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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A DISCIPLESHIP  
PROGRAM AT EAST AUDUBON BAPTIST CHURCH  
IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

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the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A DISCIPLESHIP  
PROGRAM AT EAST AUDUBON BAPTIST CHURCH  
IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

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I dedicate this project to all the wonderful people who have opened the door to the incredible realities of the Great Commission throughout the year.

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## PREFACE

Thank you to all the incredible professors and staff at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for their direction and encouragement throughout this process. I thank God for the members of East Audubon Baptist Church and all of my friends, mentors, and sponsors who have supported me. I also acknowledge the grace and wisdom of my faculty supervisor as well as his ability to lead me to a place of perseverance. Finally, I thank my wife, Victoria, and my children and son-in-law. In His Grace!

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Louisville, Kentucky

May 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

East Audubon Baptist Church (EABC) was in a period of church revitalization when I resumed as their pastor in November 2018. The two serving deacons and a few faithful women who remained in the church had been directing the ministry of the church. The membership had declined, and regular attendance at Sunday worship and the midweek service was low. Most of the remaining members were women. There was no organized discipleship program in the church, although the church had benefited in the past from faithful ministers who labored in expository preaching. EABC is blessed with godly men and women that can train their families and other believers in the way of the Lord. As these men and women become more involved in discipleship training, they can reach the community for Christ. This project addressed the need to disciple members into spiritual maturity and develop and train leaders who could disciple their groups and equip them to make more disciples.

#### **Context**

East Audubon Baptist Church is surrounded by a diverse socioeconomic community. From the outside, the building looks big, but the active membership is fewer than twenty people. When the church was at its peak attendance, the membership list numbered approximately seventy; however, current attendance, including nursery, youths, and adults, is approximately twenty-five to thirty people.

I am the twenty-seventh pastor in the ninety-six years of EABC. The time of service in the church for prior pastors averages three years and six months. Many of these pastors were seminary students who moved after completing their studies. The

membership has been fluctuating and needs revitalization. When I resumed as pastor, my examination of the ministries at EABC revealed the necessity for spiritual development, pointing to the need for this project.

First, this church had suffered divisions from poor leadership, leading to a decline in membership and church attendance. The division caused some aggrieved members to leave and join other churches and possibly some to stay at home. The Sunday school class was not functioning properly, and the midweek service was almost dead, but the community dinner attracted some friends of the church on a monthly basis. Some members remain committed and faithful in attendance. The men and women who regularly attended church programs desired to be taught discipleship. A thorough examination indicated that members desired to grow spiritually and were eager to be instructed in biblical doctrines.

Second, every ministry of the church needed to be revitalized through the discipleship of men and women. The budgeting and financing of the church became taxing because of the meager income of the church. The church relies on the generosity of its members and friends to survive. Most of the present members need to be taught financial stewardship and commitment to supporting the church. One of the purposes of this project was to further develop their sense of financial responsibility to the church. Since discipleship helps in Christian maturity, members would better be able to discern their responsibilities to the church.

Finally, the lack of discipleship training may have led to an inability to retain membership. Those who attend Sunday School and mid-week service number a few men and women with children. People come for breakfast and attend worship an hour later. The community has changed considerably from what it used to be; it now includes many single parents and drug addicts. The church formerly flourished with many youths in attendance, but when the transportation ministry collapsed and older people in charge did not care about the kids coming without parents, the attendance dropped.

## Rationale

The last command Jesus gave to his disciples was to make more disciples (Matt 28:18–20). This command extends to every follower of Jesus Christ to instruct others in biblical teachings. Christians must grow in faith to sustain what is experienced at conversion. The goal of discipleship is to make every believer more like Christ. Hence, discipleship is a life-long process that involves continuous studying and teaching of biblical truth. In order to reach out to the community and the city at large, EABC members must be discipled in foundational Christian doctrine, so this project focused on developing a discipleship program. Paul writes about “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” in Ephesians 4:12, which happens when discipleship is part and parcel of a church.<sup>1</sup> Because EABC had no discipleship class, I believed this project was timely and urgent and would meet the following four needs.

First, I wanted to focus on training men and women who would in turn train their families, small groups, and the new members in the church. This is the prototype of the New Testament church. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul wrote about Timothy being instructed according to the faith that was in his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. I wanted to demonstrate a similar pattern of discipleship for EABC men and women so that they could train current members and teach new members. In doing so, this would become a pattern for the whole church.

Second, I determined that a curriculum was needed to train the membership in spiritual development and maturity in Christ. I delivered this curriculum in eight sessions over a four-week period through both teaching and preaching. This series informed members of the necessity of effective discipleship in the church, as discipleship leads to spiritual development and growth and promotes evangelism within the community. One of the goals of this curriculum was to encourage EABC members to reach out to the

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the *English Standard Version*.

unchurched community and non-churched affiliates with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The series revealed the biblical pattern of discipleship, and repetition of the patterns provided in Scripture increased retention and understanding of what it means to be a student of the Bible and a follower of Jesus Christ.

Third, a strong discipleship program enables and encourages the church to create small groups, which fosters membership and dedication to the church. Members need to have a small group that will hold them accountable. Small groups help to make disciples accountable to their leaders and church. My hope was that this project would help train leaders who could instruct others to be responsible for the church and her ministry. The early disciples multiplied through small groups and continuous instruction in Christ and the apostles' teachings. Christianity spread as a result of sound teaching and discipleship, and this was a tested model that needed to be implemented at EABC.

Fourth, intentional discipleship helps to develop an effective prayer life in church members. Prayer is an activity that needs commitment and consistency. Discipleship aids in developing strong relationships between members of a small group. It helps to share prayer requests and develop prayer journals, which are used for effective prayer life. The early disciples and apostles engaged in fervent prayer meetings and prayed for each other when persecuted. Prayer has been an integral part of church life, which Christians today need to develop and take seriously. Prayer is another means of developing an intimate relationship with God. When discipleship results in small groups, the opportunity to pray together is possible. My goal was to see discipleship training among the members create intentional praying groups within the church.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a discipleship program for men and women at East Audubon Baptist Church.

## **Goals**

The development of a discipleship program at EABC was guided by these three goals.

1. The first goal of this project was to assess the current level of discipleship training in a representative sample of church members at EABC.
2. The second goal of this project was to develop a curriculum for training these church members in discipleship and disciple-making.
3. The third goal of this project was to increase the participants' knowledge of discipleship and disciple-making by implementing the curriculum in eight sessions over a four-week period.

These goals were designed to help achieve a long-term discipling culture within the membership of the church. A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these goals.<sup>2</sup> The research methodology is outlined in the following section.

## **Research Methodology**

The first goal of this project was to assess the current level of discipleship training in a representative sample of church members at EABC. To assess a participant's awareness of the need for and process of discipleship, I developed the Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey (DKPS).<sup>3</sup> This survey was designed to reveal a participant's basic knowledge of ecclesiology (church ordinances, missions, and membership), soteriology, and spiritual discipline. This goal was considered successful when six men and women completed the DKPS prior to project implementation.

The second goal of this project was to develop a curriculum for training these church members in discipleship and disciple-making. The curriculum was developed using biblical texts, relevant books, discipleship principles, and disciple-making tools.

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<sup>2</sup> 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 ministry project.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2.

The curriculum was evaluated by an expert panel who used a rubric to assess the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Feedback from the expert panel was also incorporated into the curriculum.

The third goal of this project was to increase each participant's knowledge of discipleship and disciple-making by implementing the curriculum in eight sessions over a four-week period. A statistical analysis was conducted on the data gathered from both the pre- and post-training assessments. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-DKPS sampling.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

*Discipleship.* According to Bill Hull, discipleship is a “sense of journey, the idea of becoming a disciple rather than having been made a disciple.”<sup>5</sup> Discipleship becomes part of the believer's lifestyle as he or she continues to obey Christ and follow what the Bible teaches and commands. Discipleship begins when Christians live a constant and committed lifestyle that reveals a regenerated life in Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23). David Noel Freedman describes the process of discipleship as acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus Christ and steadily growing in daily relationship with Christ. Freedman writes, “The life of Christian discipleship as presented in the New Testament calls for

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*, Navigators Reference Library (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 35.



supreme devotion to Jesus through the acceptance of his lofty demands. Commitment to him must come before all other attachments.”<sup>6</sup>

*Disciple-making.* Disciple-making is intentional obedience to one of the imperatives of the New Testament. The church would not grow steadily and fulfill all her duties without disciple-making efforts. J. Andrew Overman posits, “A disciple is one who understands, teaches, and does what Jesus taught and did.”<sup>7</sup> This intentional effort is the process of making and multiplying mature believers, creating avenues for greater understanding and application of biblical truth.

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the quality of the DKPS was based on the ability of the respondents to provide genuine answers regarding their biblical knowledge and understanding of disciple-making principles and practices. To mitigate this limitation, the respondent’s surveys were completed anonymously. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the unpredictable availability of the participants to physically attend all eight sessions. To mitigate this limitation, I scheduled make-up training sessions for participants who missed a session.

One delimitation applied to this project. This project was limited to baptized members of East Audubon Baptist Church. The reason for this delimitation was to focus on equipping a select group of members in discipleship and disciple-making so they may model and teach these skills to the church membership.

## **Conclusion**

Disciples of Christ need to disciple others for God’s kingdom growth and in preparation for the second coming of Christ. Kingdom growth hinges on the final words of Jesus Christ to his disciples commanding them to make disciples. EABC will grow and

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<sup>6</sup> David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 349.

<sup>7</sup> J. Andrew Overman, “Disciple,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 168–69.

have an impact on the community when other believers are disciplined. This mandate by Jesus is non-negotiable. Disciples of Christ can apply biblical doctrines to their daily activities, making Christianity real to non-Christians. Their lives communicate gospel messages to those who interact with them daily. When they are well informed about what it takes to follow Christ, believers are less likely to backslide from the faith. The comfort these disciples share within themselves encourages them to be steadfast in their faith and mature in their commitment to Christ and others. That is my prayer for EABC.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE PROJECT

Matthew's Gospel narrates how Jesus interacted with his followers, especially the twelve men he discipled. These twelve would continue his ministry after his resurrection and ascension. Jesus's intentions for his disciples were not clear to some of the twelve as they followed him. Some deserted him at the time of his arrest, trial, judgment, and crucifixion. However, after hearing reports of his resurrection, eleven out of the twelve men and some of his other followers returned.<sup>1</sup> They were still contemplating their dilemma, and Matthew writes that some of them doubted even when he appeared to them. During his earthly ministry, these disciples followed him everywhere and learned from Jesus how to confront and resolve many situations. However, in Jesus's departing remarks to these eleven disciples, he commanded them to make disciples of all nations to the end of the age. Therefore, this chapter will argue that the Bible commands Christians to make disciples through training. This is a lifetime commitment to continue in the path of maturity and conforming to the image of Jesus Christ.

