mission to reach the world with the gospel message. I better realized the seriousness of Jesus's work during this project. If the church improves its theology, then the church can improve its methodology.

Personal Reflection

This project helped me realize that I was not doing all that I could to produce disciples. I realized that neither I nor the church was walking closely with individuals who had made a confession of faith. New converts need attention and care during the process of discipleship. Jesus walked closely with the men that were following Him.

The project helped me see the need for a discipleship culture at PMMBC. I was actively teaching and leading a congregation of believers, but the church was not making disciples who make disciples. The church had not seen growth because the church had not applied the biblical model given by Jesus that would facilitate its growth.

Through this project I was reminded of the power of God that works through the Holy Spirit to help His children when they need it most. At the onset of this project, I was anxious as to how I would complete it. However, during the project, God constantly sent me help in the form of His servants to guide my work.

One of the challenges of this project was finding written material and voices that could speak from the Black church perspective on the subject of discipleship. However, through this project I was connected with a few Black scholars that introduced me to material that is continuing to help develop a more in-depth ministry model on discipleship.

I am seeing the change in me as a result of this project. I now take discipleship seriously. My plan moving forward is to be a pastor who is a strong proponent of discipleship. I want to be obedient to the call to ministry and command to do ministry the way Jesus designed ministry be done.

Conclusion

Matthew 28:19 reads, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.” I read this passage as a command to execute the work given to the church to ensure that the gospel message would be spread throughout the world. My responsibility may not be to the world, but I am to carry the gospel message to the part of the world to which I am assigned.

The four goals of this project were set in an effort to make disciples who then make disciples. The Bible provides both Old Testament and New Testament examples of discipleship, and many scholars have written on the subject of discipleship. I took what I learn and compiled some of it so that I may better lead PMMBC in the practice of discipleship.

This project was an enlightening experience, not just for the participants but for me. We all gained from this experience. One congregant thanked me for leading her to a better understanding of the subject matter.

This project confirmed the need for a model of discipleship at PMMBC. The project helped to guide the church in the direction of developing that ministry model. I pray that both I and the membership of PMMBC can be committed to the discipleship practice and process moving forward.

APPENDIX 1

DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your current understanding of Christian Discipleship. This research is being conducted by Stephen D. Smith for the purpose of collecting data for a dissertation project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your response in this research.

Date: _____

Initials or last 4 of phone: (ex. ABC/0000): _____

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer using the following scale:

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am in the process of becoming a disciple.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand what it takes to be a disciple.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Disciples are learners, students, and followers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand the purpose of discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I understand my role as a disciple of Jesus Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. I understand the strategies Jesus used to develop disciples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I understand the connection of discipleship and church membership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I know how to lead someone to Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I understand the process of discipling another person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I have gone through the process of discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Jesus is the only way to salvation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I believe I can lead someone to be a disciple.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I have discipled others as I was discipled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I believe it is important to model my faith while disciplining someone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I believe that people grow in Christ when they are disciple.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I know the importance of Bible Study in discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I know the importance of Prayer in discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I know what the Bible say about discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Evangelism leads to discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Church membership is different that discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I was made a disciple upon my acceptance of Christ in my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I believe discipleship is best done in small groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I believe Jesus wants me to be a disciple	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I understand the role of God the Father in discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
26. I understand the role of the Son in discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. I understand the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Disciples should attend church regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. A disciple should be a giver of self and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 2
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Portland Memorial Baptist Church					
Discipleship Training Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum was theological sound.					
The curriculum is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Discipleship.					
The curriculum provides sufficient coverage of the subject.					
The curriculum provides a clear path to discipleship.					
The curriculum is in line with the goals set forth in this project.					
Overall, the lessons are clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 3
T-TEST RESULTS

To determine the success of the project, I evaluated the data collected from pre-surveys and post-surveys that were distributed to those who participated in the project. The measure for these goals included a pre- and post-training survey, and the goal was met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre-and post-training survey scores: $t(31) = -3.773$, ($p < .0001$).

t-T+B:Best: Paired Two Sample for Means			
	138	158	
Mean	124.21875	130.28125	yes
Variance	429.208669	405.563508	
Observations	32	32	
Pearson Correlation	0.90144056		
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		
df	31		
t Stat	-3.773968		
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0003409		yes
t Critical one-tail	1.69551878		yes
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00068179		
t Critical two-tail	2.03951345		yes

APPENDIX 4

RECOMMENDED READING

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLE MAKING PROCESS FOR PORTLAND MEMORIAL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
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This project equipped the members of Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky in the process of disciple making. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of Portland Memorial and the goals for this project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of the Gospels to provide a clear model of discipleship that every believer can follow. Chapter 3 addresses the urgency of disciple making and the challenges to making disciples. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and teaching methodology of the course curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of specified goals.

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