#### **The Call to Make Disciples (Matt 28:18–20)**

In Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus visited his disciples, who were still considering the events of his death and resurrection. By this time, the news of his resurrection had spread among his disciples as a result of reports from those who claimed to have seen

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<sup>1</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 87. France comments that the group Matthew referred to was possibly greater than the eleven disciples. It is possible they were the group Paul referred to "as more than five hundred brethren at one time" (1 Cor 15:6).

him or an angel at his tomb (Matt 28:1–10). However, Jesus came to meet and address them as a group. Donald Alfred Hagner writes, “Jesus now ‘comes to them,’ a comforting approach that takes the initiative to reestablish an intimate relationship with them. . . . He does not rebuke them for their disloyalty or their doubt.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus’s disciples may have been longing to see him and have a conversation with him in order to know their situation after his resurrection. During this time, some of them were claiming to have encountered him (Luke 24:13–35). Jesus wanted to discuss the next phase of their assignment because these disciples were under his teaching for three years. During this interaction, Jesus told them what would happen after his ascension. Their situation would change from reaching out to Jews alone (Matt 10:5–7; 15:24) to embracing the all-inclusiveness of God’s mission to save tribes, tongues, and nations (both Jews and Gentiles). From verse 18 on, Jesus repeats the word “all” many times. D. A. Carson writes, “All dominates vv18–20 and ties these verses together: all authority, all nations, all things, all days.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the authority Jesus proclaimed was a fulfillment of Daniel’s vision (Dan 7:13–14). France writes, “This ingressive aorist (has been given) thus indicates that the prophecy that the Son of Man would be enthroned as ruler of the world was fulfilled in the resurrection.”<sup>4</sup>

The use of the word “all” by Jesus demonstrates the intentionality of God to reach all nations through these disciples. There are depictions of discipleship in the Old and New Testaments. Teaching people about God could be traced to the Israelites. Moses commanded the Israelites to teach their children the statutes and ordinances (Deut 6:1–9). Teaching results in the repetition and passing down of stories or ideas from one generation to another. Jesus trained these disciples who would teach others about the

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), 886.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, *Matthew and Mark*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 665.

<sup>4</sup> France, *Matthew*, 89.

kingdom of God he proclaimed. Jesus told his disciples to remind others of everything he had taught them. The information about the kingdom of God needs to be spread through clear communication. Training with Jesus for three years equipped the disciples to train others based on what they had seen Jesus doing and practicing.

### **Authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matt 28:18b)**

Jesus emphasized his authority when he was traveling and teaching with his disciples (Matt 7:29; 10:1, 7–8; 11:27). Matthew explains that Jesus approached these disciples and had conversations with them in which he clarified the essence of his coming. Jesus affirmed that every kind of authority had been granted to him. The word that is translated as “authority” reveals the ruling power of Jesus over heaven and earth. Carson writes, “It is incautious, if not altogether wrong, to claim that the resurrection conferred on Jesus an authority incomparably greater than what he enjoyed before his crucifixion.”<sup>5</sup> His appearance to his disciples fulfilled his promise to resurrect on the third day. Jesus declares his authority, and the disciples know who is sending them on this assignment. France elaborates,

Of course, Jesus already had authority during his earthly ministry (Matt 7:29, 9:6, 8). But now he has all authority, and that word all will be repeated insistently in vv.19 “all nations” and 20 “all things, always.” In Matt 4:8–9, Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; now, by the way of suffering obedience, he has received far more than Satan could offer, all authority in heaven and on earth.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus knew these disciples would face challenges from earthly authorities who would question in whose authority they acted (Acts 4:5–7). However, Jesus’s authority is established both on earth and in heaven. Ulrich Luz writes, “Thus for the readers the word of authority spoken by the risen Jesus in v18 means confirmation and deepening of

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<sup>5</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 665.

<sup>6</sup> France, *Matthew*, 89.

their belief in the truth of Jesus' words."<sup>7</sup> It was clear to these disciples that the authority of Jesus was not in the same category as the ruling class of the Roman government or the religious leaders.

Jesus stated to his disciples that his authority superseded all known authorities. Jesus's authority is not limited to earth or a certain domain, but he has ruling power in heaven and on earth. Luz explains this to be "a mighty claim" because the world system was and is governed by different powers in "which the will of God all too often does not happen because, given our experience, the world . . . has by no means been visibly changed by the resurrection of Jesus."<sup>8</sup> This authority is given to him by his Father, which reveals Jesus as King, Lord, and Messiah. In contrast, the earthly authority of the Roman government and religious leaders is temporary and limited.

Matthew writes about the authority of Jesus as being in some sense distinct from God the Father. Craig Blomberg explains, "He is still in some sense distinct from his Heavenly Father, so that Matthew can use the passive in speaking of his having 'been given' this authority."<sup>9</sup> God sent his Son and gave him all authority to do his ministry on earth. The presence of his Father in all of Jesus's actions and words is acknowledged by the Gospel writers. Hagner explains further that the authority is given by God to Jesus: "The passive verb assumes God as the acting subject: God has given Jesus this comprehensive sovereignty over the whole of the created order."<sup>10</sup> Jesus exercised authority during his earthly ministry, and the disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to their world. Jesus had given this authority to his disciples before, and they were aware of the power of his authority. Luz describes this power: "They may

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<sup>7</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 624.

<sup>8</sup> Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 624.

<sup>9</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 431.

<sup>10</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

remember that Jesus has also granted power to the apostles—namely, to drive out demons and to heal sick people Matt 10:1; it is the same power that Jesus had often enough exercised as the healing Messiah of his people in Matt 8–9.”<sup>11</sup> This statement describes the disciples’ reliance on Jesus for sustenance in the spread of the gospel and in discipleship. Jerome explained that “authority was given to him in both heaven and earth so that he who once reigned in heaven might also reign on earth through the faith of his believers.”<sup>12</sup> These disciples will demonstrate the dominion of God in heaven and earth through their obedience.

### **Go (Matt 28:19a)**

Jesus’s command to his eleven disciples during this parting conversation emphasizes intentional movement in order to make disciples everywhere. God’s plan for salvation is extended to the Gentiles and is not solely for the biological children of Abraham. Hagner writes, “The universal authority of Jesus is the basis of the universal mission of the church.”<sup>13</sup> The process of making disciples will be the responsibility of Jesus’s disciples. These eleven men must prepare henceforth to travel from one place to another with the intention to make disciples. The eleven disciples will act by going from their Galilean territory to other places. Luz writes, “The eleven disciples are to leave Galilee and to make disciples of all nations. Make disciples is the dominant imperative that is elucidated by the participles that follow in vv19b–20a.”<sup>14</sup> Jesus’s command to go is to be obeyed by all Christians. Discipling is the responsibility of all Christians, not just the eleven disciples who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry.

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<sup>11</sup> Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 624.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in evangelium Matthaeum libri IV*, ed. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 77 (Turnhout, Belgium: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1969, 282–83.

<sup>13</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886–87.

<sup>14</sup> Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 625.

## **Make Disciples (Matt 28:19a)**

*Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines a disciple as a “convinced adherent of a school or individual; one who accepts or assists in spreading the doctrines of another.”<sup>15</sup>

To become a disciple of something is to become well-informed in an enterprise or field of choice. Jesus intends for his disciples is to be informed about the kingdom of God. The one who disciples others must have been called by Jesus (Matt 4:18–22) and must be informed about Jesus so that he will not lead others into error. As seen in the lives of the eleven disciples, discipleship is a continuous process. The disciples were not deceived as to the nature of the call; all of them willingly left their vocations to follow Jesus and learn from him. A disciple publicly affirms through baptism his intent to follow Jesus.

Disciple-making is the responsibility of all Christians. Discipleship is the gradual spiritual development of new converts into maturity as they daily learn about the kingdom of God. David Platt posits, “Disciple making is not simply what happens in a classroom for an hour or so each week; it’s what happens when we walk through life together as a community of faith, modeling for one another how to follow Christ.”<sup>16</sup> This involves daily reading of the Bible, praying, fellowshiping with other believers, and applying biblical truth to life experience. In his Gospel, Matthew explains that the process of making disciples begins through the proclamation of the gospel. Hagner offers, “To be made a disciple in Matthew means above all to follow after righteousness as articulated in the teaching of Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> Following Jesus means pursuing the righteousness that is imputed by his atonement on the cross.

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<sup>15</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2020), s.v. “disciple.”

<sup>16</sup> David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 376.

<sup>17</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 887.



### **Of All Nations (Matt 28:19a)**

Jesus defined the scope of discipleship making. Initially in his ministry, he admonished his disciples to reach out to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 10:5–6). Jesus’s ministry was limited to Jews and a few interactions with Gentiles (Matt 15:21–28). However, the situation changed with his disciples, who were moved out of their domain to other territories with the purpose engaging people with the gospel and in discipleship (Acts 8:1–5). The Great Commission is in sharp contrast to Jesus’s earlier command to the twelve disciples in Matthew 10:5–6: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The phrase translated “of all nations” in Matthew 28:19 could be interpreted as focused on the Gentiles without Israel, but in another sense, it could be all-inclusive since God promised to bless all nations through Abraham (Gen 12:3), which finds its fulfillment in Christ. Carson writes, “All nations have been understood primarily in two ways, to all Gentiles (Matt 4:15; 6:32; 10:5; 18:12) . . . except Israel, and to all people, including Israel (Matt 21:43).”<sup>18</sup> After Jesus’s ascension to heaven, the apostles and early Christians moved to Gentile territories and preached about the resurrected Lord and Savior. This statement is also confirmed in Revelation 7:9. Platt explains that “Jesus speaks of making disciples of ‘all nations,’ a phrase which in the original (*panta ta ethne*) refers not simply to nations or countries as we usually think of them, but rather to tribes, families, clans, and peoples, what we call ‘people groups’ today.”<sup>19</sup>

Through the witness of Jesus’s disciples, people from all nations will follow Jesus, become disciples, and make disciples as they obey the command of Jesus. Paul demonstrated this imperative by preaching and making disciples in many Gentile cities; many of these Gentile believers became the leaders of the churches Paul established, including those at Ephesus, Colossae, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Philadelphia.

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<sup>18</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 666–67.

<sup>19</sup> Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 376.

## **Baptizing Them (Matt 28:19b)**

Jesus's disciples were to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Bruce A. Ware writes, "Despite the obvious significance of this dominical commissioning, followers of Christ entertained both differing understandings and differing practices, particular of Christ's command to baptize others."<sup>20</sup> This diverse understanding generated debate in Christendom. Ware elaborates, "The term *baptism* refers most clearly and naturally to the immersion of a person in water, and as such, its very usage argues directly for immersion as the mode baptism, and indirectly for the application of baptism to those past infancy."<sup>21</sup> To baptize with the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is crucial. Jesus's disciples were not to fall into the error of baptizing in the name of any other person or being. The Trinity is present at the baptism of the new convert. This imitates Jesus's baptism, when the Spirit descended in the form of a dove and the Father spoke from heaven to reveal that his Jesus as his Son (Mark 1:9–11). Jesus himself did not baptize while on earth (John 4:1–2) but gave his disciples the command to baptize when inviting people into the kingdom of God (Matt 28:19). These disciples were to follow Jesus's command and instruct others to do likewise. Ware writes,

The Matthean Great Commission text, likewise, commands followers of Christ to "make disciples" (aorist imperative, *matheteusate*) through the dual means of baptizing them and teaching them (both present participle) all that Christ commanded them. This, likewise, seems to indicate that those baptized are also able to be taught—hence, they are at least young children or adults, but not infants.<sup>22</sup>

Baptism is necessary following repentance and conversion and is part of disciple-making, as disciples are taught about the kingdom of God. Platt writes, "Baptism is a part of what it means to make disciples because baptism symbolizes identification

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<sup>20</sup> Bruce A. Ware, "Believers' Baptism View," in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. David F. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 19.

<sup>21</sup> Ware, "Believers' Baptism View," 21.

<sup>22</sup> Ware, "Believers' Baptism View," 24.

with the person of Christ and inclusion in the body of Christ.”<sup>23</sup> Teaching and learning is a continuous process, but baptism is a one-time activity in the life of Jesus’s disciple. Jerome commented on baptism: “They were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit so that the three who are one in divinity might also be one in giving themselves. The name of the Trinity is the same.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Teaching Them (Matt 28:20a)**

Disciples should teach others everything Jesus taught his disciples while on earth. These teachings include proclaiming the gospel, prayer, loving your enemies, parables, loving each other, loving your neighbor, specific predictions and promises, and commands (both implied and expressed). Their teachings included the Torah and the Prophets, and they taught those they met how the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44–45). The disciples were to keep reminding people of Jesus’s teachings. It is important to note that *coming* to Jesus was the first step in the disciples’ experience. Now, the scope of their assignment is to *go*. Jesus uses the word “therefore” to remind the disciples that he sends them because he is their Lord and they are to obey his command. To be a disciple is more than mentally assenting to teaching; it is a life of commitment. Disciples need to observe carefully all that Jesus taught and carefully teach it to others.

### **The Effects of Teaching as Commanded by Jesus Christ**

The disciples’ teaching produces many results, and they are identified as followers of Jesus from the evidence that follows their testimony about the risen Lord (Acts 4:13). They present the message of the kingdom of God that Jesus came to announce in his earthly ministry.

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<sup>23</sup> Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 376.

<sup>24</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in evangelium Matthaicum libri IV*, 282–83.

## **Teaching Produces Light and Empowers (Matt 28:20)**

Teaching the Word illuminates the heart and transforms the disciple's whole being (Ps 119:105; John 8:12). Jesus knew the light of the gospel would come into the hearts of his disciples, and with this same light, his disciples would train others as they spread the good news. He declared himself to be the light of the world (John 8:12). Light is constant and relevant to human existence; it gives life to humanity. Paul said that those who come into this light have been "delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col 1:13). Light brings clarity and exposes everything. The light that comes from teaching about the kingdom helps disciples see their state as sinners and the opportunity for their redemption from slavery to sin and Satan.

Discipleship reveals who Jesus is, what he did for humanity on the cross, and the triumph of his resurrection. The religions of the world guide humanity to self-righteousness through certain rules that adherents must follow. However, discipleship reveals God's provision for salvation through Jesus Christ. This salvation does not require any self-effort to attain favor from God; instead, Jesus gave his life as a ransom for as many as received him as Lord and Savior. Teaching others about this gift delivers the sinner and sets the oppressed free from the captivity of the devil. Individuals who understand this revelation will surrender their lives to Jesus and become part of the kingdom of God.

This revelation empowered the disciples to train others in the truth of the gospel: the knowledge of who Jesus is as the Savior of humanity, what Jesus does as an advocate before God the Father, and his second coming in glory to establish the new heavens and the new earth. Discipleship empowers Jesus's followers to rely on God's to sustain their spirituality. Knowledge is a tool in the hands of humanity to help avoid costly mistakes. It transforms lives. It produces sustainable results. Discipleship training, therefore, empowers Christians to teach others about Jesus and the kingdom of God. This training sustains disciples for a lifetime.

### **Content of the Teaching (Matt 28:20a)**

Jesus provided his disciples with the content they should teach. As these disciples obeyed, those that accepted the gospel message were to observe those things which Jesus taught about the kingdom of God. These teachings should be evident in the life of a disciple; their present lifestyles should be different from their past, pre-conversion lifestyles (Matt 28:20a). Nicodemus acknowledged the presence of God with Jesus; this was evident in his conversation with Jesus in John 3. Nicodemus acknowledged the fact that Jesus taught with authority and confirmed his teaching with the results that followed. Jesus taught Nicodemus about new life through being born again. This is the kingdom mandate to the citizens of God's kingdom: to teach others about new life through being born again.

The disciples of Jesus are to go and do likewise. Jesus's disciples do not have to formulate their own curriculum; they should simply teach the resurrected Lord and the liberation that comes through accepting him as Lord and Savior. The teaching about the resurrected Christ is basic because it reveals the love of God for humanity and the deliverance for humanity from sin and its consequences.

### **Lifestyle of the Teacher (Matt 28:20)**

Jesus taught his twelve disciples to watch their lifestyle and not to fall into the errors of the Pharisees (Matt 23:1–3). The Pharisees taught and did different things. They knew what the law said but did contrary to what is in the law. This hypocritical lifestyle negates the presentation of the gospel and the kingdom of God. Teaching people about the kingdom of God requires honesty and faithfulness. Obedience to the Bible and its teachings forms the lifestyle of the teacher. Those who follow these biblical teachings can be identified by others who are not followers of Jesus Christ. Christian teachers need to be careful about their conduct so that their followers will not be misled. Many of their disciples will emulate their teachings and character, their worldview and interpersonal

relationships with others. Most great teachers reproduce themselves through their students. In Acts 4:13, Peter and John addressed the rulers and elders of the people and after their address they were identified to be with Jesus because of their boldness and presentations.

### **Training to the End of the Age (Matt 28:20)**

Discipleship training enhances the obedience of Jesus's followers; they follow the Bible's instructions and live accordingly. Jesus instructed his disciples to teach all that they had received during the time they were following him. God's mission is to institute his kingdom on earth, a kingdom of people who act in obedience to him. Israel's inability to obey and follow God's instructions necessitated the coming of Christ. The Israelites were rotating on an axis of disobedience, punishment, and deliverance and could not train their children to obey God. Jesus came to demonstrate this by raising twelve apostles, a number that reflected the twelve tribes of Israel.

Training a new community of godly people was crucial; this training exposed and corrected the error of the nation of Israel. The early church was able to proclaim the resurrected Lord because the twelve apostles continued to teach others about Jesus's sacrificial atonement. Jesus commanded his disciples to ensure that this training was prominent in their advancing of the kingdom. These apostles followed this command and avoided anything that would cause distraction (Acts 6:2-4).

The church today should also see discipleship training as crucial for church members. The failure of church members to know and understand the importance of disciple-making has led to a decline in church membership decline and, in some cases, the closing of worship centers. Some Christians struggle with the application of their faith in their lives because they did not have training to handle the challenges of life that are not clearly spelled out in the Bible. God's mission should be paramount in the heart of

every disciple, and they should embrace the instruction of others whenever and wherever possible.

Jesus guaranteed his presence with those who engage in disciple-making. The teacher should not be afraid to teach the whole counsel of God. Platt writes, “We get the assurance in Matthew 28:20 that we can depend on the presence of Christ.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus’s explains how this promise will be fulfilled by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5). Stanley Hauerwas encourages those whom Jesus calls: “The disciples are to remember that the mission on which Jesus sends is not one on which they must go alone.”<sup>26</sup> This statement gives courage and boldness to those who engage in the command of Jesus to go and make disciples. Hauerwas continues, “He was in the beginning, which means that he can promise to be at the end of the age.”<sup>27</sup> He is the resurrected Lord whose abiding presence is necessary.

### **Discipleship Training Breeds Church Planting (Titus 1:5)**

The New Testament reveals that those who were converted and submitted themselves for discipleship were organized into the body of Christ. These people formed local churches consisting of baptized believers who devoted their lives to the teachings and doctrines of the apostles (Acts 2:42–47). These churches sought to know more about Jesus and the kingdom of God. Paul wrote to various churches in different locations instructing them on their position with God as a result of faith in Jesus Christ and the cost of following Jesus. Paul wrote to churches in Rome, Ephesus, Galatia, Corinth, and Thessalonica; other home groups would also read his letters. He chose leaders among them who were his disciples, notably Timothy and Titus, and encouraged these leaders to

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<sup>25</sup> Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 377.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 450.

<sup>27</sup> Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 450.

commit the gospel into the hands of faithful men. These churches would be responsible for planting other churches through discipleship training and developing converts into maturity. These churches consisted of baptized believers; they gathered to worship, fellowship, and do the work of the ministry. Church planting became an integral part of the missions of these believers because of the need to worship, fellowship, and send out men and women for missions.

### **The Command to Teach (Eph 4:7–16)**

Paul’s teaching to the disciples of Jesus Christ has sustained the church over centuries. His faithful dividing of the Word of truth continues to sustain sinners who come to faith through repentance, forsaking their sins and accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Paul wanted disciples to continue his ministry, and this hinged on consistently teaching new believers about their newfound faith. Teaching helps new believers to grow and mature in faith. The Word of God needs clarity and understanding in order to produce fruits in the lives of followers of Jesus. Teaching cannot be replaced by any other means of informing others about the kingdom of God.

### **Grace to Teach (Eph 4:7)**

The grace to teach is given by Jesus who ascended on high and has given authority to his disciples to teach. Paul writes about the risen Lord who is victorious over Satan, sin, and death. This teaching may imply one-on-one teaching or teaching a small group of believers in the church. Elders should teach according “to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph 4:7), which means there is no need for competition. Jesus will determine each person’s ability and enable them to teach according to the abilities he gives. Bryan Chapell writes, “The sweet side of this reality is that we have



complementary strengths, weaknesses, interests, and personalities.”<sup>28</sup> However, these differences may also “cause us to get on each other’s nerves.”<sup>29</sup> Each teacher should focus on Jesus, glorify God in all that is done, and restrict themselves from claiming glory that belongs to God. Francis Foulkes reminds teachers that “they may not expect their personalities, their gifts, and their tasks to be all alike. In his wisdom, and to make each dependent on others, God has ordained not uniformity, but an endless variety of gifts for members of the body.”<sup>30</sup>

In this epistle, Paul discussed unity in the church and the grace to teach. To achieve his purpose, God allows some to occupy certain offices for the purpose of training others for the work of the ministry; these are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. Paul clarifies the work of the Holy Spirit within the church and explains that these different gifts “are derived from Christ’s authority.”<sup>31</sup> Paul knew that the favor of God would result in raising up and sustaining mature elders. In turn, their ministry would help those in the church to grow and develop into maturity. The elders would use their spiritual gifts to train other disciples.

When considering whether the gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 are relevant to today’s church, Chapell explains that “almost every one of these terms has some ancient debate regarding its precise definition and place in the contemporary church.”<sup>32</sup> However, he continues, “What nobody debates and what is essential for [the] present purpose is the understanding that Paul says we are not all the same.”<sup>33</sup> Realizing and understanding the

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<sup>28</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 188.

<sup>29</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians*, 188.

<sup>30</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 10 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1989), 121.

<sup>31</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians*, 188.

<sup>32</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians*, 187.

<sup>33</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians*, 187.

purpose of and differences in the giftings helps to advance the kingdom of God and to obey the Great Commission by Jesus Christ.

### **Obedience to Jesus's Command (Eph 4:11–13)**

In his epistle to the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul encourages the church to recognize their uniqueness. He discussed unity within the church because we are the same and at the same time different (Eph 4:13); we are one in the body of Christ but we are differentiated with individual giftings. Chapell explains that Paul writes so that we “understand that we are all different and that is a good thing. The emphasis on upon the legitimacy of our differences encourages equal respect for our differences.”<sup>34</sup> Elders in the church are to use their spiritual gifts to teach and develop others. The essence of this teaching is to develop and prepare Christians for the work of ministry. Christians need to participate in the ongoing work of the ministry; however, they are expected to be equipped through discipleship training by the elders in the church. God places elders in the church for these reasons. Jesus's followers will grow into maturity as they develop in their faith through discipleship. Maturity occurs as these new believers face situations that require spiritual maturity in their responses. Backsliding or apostasy will occur if these new believers are not maturing in their faith. To avoid this danger, Paul clarified that these elders in the church should continue to teach until members become mature and could reach the same level in faith as they obey the commands of the Lord and follow the apostles' doctrines. Paul reiterates the commands of Jesus and emphasizes the need for discipleship training in the church.

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<sup>34</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians*, 186.

## **Teaching as an Endowment (Eph 4:11)**

Paul discussed teaching as an endowment from the Jesus Christ. This grace is bestowed on people within the body of Christ. Making use of these gifts will produce growth and maturity within the body of Christ. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus commanded Christians to teach about the kingdom of God. To some extent, every follower of Jesus should be able to teach and disciple others in the way of the Lord. Beyond the scope of those who have this special ability from the Lord, God uses every available person as an agent of transformation. True transformation comes from right information.

The purpose of the gift of teaching is to disciple those within the church and develop them into maturity. These gifts are blessings to the body of Christ. Grace is given for mutual benefit and not for individual achievement. Thomas B. Slater writes, “The ministers endowed and selected by Christ shall bring the rest of God’s Church to maturity. These ministers shall enable the lay members to fulfill their spiritual calling.”<sup>35</sup> Education produces a spiritually developed mind through which Christians will be able to withstand all forms of unbiblical doctrine and thinking.

## **Equip the Saints (Eph 4:12)**

It is not enough to mentally assent to follow; rather, one needs steady and consistent growth in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Equipping the saints is the responsibility of the church. To achieve this responsibility, Jesus gave some special gifts to his body to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. This implies that each member of the body of Christ will have a ministry such as teaching, mercy, counseling, local evangelism, hospital visits, inmate ministry, ministry to the homeless, or another ministry as the Lord allows. Equipping the saints delivers them from being

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2012), 113.

tossed around by every wave and wind of doctrine that does not have a biblical foundation. In time, this spiritual nurturing enhances a believer's spiritual development.

Spiritual development cannot be measured by outward emotion. It develops over time through the courage to persist in serving the Lord. Equipping means restoring something to its original condition, which help believers discover who they are and God's plan for their lives. Equipping believers with the God's Word helps to develop godly worldviews and interpersonal relationship with other believers and unbelievers. It also helps believers to recognize their former state and appreciate what God did for them through Jesus Christ.

### **Building Up the Body of Christ (Eph 4:12)**

Paul writes that equipping the saints leads to building up others for the work of the ministry. God gave the church these gifts to build up the body of Christ. Since building a house requires different materials, these gifts will serve different purposes within the body of Christ. Building requires time and different materials that are fitted together. Likewise, the body of Christ needs the different giftings that Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. These gifts come from the Holy Spirit. Recipients should use them to serve, not to see themselves as superior to other Christians. Using these gifts helps the body of Christ grow in faith and reach "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Slater writes, "This divine endowment is an act of grace that enables each Christian to participate in God's mission. The use of *metron* (measure) implies that some are more gifted than others, but that such pleases God."<sup>36</sup>

The contribution of each member of the body of Christ in relation to their gifting will be different. This does not make one gift superior over another (Eph 2:9),

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<sup>36</sup> Slater, *Ephesians*, 109.

nor does it make room for arrogance in the recipient. Slater writes, “The proper emphasis should be on the giver, not the gift or the one who receives the gift.”<sup>37</sup> Proper understanding of who gives these gifts and the proper use of these gifts will help the body of Christ position each gift for its proper use.

### **Teaching as a Gift (Eph 4:11)**

Paul, like Jesus, commanded churches to teach people sound doctrine to combat false teachers. In his letter to the church in Ephesus, he wrote about different gifts in the body of Christ. He mentions the gift of pastors and teachers in Ephesians 4:11. F. F. Bruce describes this gift:

When new believers are incorporated in the church, they require further ministry (as indeed do older believers): they need to be shepherded and taught. The noun pastor . . . does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament in reference to a ministry in the church, but the derivative verb “to shepherd” (also derived from the noun meaning shepherd) is used of the church.<sup>38</sup>

New believers need to be instructed about their new life and the commitment that it requires. However, Jesus’s disciples are to teach others, both Jews and Gentiles, about doctrinal beliefs and practices apart from this gift. Teaching enriches the students in wisdom and maturity. Teaching aids learning and helps believers gain insight into what the kingdom of God requires. Platt writes, “As we make disciples, we teach the Word. We don’t just receive the Word; we reproduce the Word. Our conversations ought to be filled with Scripture as we teach people all that Christ has taught us.”<sup>39</sup> We reproduce what we have learned from faithful teachers.

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<sup>37</sup> Slater, *Ephesians*, 109.

<sup>38</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 347.

<sup>39</sup> Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 376.

## **Paul's Example of Discipleship Training**

Paul is a model of discipling new converts and building them up in their newfound faith. He desired to see followers of Jesus develop into maturity and be able to disciple others. He was diligent about discipleship training and establishing churches in various places.

### **Discipleship Training at Home (2 Tim 2; Titus 2:1–8)**

In his letters to Titus and Timothy, Paul encouraged both leaders to train men and women who would teach others about Jesus. The homes of Christians should be discipleship training centers. Parents should model a pattern of discipleship training for their children. This should be evident in the lives of those who would assume leadership positions in the church. Men in the church would be responsible for the training of young men while women would be responsible for the training of young women (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2:1–8). This training would bring balance to the church and produce generational followers of Jesus. Paul's hope is that both Timothy and Titus would be effective leaders, reproducing those who would minister with them in the church. Paul emulated Jesus by training others under him and instructed Timothy and Titus to do the same. The faithfulness of their ministry would be measured by their ability to raise up future leaders to continue the ministry after they were gone. Paul accomplished this by visiting and writing to places where he and others had planted churches. Paul's continuous training of those who came under his supervision included epistles in which he provided guidance for their spiritual relationship with God.

Home instruction had long been part of the Israelite tradition. Before they entered the promised land, Moses instructed the Israelites to instruct their children and their grandchildren after them in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord (Deut 6:1–9). The Israelites' failure to instruct their children resulted in sin against God (Deut 8:19–20). Paul's knowledge of the Old Testament and his knowledge of Jesus informed

his writing to Timothy (2 Tim 3:14–17) and Titus. Christian discipleship should begin in the home. Parents should be mentors to their children. Men and women in the church should disciple children in the church for growth within the body. Discipling youths and young adults enables them to spread the good news to their peers. Paul was intentional in discipleship, wanting to prevent apostasy and rejection of Christianity by the young men and women who would succeed the present generation.

### **Determination to Raise Faithful Leaders (2 Tim 2:1–2; Titus 1:5–9)**

Training people in discipleship will help to raise faithful leaders who will be able to transmit the training they received to others. Jesus’s strategy was to raise men who would be faithful to continue his ministry after he left. Robert E. Coleman writes, “The initial objective of Jesus’ plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to his life and carry on his work after he returned to the Father.”<sup>40</sup> Because there were false teachers spreading false teachings during this period, Paul encouraged Timothy and Titus to select faithful leaders who would teach and disciple believers in sound doctrine. Contending with false teaching requires training in sound doctrine. Developing faithful disciples requires faithfully teaching the Word of God. Paul committed sound doctrine to Timothy so that he could train the faithful church leaders in Ephesus to contend with the false teachers in Ephesus. Phillip H. Towner writes, “There ‘the things heard’ from Paul formed a pattern for Timothy’s teaching, as well as the substance of what had been entrusted to him. The same phrase, ‘the things you have heard me say’ identify the commodity Timothy is to pass on to others.”<sup>41</sup> Jesus instructed the disciples to teach everything he taught them. Likewise, Paul instructed Timothy and Titus to teach the

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<sup>40</sup> Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1994), 27.

<sup>41</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 489.

sound doctrine they had learned from Paul to faithful leaders in the church for the purpose of refuting false teaching.

### **Discipleship Is Conditional (2 Tim 2:9–13)**

Paul revealed to Timothy that teaching and discipling people may cause hardships (2 Tim 2:9–13). False teachers will try to spread wrong doctrine, and people will reject the good news due to their hardness of heart. Paul is a good example for Timothy, as he must be ready to face consequences similar to what Paul faced. Paul uses three metaphors to describe this situation: the soldier, athlete, and farmer. Towner notes that Paul uses these metaphors “to encourage commitment, self-control, discipline, and preparedness.”<sup>42</sup> Hardships may include unbelief, false religion, and government restrictions on Christianity. Regardless of the situation, Paul prepares the mindset of a teacher like Timothy to be ready to teach under such hostile and anti-Christian circumstances. Therefore, Timothy must be careful about his conduct among people as a young pastor so that people would not take advantage of such a situation and look down on him. Timothy’s conduct would speak volumes to those who observed him and listened to him; keeping away from youthful lusts would distinguish him as a leader (2 Tim 2:2–26).

### **Teaching and Making Disciples in the Old Testament**

Though the term for discipleship may not feature in the Old Testament as it does the New Testament, this does not mean the Old Testament lacked evidence of training in the law or the ways of God. The statutes and commands given by God to Moses were important to the Israelites. Moses trained leaders in the wilderness who assisted him in settling disputes among the Israelites. He accepted the counsel of Jethro

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<sup>42</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 493.



his father-in-law (Exod 18). Paul used the same pattern with Timothy. Four things happen in this type of discipleship model: (1) selecting those who are capable of taking on greater responsibility, (2) training the chosen leaders in the statutes and commands, (3) allowing them to implement what they have learned from Moses, and (4) ensuring their responsibility matches their giftedness. In the Old Testament, rabbis taught the laws and traditions of the Jews to help Israelites remember Yahweh's instructions and to worship him. God chose the nation of Israel, a foreshadowing of the kingdom of God that the future Messiah, Jesus Christ, would usher in. God called Moses as their first leader. Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery and received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. These commands guided their relationship with God and their neighbors. They were to teach future generations to remember the commandments. However, Israel did not follow these commands after the death of leaders like Moses, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, eventually requesting that God place a king over the nation. Most of these kings did not lead them according to the laws of Yahweh, leading to their captivity for many years.

Whereas in the New Testament, Paul described to Timothy and Titus the qualities needed in a leader, in the Old Testament, God selected the individuals who would lead his people. Training his people became one of their responsibilities. Teaching and discipling were customs of the Jews. Throughout history, rabbis trained their students, teaching the whole counsel of God to Israel, the nation under God. Examples of this training include Moses, who trained the elders of Israel and Joshua (Exod 17:8–13; 18:19–26; 24:12–13), Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19–21; 2 Kgs 2:1–15), and Elisha and his school of prophets (2 Kgs 6:1). The following section focuses on the examples of Moses, Ezra and Nehemiah, and Elijah.

## **Moses as a Trainer**

Moses led the nation of Israel. He had also had individuals who studied under him, including Joshua, who became his successor after his death. God told Moses to gather the seventy elders in the camp, saying to Moses, “I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone” (Num 11:16–17). These elders watched and followed Moses in all that he did and taught, and as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. Two men in the camp were beneficiaries of this outpouring of God’s Spirit (Num 11:26–30). God chose these men for his glory, and Moses was satisfied with this development even when confronted by Joshua, who asked him to stop those prophesying in the camp. Moses believed in the move of God that called people into his service. Moses’s ability to mentor Joshua helped prepare for a smooth transition after Moses’s death.

## **A Sense of New Beginning**

Spiritual training and renewal produce a sense of beginning anew. The nation of Israel experienced many new beginnings at which time they renewed their covenant with Yahweh. Derek W. H. Thomas describes this as a “covenant-renewal ceremony,” a ceremony held when the Israelites entered a new season.<sup>43</sup> This took place “in Joshua 24, before they entered the Promised Land; in 1 Samuel 12, before they entered a period of rule by monarchy; and here in Nehemiah 9, as they return from Babylonian exile, the people of Israel engaged in a covenant-renewal ceremony.”<sup>44</sup> This is a period of rededication to spiritual renewal. The same commitment is needed for discipleship training, as it should lead to greater faithfulness to God. Nehemiah insisted that the Israelites should not marry foreign women or give their daughters in marriage (Neh

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<sup>43</sup> Derek W. H. Thomas, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg NJ: P&R, 2016), 358.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, 358.

13:23–27), alluding to Deuteronomy 7:3–4. He also forbade the people from buying and selling goods in Jerusalem on the Sabbath (Neh 13:15–22; Amos 8:5). Nehemiah reminded the people of the commands God gave to the Israelites through Moses while they were in the wilderness.

### **Ezra and Nehemiah as Agents of Change (Neh 9–13)**

When the Israelites returned from Babylonian exile, Ezra the scribe ensured that the Law was read to those returning. Derek Thomas writes that “the Jews gathered at the Water Gate in Jerusalem to hear Ezra and his team read from the book of the Law of Moses.”<sup>45</sup> The Israelites were in captivity because they disobeyed God; this resulted in punishment by the Babylonians. Ezra and Nehemiah were interested in the restoration and prosperity of their people, and they needed to remind them of God’s law. They recognized the importance of leading and instructing their followers to obey all that the Bible teaches.

Teaching involves devotion to and consistent study of Scripture. Reading the Torah led the Israelites to recognize their sins, including marrying foreign women (Neh 13:1–3). God instructed Moses to teach the Israelites the laws and to pass this knowledge to the succeeding generations. This would enable the Israelites to recognize their status as God’s chosen people and conduct themselves within the parameters of the law. Each time these laws were not passed on to the next generation, it usually resulted in idolatry. God then handed them over to enemies who humiliated and punished them. Each time, the Israelites repented from this situation, and God forgave their sins and brought them back to their promised land. Though this cycle continued, God promised in the future to give them hearts to obey him (Jer 24:7).

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, 352.

During the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people wept and made restitution because they were eager to repent and turn to God. Thomas notes, “As the men gather again the following day to hear further instruction, it became apparent that there was much in the law that they were neglecting, including the keeping of the Feast of Booths.”<sup>46</sup> The Israelites were ready to align themselves with the Torah and obey God’s instructions.

In the Old Testament, the masters of the law were responsible for teaching. In the New Testament, discipleship is the responsibility of all Christians. As Moses instructed in his time, discipleship begins at home as parents teach their children about God so that people recognize inconsistencies in their relationship with God and do not neglect their worship of the Almighty.

### **Elijah Raises a Successor**

Elijah is an example of a prophet who was able to raise another person to succeed him. After Elijah’s ascension to heaven via a chariot of fire (1 Kgs 19:19–21; 2 Kgs 2:11–12), Elisha took up the prophetic office for the nation of Israel. He greatly impacted the nation of Israel and taught many students in the prophetic school (2 Kgs 4:1). A disciple must be like his teacher, learning from him everything that could help in physical and spiritual development. It is also a task that requires obedience to the master’s teachings, as is seen by the removal of Elisha’s close disciple, Gehazi, from the prophetic office due to the sin of greed (2 Kgs 5:20–27).

### **Conclusion**

To continue any cause and retain adherents to the cause, it is necessary and crucial to train people for the cause. Students are a reflection of the quality of their education. Though he had many followers, Jesus chose twelve disciples to be closest to

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, 352.

him. They became his apostles who, after witnessing Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension, led the way in sharing the gospel and witnessing for Christ. Jesus did not organize a religion separate from Judaism; instead, he announced the coming of the kingdom of God. His disciples were to go out and teach others—Jew and Gentile—about the kingdom of God. This training, a fulfillment of the Great Commission, is to continue until the second coming of Jesus Christ.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE PROJECT

Disciple-making existed before the time of Jesus Christ. Teachers had disciples before Jesus came and called his disciples. The word “disciple” in the New Testament was used for those who were listening to Jesus’s teachings (John 6:60–66). It can also refer to the twelve men who later became the apostles after Jesus’s resurrection and ascension to heaven (Matt 10:1–2). These twelve men were the inner circle who received instruction from Jesus and followed him wherever he went. Considering the time in which Jesus lived, John the Baptist, the Pharisees and Sadducees, philosophers, and other messianic movement leaders had their disciple-making models (John 1:35; 3:1–2; Acts 22:3), and Jesus was familiar with them. Yet Jesus’s model was different from others and could be identified as distinctive by other scholars or disciplers. For example, after his ascension, religious leaders recognized that Jesus’s disciples were unschooled by religious leaders of their time (Acts 4:13). Jesus’s model was to train and allow the disciples to practice (Luke 10:1–3) without a “graduation.” Therefore, Jesus’s model of discipleship is a timeless method of training.

First-century Jews were expecting a messiah who would deliver them from Roman rule. When Jesus began teaching and enlisting people to be his followers, many of the Jews were disappointed. Jesus’s teachings were about the kingdom of God, and some of his early disciples misunderstood him. Therefore, those who expected Jesus to be a messianic freedom fighter left him because of his teachings (John 6:60–66). Those who remained under Jesus’s training were ordinary men whose theological backgrounds covered only the basics of the Torah as a Jew. Michael J. Wilkins writes,

We find a variety of types of people who came to Jesus in the beginning, a variety who had different needs and different expectations of how their needs would be met. As the movement grew, Jesus clarified the goals of his ministry. That clarification had significantly different effects upon those who were following him: some agreed with him; others disagreed; some became more committed to Jesus; others abandoned him; some readjusted their thinking; others rebelled against Jesus' way. Finally at the end of his ministry, only a few followers remained.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter discusses the disciple-making processes of Jesus and Paul and presents them as models for today's church. It also considers the theoretical, practical, and historical issues concerning discipleship.

### **Jesus Christ's Discipleship Model**

Jesus and Paul's strategies of disciple-making are transferrable to the modern church and in use today by various Christian churches. Jesus Christ used disciple-making to reproduce his mission in twelve men and others who were listening to him (Luke 24:24). These people followed him and continued his mission after his ascension (Acts 1:12–14). They followed him wherever he went and learned from him a servant-leader model of disciple-making. Bill Hull writes, "The disciples dropped everything to follow Jesus because they had previously been with him and because he gave them an invitation, not a responsibility. Without the previous exposure there would have been no solid interest; without the invitation they would have stayed where they were."<sup>2</sup>

During the time of Jesus, his disciples left their vocations and followed him wherever he went. It was possible for them to leave their vocations because Jesus provided for their needs. He trained them whenever time permitted rather than providing a formal setting for their training. He trained them in homes, by the seaside, in the synagogues, and in the wilderness. This practice enabled him to teach people with various vocations according to their availabilities. In the same way, churches today

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 143.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 70.

should find a way to disciple people even when their jobs become an obstacle, encouraging disciple-making as the situation permits.

Disciple-making is a process that lasts a lifetime and requires regular training. Jesus influenced the lives of the twelve disciples and others who were able to influence their community and cities wherever they lived (Acts 11:26). This is another application for churches today as they study the early church and consider both the theoretical and practical paradigms of disciple-making. Studying the model of Jesus Christ will enable contemporary churches to regain the practice and model that has proven effective for centuries.

Jesus practiced full-time ministry, and the Luke narrative reveals how he received support for his ministry. Luke writes in 8:2–3 that the disciples were with Jesus, “and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out their means.” This set a precedent for a disciple to receive support when engaging in full-time ministry. This could look like full-time pastors, elders, and missionaries being supported by a church, churches, or mission agencies. This aspect of Jesus’s model is being practiced by many disciplers today. Disciple-making was a major focus of Jesus, and he commanded his disciples to do likewise. However, we must engage in it while considering our context and culture.

### **Paul’s Discipleship Model**

Paul practiced bi-vocational ministry (Acts 18:1–3). Paul was able to combine his vocation and disciple-making by working alongside a family (Aquila and Priscilla). Luke writes in Acts 18:2–3, “And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.” In this case, a discipler (Paul) partnered with his disciples in providing for his needs. This situation may



not be a paradigm that the church can copy today, but it does mean that a discipler can have a vocation. A discipler may participate in part-time ministry, especially when the church is unable to support a full-time ministry. Both discipler and disciple could take full-time or part-time jobs in order to cover their financial expenses. It could also mean that people within the same vocation could engage themselves in disciple training. In this case, people whose jobs do not permit them to attend mid-week service or fellowship in the church could organize themselves into a discipleship group. For example, a Christian lawyer could organize a discipleship training small group for his colleagues. Kevin E. Lawson provides another example supporting this idea: “In 1844, George Williams was a young man working in a draper’s shop in London. With a desire to help other young men pursue spiritual growth and avoid the temptations of city life, he formed a small group that met after work for prayer and discussion of Scripture and religious writings.”<sup>3</sup> Disciple-making can take place in settings apart from the four walls of the church building.

Like Jesus, Paul also received support from others. Specifically, Paul received support from the Philippians. He writes, “And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only” (Phil 4:15). Paul’s examples of both bi-vocational ministry and church-supported ministry are applicable to churches and Christian ministry today. There are bi-vocational pastors and missionaries as well as full-time pastors and missionaries. Churches and Christian ministries in this generation may apply either of these paradigms appropriate in their context. For example, from an African context, most Nigerian Baptist pastors are full-time and may not be allowed by their churches to take a second job. Paul’s model provides a precedent for this. And in

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin E. Lawson, “Historical Foundations of Christian Education,” in *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry*, ed. Freddy Cardoza (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 69.

other contexts, Paul's model allows for disciples to be supported by a church or a Christian ministry.

Both in theory and in practice, Jesus and Paul were able to reap results through their models of disciple-making. Teaching crowds and turning them into disciples were the strategies of Jesus Christ and Paul. This strategy helped Paul establish churches in cities where people gathered for worship (Acts 14:21–22). Christianity spread because Paul, other apostles, and early Christians engaged in disciple-making. The early followers of these apostles or converts to Christianity were considered disciples because they consistently gathered to listen to the apostles and follow their doctrinal teachings (Acts 2:42). Luke writes, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Maintaining this practice helped them to persevere in their faith in Jesus Christ. Multiplying disciples like this is the reward, or result, of Jesus and Paul’s methods of disciple-making.

### **Disciple-Making Theory**

Churches should work from the New Testament model of making disciples. Studying the early church provides direction and a pattern for today’s churches to follow. This is because Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb 13:8). Modeling churches after the pattern of Jesus will help to equip Christians as they grow in their relationship with God and humanity.

Because disciple-making existed before Jesus started his ministry, the Pharisees in his day would have expected Jesus to have a model, or style, of discipling. Wilkins explains “The various subgroups that existed within Judaism in the first century each had their own followers. Several of them could be described by master-disciple terminology.”<sup>4</sup> These Pharisaic models “were called a philosophical school, a religious

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<sup>4</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 84.

sect, or a political interest group,”<sup>5</sup> which Matthew and Mark identify as “disciples of the Pharisees” (Matt 22:15–16; Mark 2:18).<sup>6</sup> However, Jesus’s model was distinct from other teachers in the sense that teaching could happen on the basis of availability. J. T. English supports this claim: “Jesus employed various spaces in his discipleship ministry. The Bible depicts Jesus teaching in synagogues, on hillsides, in homes, and to individuals. He was intentionally using various spaces in order to teach and equip the men and women who were following him.”<sup>7</sup>

Today’s churches need to create discipleship programs that are able to train business and industry leaders and others whose jobs do not allow them to participate in regular church programs. Jesus engaged people with teachings at any location that was convenient or appropriate for such people to be taught.

In John 3, Nicodemus’s introductory speech upon meeting Jesus gives a theoretical depiction of what other teachers expected of Jesus. Nicodemus says, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (3:2). The “we” Nicodemus refers to are the Pharisees. They were evaluating Jesus’s model of making disciples. The Pharisees expected Jesus to establish another rabbinic school that would facilitate his training of disciples. However, Jesus was not establishing a school but equipping his followers by teaching wherever possible.

The Pharisees also recognized Jesus’s miracles. Jesus was identified by Nicodemus as a teacher from God, and his miracles were acknowledged to be from God. The transformations that followed Jesus’s model of disciple-making brought people to

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<sup>5</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 84.

<sup>6</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 84.

<sup>7</sup> J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 189.

him, and the primary component of Jesus's model was teaching the kingdom of God.

English affirms this truth about Jesus:

The Gospels show that the content of Jesus' teaching was primarily the gospel of the kingdom. He never strayed from the message of the kingdom. He approached it from different angles; he used parables, stories, and imagery familiar to his audience, but the scope of what he taught never changed. The Gospels depict him ministering to crowds, to large groups of followers, to the twelve disciples, and to three disciples. He does not neglect the few for the crowd, and he does not neglect the crowd for the few.<sup>8</sup>

In the same way, teaching the Bible today can produce transformation resulting in a deeper relationship between a disciple and his discipler. Further examples of Jesus engaging people in their contexts with the message of the gospel include his summary of the Old Testament law in two commandments: to love God and love people. He explained the law in Matthew 22:34–40 when a member of the Pharisees asked him to identify the greatest commandment. Their intent in asking this question was to justify their knowledge of the Scriptures. Jesus's response was different from the answer they expected him to give. Jesus also engaged the Samaritan woman in her own culture and context with the reality of the kingdom of God (John 4:5–25). He began by responding to her concerns about worship; he then brought the gospel into their conversation. Engaging people where they are in their knowledge about God and leading them to where they are supposed to be is effective discipleship.

Jesus adopted an on-the-job training model for his twelve disciples. LeRoy Eimes says Jesus trained the twelve “out where the battle raged. Occasionally he would take his men aside for some special times together, but his training was mostly on the job.”<sup>9</sup> Disciple-making is at its best when disciples can put their training into action just like Jesus trained the twelve. A disciple should be able to apply his teachings to daily activities. This would help to reconcile spiritual education with real-life circumstances.

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<sup>8</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 189–90.

<sup>9</sup> LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 37.

Jesus's on-the-job training method contrasted with the models of the Pharisees (Matt 4:23–25). Wilkins expounds on the Pharisaic model: “All through the Gospels the Pharisees are concerned with fidelity to the Scripture, the traditions, and the unblemished practiced of both. Therefore, it would be expected that their disciples were students of the Law and tradition and were practitioners of legalistic adherence to both.”<sup>10</sup> Jesus's teaching was about the kingdom of God and its influence on humanity. Jesus's teaching on Sabbath in Mark 2:23–28 illustrated the meaning and purpose of the Sabbath. He answered the question about his disciples breaking Sabbath laws. Instead of practicing human traditions, Jesus taught his disciples to obey the Sabbath and to be aware of situations on the Sabbath which may need their attention. This was in contrast to the Pharisaical teaching about the Sabbath.

According to Wilkins, the Pharisaical model also differed in that “each group had their scribes or official interpreters. A disciple, by contrast, was a person outside of the official party and was most likely in training to become an official member.”<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Jesus's model considered a disciple a bona fide member of the kingdom of God.

John the Baptist's model of the teacher-disciple relationship is an example of preparing disciples for the coming Messiah. John's focus helped some of his disciples follow Jesus as the Christ. After hearing John's teaching, they realized that Jesus was the Messiah, and some of them became Jesus's disciples and consistently followed him during his earthly ministry (John 1:35–42). After Jesus's death and resurrection, these former disciples of John remained part of the eleven disciples and others who were filled with the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit helped them spread the gospel with boldness and courage.

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<sup>10</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 85.

<sup>11</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 85.

Furthermore, Luke writes in Acts 4:13, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” The Jewish rulers did not expect Peter and John to have the confidence to address them when they confronted them about following Jesus. The apostles did not have formal rabbinical training, which may have led the rulers to believe they would not have the courage to challenge the Jewish rulers. However, Peter and John’s responses before the council reveal the type of training they received from Jesus. They were not arrogant but maintained their loyalty to God. Their fear of God put their situation in perspective and informed their response. The disciples were trained by Jesus to speak against evils through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught his disciples and sent them out in pairs to go and teach (Luke 10:1). Moving in pairs helped them support and motivate one another. This practice can be adopted today by having two mature disciplers teach a small group. The church in Antioch also used this model as they prayed for Paul and Barnabas to be sent on a mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1–3). Paul traveled with others on his missionary journeys, and their relationships lasted until Paul’s death. He maintained the same standard with churches and wrote epistles to encourage and guide them.

Paul trained people whom he expected to train others about the kingdom of God. Paul made disciples, which has been the historical practice of the church as well as the practice of modern-day Christians. This theoretical argument was established through biblical evidence as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and Paul’s Epistles. In theory, both Jesus and Paul taught the Scriptures and led people to God by developing relationships with them.

### **Practical Issues**

While both Jesus and Paul sometimes preached to large crowds, each relied on the long-term effects of their teachings within small groups and interpersonal

relationships. This method is seen in Jesus training the twelve disciples and others. Paul also trained many disciples and individuals, including Timothy, Titus, Aquila, and Priscilla. Paul's model helped develop groups into churches and enabled him to select leaders among them, including Timothy. Jesus and Paul exhibited similarities by encouraging their followers to spread what they were taught and to multiply disciples.

Jesus taught his disciples concerning the kingdom of God and its influence on earth. Following Jesus as a disciple, according to Wilkins, could be both physical and metaphorical. Wilkins writes, "Some disciples physically follow Jesus around as disciples in his earthly ministry (e.g., the twelve), while other disciples followed Jesus only in a figurative sense (e.g., Joseph of Arimathea, John 19:38)."<sup>12</sup> Jesus's training of the twelve disciples provides a model for training small groups and individuals in the church. Jesus's model of disciple-making is deep discipleship training, and it included calling ordinary men with different backgrounds, vocations, and spiritual development. Some of them were disciples of John the Baptist but became Jesus's disciples and family. English avers, "Deep discipleship is about giving people more Bible, not less; more theology, not less; more spiritual discipline, not less; more gospel, not less; more Christ, not less."<sup>13</sup> This model was effective and can be duplicated in its simplicity and effectiveness. Jesus's model creates a legacy for churches and Christian groups to follow today.

Jesus's disciples developed at their own pace because Jesus did not place unnecessary demands on them. Instead, he allowed for their organic development and corrected them when necessary. The vision became real to his disciples after his ascension. The track record of Jesus's model can be traced back through the centuries because it produced results. Robert E. Coleman affirms, "It all started by Jesus calling a

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<sup>12</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 125.

<sup>13</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 8.

few men to follow him.”<sup>14</sup> These men had no track record of spiritual prominence before following Jesus as their Lord. They obeyed simply by following their master, whose life was simple and stood in contradiction to the religious leaders of his time. The disciples were following Jesus’s model and were changing people’s lives through the gospel by discipling them. It was possible for Jesus’s disciples to multiply disciples because Jesus’s model was effective and simple to practice and apply. Hull posits, “Jesus’ primary method of changing the disciples from fishers of fish to fishers of men was to expose them again and again to ministry opportunities that he initiated and modeled for them. It is a serious mistake to send a boy out to do a man’s job. It is just as problematic to send an untrained convert out to do a trained disciple’s task.”<sup>15</sup>

Jesus engaged in discipleship and equipped men and women to face the reality of following him. His disciples were struggling with the content of his teaching until the time of his ascension. They asked questions about the restoration of the earthly kingdom until they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5–8; 2:1–4). The disciples were expecting a military messianic movement through Jesus. Meanwhile, God was reconciling humanity to himself through Jesus by making disciples of different ethnicities, tribes, and tongues. Although he trained them so they would be able to reach those around them for the kingdom of God, their expectations were for the restoration of the nation of Israel. Instead, Jesus commissioned them to make disciples of all nations. They would be responsible for the continuation of his ministry after he ascended to heaven and for the disciple-making process among the Jews and Gentiles.

The principle of making disciples through Jesus’s model is to disciple a small group or one person like the Samaritan woman, who will then disciple others. Essentially, the kingdom of God is spread by the idea of “teach one to reach one.”

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<sup>14</sup> Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2006), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Hull, *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker*, 69.



Training disciples was core to Jesus's ministry. He was deliberate in training people who would continue his ministry after his ascension. In achieving this, he called ordinary men who were transformed into committed disciples. He called those who had a teachable spirit, and they became like his family.

### **Calling Ordinary Men**

Jesus chose ordinary men and trained them to become fishers of men. These men adopted the method of Jesus by calling ordinary men like them. Andrew called his brother Peter (John 1:41–42), and Philip called Nathanael (John 1:43–51). Jesus called other fishermen (Matt 4:21; Mark 1:19). Apart from these individuals, Jesus chose others who followed him and accepted his teachings. LeRoy Eims writes, “The men whom Jesus chose were ordinary people: fishermen, tax collectors, and others like them. When it came to time to choose those whom He would train, He spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12–13).”<sup>16</sup> This reveals the importance of prayer in making disciples. Jesus prayed throughout the night before choosing and beginning to train the twelve. Coleman says, “There is no evidence of haste in the selection of these disciples, just determination.”<sup>17</sup> Jesus was deliberate in choosing those he would train.

Those whom Jesus chose did have knowledge of the Old Testament but were not trained in rabbinical schools. Their theological understanding was developed by their understanding of who Jesus was and the parables he taught. Jesus explained his mission to them, but the Synoptic Gospels reveal how the disciples struggled with his teachings. He influenced their lives toward unity during his training, which is how Matthew the tax collector could train alongside Simon the zealot. After Jesus's ascension, the disciples remained unified while turning their world upside down with the gospel through making disciples (Acts 5:28). His influence upon their lives and ministry was immediately

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<sup>16</sup> Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 19.

visible; religious leaders in Jerusalem could detect it when the disciples started their ministries.

Describing how Jesus called the disciples, Coleman observes, “The particulars surrounding the call of other disciples are not recorded in the Gospels, but it is believed that they all occurred in the first year of the Lord’s ministry.”<sup>18</sup> For instance, Judas Iscariot’s call is not recorded, although he was trained with the others and sent out on missions. This shows that the Synoptic Gospels do not take the time to explain the qualifications of those whom Jesus called. However, what is clear is that these disciples were ordinary men, so much so that religious leaders acknowledged them as unschooled men who had been with Jesus Christ.

These ordinary men devoted their lives to Jesus’s teachings and could present the gospel to people after his ascension. They left everything they had to answer the call (Luke 9:23–24). Philip Graham Ryken writes, “Jesus never made it sound like following him would be easy. On the contrary, He told people that unless they were willing to give up everything, they could not be his disciples at all.”<sup>19</sup> Jesus revealed the cost of being his disciples to those who were following him. Those who would be his disciples must consider the cost of following Jesus. It cost the twelve disciples their total being to be used by God. Commitment is the bedrock of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. It involves being able to give up everything about oneself and surrender to the cause of the gospel.

This principle set by Jesus Christ reveals that making disciples today should be deliberate. It should start with prayer for those who would be disciples and requires commitment to Jesus’s teachings, as modeled by his disciples. It should be clear to disciples and disciplers today that this is a continuous process until Christ comes. It means that disciples today must also dedicate their lives to becoming like Jesus and to

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<sup>18</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *City on a Hill: Reclaiming the Biblical Pattern for the Church in the 21st Century* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 111–12.

training people to do likewise. Churches should make discipleship training a continuous exercise “by giving people more Bible, not less; more theology, not less; more spiritual disciplines, not less; more gospel, not less; more Christ, not less.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Disciples Are Committed People**

The early disciples committed themselves to the teachings of Jesus and followed him for three years. They “were impulsive, temperamental, easily offended, and had all their prejudices of their environment,”<sup>21</sup> yet Jesus did not reject them. They committed their lives to following Jesus and his teachings, inviting others to him, and asking questions about things that were unclear to them. Jesus kept them around him and explained all his parables to them. Coleman writes, “Jesus saw in these simple men the potential of leadership for the kingdom. They were indeed ‘unlearned and ignorant’ according to the world’s standard (Acts 4:13), but they were teachable.”<sup>22</sup> Their teachable attitude made it possible for them to be committed to Jesus. One’s commitment as a disciple will improve his learning and application of his studies.

The disciples left all they had and followed Jesus. Such a commitment helped them have an undivided loyalty to Jesus. Their levels of commitment can be observed through their interactions with Jesus. The disciples were ready to go the extra mile for Jesus. James and John asked Jesus’s permission to destroy the Samaritans who rejected Jesus. However, Jesus rebuked them for such a request (Luke 9:51–56). Jesus demonstrated that the essence of his coming was to save humanity. In the disciples’ commitment to Jesus, their focus should have been on the salvation and transformation of the world. There were cultural prejudices between Jesus’s Jewish disciples and the

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<sup>20</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 21.

Samaritans, which led to their request to destroy the Samaritan village. But committing one's life to Jesus requires the elimination of racial bias and sentiment.

Commitment is a major issue in Christianity because many Christians move from one church to another. This leaves many churches with empty pews, and many churches eventually close their doors. The majority of church members are merely attendees, not committed to being disciplined or discipling others. It is necessary to train people to be committed to Jesus's teachings rather than committed to tradition, which results in empty pews. This training needs to emphasize biblical theology, doctrinal beliefs, and practices. English reiterates the importance of Christian education:

The tragic irony of the demise of Christian education is that it is happening at precisely the wrong time. Study after study shows that Christians do not know their Bible, the basics of the faith, or how to practice spiritual discipline. We are basically illiterate when it comes to the Christian faith, yet we are adopting philosophies of ministry that de-emphasize the importance of learning for the Christian life. For some reason, we have grown skeptical of learning and education in the church. This is unfortunate, given the overwhelming evidence that what is lacking in our discipleship is basic biblical and theological literacy.<sup>23</sup>

The model of Jesus can also be applied today by clearly teaching truth from Scripture. The Bible should be explained to disciples as the authority in God's kingdom. Regular reading and studying of the Bible are necessary for commitment to take root in a disciple. A lack of reading and studying the Bible could lead to hypocrisy. Jesus confronted the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, which for them was a ministry philosophy and practice that did not produce godly disciples. Avoiding hypocrisy can be achieved by training church members to be disciples and to be courageous to implement their training in small group exercises and with their immediate families and coworkers.

The context and culture today are not like how they were during Jesus's day. However, the situation remains the same because all humanity is sinful in nature. Modes of communication have changed considerably with the internet and social media. With

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<sup>23</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 85–86.

these modern outlets, it is possible to disciple people both in one's immediate environment and across the world. Even in countries where Christianity is restricted through social media and the internet, many unreached people groups are now being reached (e.g., Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Mali, South Sudan, and Ethiopia). The opportunity to make disciples in this generation is higher than in the period of Jesus's disciples because of technology. In her commitment to make disciples, today's church must exhort each member to maintain resolve in discipling others.

Jesus's model can be duplicated in churches, resulting in the multiplication of church members and disciples. Disciple-making will be effective when a disciple is committed to the teacher and his teachings. Obeying the teachings of Jesus as his disciples did will help in spiritual maturity. Eims writes, "They were in the ministry with him. John looked back with awe and wonder at what he had experienced."<sup>24</sup> These disciples were committed to him and were able to learn from him all that Jesus was ready to teach them. They were able to replicate this level of commitment in others in their ministries. An emphasis on commitment within the church today will enhance meaningful participation in discipleship and ministry. Disciple-making requires commitment and diligence for sustainable growth within the church.

### **The Disciples Had a Teachable Spirit**

The disciples of Jesus were teachable and could promote their teachings with ordinary people, gathering crowds to start churches anywhere they found themselves. Church planting was possible because their teachings were not complicated but simple and clear enough to attract people to their group. The church over the millennia has survived and sustained its message through interpersonal training. Spiros Zodhiates supports this: "Jesus had disciples in the sense that they believed and made his teaching

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<sup>24</sup> Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 37.

the basis of their conduct (Matt 5:1; 9:19; 14:22; Luke 14:26, 27, 33).”<sup>25</sup> Accepting Jesus’s teaching and making it a lifestyle led the disciples to teach others all they learned from Jesus, their Lord and Master. They were able to reproduce disciples when they were persecuted in Jerusalem and scattered into Gentile territories. Their teachable spirits helped them defend their faith and pass it on to others. Christians should not keep what they are learning to themselves or only in the church. The transformation in them that comes through the Holy Spirit must be witnessed by unbelievers for discipleship training to be effective.

### **Practical Aspects of Paul’s Model**

Paul’s discipleship model was patterned after Jesus Christ’s. After his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and his retreat into Arabia, Paul visited other apostles and went about to teach and preach (Gal 1:17–18; 2:1–2). Paul’s model of making disciples revolved around individuals and small groups. His strategy usually resulted in the multiplication of disciples.

Paul constantly moved around to visit places where he had trained people. He concentrated his efforts on the groups under his leadership until they grew and developed. Eims writes, “Paul became burdened for these people and said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are’ (Acts 15:36).”<sup>26</sup> However, he was also interested in other groups that were not started by him, like the Roman church (Rom 1:8–13).

Paul focused on making disciples and would not allow any situation to distract from his purpose. Paul was deliberate in his obedience to the command of Jesus to make disciples of every nation, tribe, and tongue. In his obedience, Paul’s teaching transformed

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<sup>25</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: For a Deeper Understanding of the Word, New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1993), 936.

<sup>26</sup> Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 52.

many lives and churches. He was able to write many epistles to churches (e.g., Rome, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth) and individuals (e.g., Timothy, Titus, and Philemon). Paul’s model of training focused on developing relationships and training people wherever he met them.

### **Developing Relationships**

Paul developed relationships with individuals and churches in the towns he visited during his missionary journeys. He was deliberate in relationship development, and this helped him maintain contact with those who were his disciples. Eims writes, “He returned to the very places where the hostility had been the greatest ‘strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith’ (Acts 14:22).”<sup>27</sup>

Paul’s relationship with others compelled his disciples to report issues within their groups or churches to him. Some of these issues occasioned part of his theological expositions to the church in Corinth. The Pauline Epistles have transformed individuals and churches over many centuries. Paul developed his disciples by teaching about the cost of following Jesus Christ. He realized the fallibilities of these churches and corrected them when necessary. He expounded theological issues from the Old Testament and related them to their situations. On developing relationships with disciples, Wilkins writes,

These mentoring relationships, both in the Old and New Testaments, were “service” oriented. The goal of these mentoring relationships was to prepare individuals to serve God’s people, either within the nation or within the church. Individuals equipped for service through these relationships. When we hear the words “discipleship” and “mentoring,” we often think of personal growth or some such thing. Growth is important, the goal of growth is service.<sup>28</sup>

Paul disciplined individuals to become pastors and deacons in local churches. These types of relationships continue today as Christian churches develop members

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<sup>27</sup> Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 52.

<sup>28</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 68.

toward maturity. For example, the Southern Baptist denomination applied relationship development in their local churches to appoint deacons and to train pastors, Christian educators, and missionaries who serve within the country or serve internationally. Developing relationships between the discipler and the disciples remains the method that produces results within the church, as it has since the beginning.

## **Training**

C. B. Eavey writes that wherever Paul went during his missionary journeys, “he taught in the synagogue, by the riverside, in prison, on Mars Hill, in the school, in the market place, in the theater, in homes, on board ship, on courthouse steps, in public, and in private.”<sup>29</sup> His teachings established from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Christ and maintained that in Jesus, both Jews and non-Jews have access to God. Eavey notes,

He taught Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans, friends, enemies, philosophers, governors, and kings. In some cities he spent days teaching, weeks in others, months and even years in still others. He taught individuals, small groups, and great assemblies. On those occasions when he made public addresses, he saw to it that what he said was instructive in content and in manner of presentation. He devoted the greater part of his ministry to instructing small groups rather than speaking to a crowd.<sup>30</sup>

Paul used whatever space and time were available to train people during his ministry. His encounters with groups or individuals became his training ground for making disciples (Acts 13:16; 15:36–36; 17:2, 22). His method was so effective that the Philippian jailor learned about Jesus in the middle of the night and was saved along with his household (Acts 16:36). Paul spent quality time training individuals like Timothy, Titus, and others who then trained converts. He encouraged Timothy to be careful about the teaching he received from him and commit it into the hands of faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). Paul’s teachings were important enough to prompt Timothy’s continuous study (2 Tim 4:13).

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<sup>29</sup> C. B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), 82–83.

<sup>30</sup> Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 83.



Disciple-making continued in the church centuries after the death of Paul. Through Paul's efforts, "he won people to Christ and brought them to maturity in Him. The process was costly and time consuming."<sup>31</sup> Because of his experience in making disciples, he could devote his life to this process. Making disciples for Paul was a lifetime commitment to investing in others' relationships with Jesus Christ. Likewise, the church can train people to be Christlike and train new believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Brief Survey of Disciple-Making**

Christianity spread after the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus's early followers met in the temple in Jerusalem and in various homes for fellowship. The apostles and those who believed in their message were referred to as followers of the Way. The apostles were dedicated to making disciples and gaining converts among Jews and Gentiles. Eavey writes, "But individual Christians were zealous in their efforts to reach and teach the young whenever and wherever there was opportunity. Thus Christianity spread, not by a system of formal education."<sup>32</sup> Instead, these Christians prepared themselves for "reaching and teaching others naturally and informally, as Jesus Himself had done. As a result, in less than three hundred years from the death of the Apostle John, the whole population of the Roman empire was nominally Christianized."<sup>33</sup> Christianity moved from Jewish territory to Gentile territory through apostles like Paul and Barnabas and the persecuted Christians who dispersed from Jerusalem. Men and women were accepting the Christian faith and would need to be informed about Christian doctrines and beliefs. The idol worshippers who turned to worship God through Jesus Christ needed to be instructed on how to develop a relationship with God. Walter A. Henrichsen affirms,

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<sup>31</sup> Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 53.

<sup>32</sup> Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 85.

<sup>33</sup> Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 85.

During his brief ministry on earth, Jesus had the world on his heart, but he saw the world through the eyes of his men. Prior to his ascension, he gave these men what is commonly referred to as the Great Commission. As recorded in Matthew 28:19, Jesus charged them to take the Gospel through the world by making disciples. Jesus had world vision. He expected his men to have world vision. Jesus expected them to see the world through the disciples that they would produce just as he had seen the world through 12 men he had raised up.<sup>34</sup>

Jesus's disciples obeyed this command and started raising up disciples who continued with his model. Teaching was the disciples' strategy of informing people about the kingdom of God and the Messiah. Many who heard them were convinced and joined their fellowship, and the Lord added to them daily those who were saved (Acts 2:42–47).

### **The Strategy of the Early Church**

The early church adopted the strategy of Jesus Christ and essentially used the following strategies: teaching in the temple and synagogues, house-to-house fellowship, making disciples at every available location, and using available resources to teach people. Luke expounds on the activities of the apostles and the early Christians in the book of Acts. Their passion for obeying the command of Jesus Christ led to an increase in their numbers. This approach of making disciples made it possible for them to spread Christianity faster and to influence communities with their teachings (Acts 5:14, 27–28).

The early church's strategy was simple, without any sophisticated program or curriculum; people joined them because of the results of their obedience to Jesus. Christianity spread through the efforts of apostles and other new believers who taught people about the Messiah. Eavey describes the way in which the early Christians taught the gospel:

The original members of the Christian church were Jews who had no reason to turn from the religious customs of their nation. Thorough instruction in the Scriptures was given in the synagogue schools. The messianic hope was emphasized in Judaism. On this Jewish foundation, the apostles and their successors could build by teaching that the crucified and resurrected Jesus was the Messiah. The development of the organization of the Christian churches was gradual. Jewish forms of training

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<sup>34</sup> Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Making Disciples out of Christians* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1974), 7.

constituted the starting point of that development. These forms sufficed so long as the church was concerned with Jews only. But when its ministry was extended to non-Jewish people who had not received the training Jews enjoyed, change in its system of instruction became necessary.<sup>35</sup>

This change continues also today as we must communicate the same gospel in different cultures and to different ethnic nationalities. As Christianity now reaches Islamic adherents, atheists, Hindus, and other religions, disciplers are necessary. These groups are non-Jews without messianic expectations. The content of Christian teachings will remain the same; however, consideration should be given to each context.

### *Teaching in the Temple and Synagogues*

The twelve apostles used the temple in Jerusalem to teach people about the resurrected Christ (Acts 5:42a). As Jews, they were familiar with the temple and participated in temple worship. The apostles chose to share the gospel at the temple for this reason and because many people came to the temple to practice their Jewish rites, expecting the Messiah to come. However, persecution drove the apostles and the other disciples out of the temple. Justo L. González writes,

The early Christians did not consider themselves followers of a new religion. All their lives they had been Jews and they still were. This was true of Peter and the twelve, of the seven, and of Paul. Their faith was not a denial of Judaism but was rather the conviction that the age had finally arrived. According to Acts, Paul would say that he was persecuted “because of the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20), meaning the coming of the Messiah. The earliest Christians did not reject Judaism but were convinced that their faith was the fulfillment of the Messiah whom the Jews over the ages had been anticipating.<sup>36</sup>

The apostles taught in worship centers where Jews and proselytes usually met for worship. The temple and synagogue were familiar places where people received religious teachings from their leaders.

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<sup>35</sup> Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 84.

<sup>36</sup> Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 27.

### *House to House*

The early church used people's home for disciple-making (Acts 5:42b). People gathered in various homes fellowshiping and teaching one another the apostles' doctrines. The Bible describes the early disciples breaking bread from house to house (Acts 2:46). Continued challenges from religious leaders prompted Christians to find places to meet besides the temple. Although the apostles continued to follow temple worship rules and observe all special festivals, the most convenient gathering places for the disciples of Jesus were the homes of the early Christians. This house-to-house situation made accountability and witness of one another's spiritual growth possible. Developing relationships became easier within the group, and they were able to encourage each other during persecution.

### *Making Disciples at Every Available Location*

Jesus taught in various locations during his ministry and disciplined many people. He used the wilderness, synagogues, the temple, the Sea of Galilee, and peoples' homes to teach and make disciples (Mark 2). The early church also used various places for discipleship. Philip was able to train the Ethiopian eunuch and baptize him where he met him after a few hours of conversation. Paul used every opportunity to disciple people and attach them to a congregation where they could develop and grow in their faith. He also used a public court, the Aeropagus, in Athens to reach people and share with them that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 17:16–21). Paul identified with Aquila and Priscilla, discipling them and helping them understand more about Christianity. Throughout history, disciple-making took place in convenient places, not only in the church building.

### **Discipleship Training in Church Today**

Discipleship training in church today has changed from the early church's style of making disciples. Different denominations have different methods of disciple-making

for their church members. However, I will limit this section to the Baptist denomination to which I belong.

The Baptist denomination adheres to Jesus's command to make disciples by teaching members and new believers in biblical doctrines as taught by Jesus. This teaching takes place in Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and home group meetings. Discipleship training in a Baptist church is usually headed by an elder, deacon, volunteer, or education minister/discipleship pastor. The latter individual coordinates the education ministry of the church with the aim of making disciples. Because each Baptist church is autonomous and free to design their curriculum or adopt curriculum from other sources, each church adopts a discipleship method relevant to its location, community, and context.

### **Disciple-Making at EABC**

EABC uses Sunday school and Bible studies for disciple-making, like other Baptist churches. EABC started as a Sunday School class for students until it metamorphosized into a church. When the church plant started, the classes were divided into age groups. Each class was organized to fit different age categories. The leaders related to the class members and gave reports to the pastor. Like any other Baptist church, this situation developed men, women, and children to grow in their faith. EABC has enjoyed this blessing for some time.

Organizing a systematic study of biblical doctrine is a focal point of EABC since making disciples is relevant to church growth and the spiritual development of church members. EABC has a small number of members, but the small size of the church could help in effective training and beneficial assessment. Spiritual maturity and growth remain the work of the Holy Spirit. Members assume that discipleship training is studying a curriculum for a certain number of weeks then graduating from the study. However, making a disciple in the Christian context is a lifelong commitment. Disciple-

making should be a life-long experience like the model of Jesus Christ and Paul. Since it involves growth and maturity in faith, it requires continuous engagement with Bible and a constantly developing relationship with the Holy Spirit.

### **Conclusion**

Making disciples is an imperative for Christians. This task was modeled by Jesus and his apostles as they passed it to new believers. Christianity grows through teaching in biblical doctrines and practices. Following Jesus requires counting the cost and taking up the cross daily to follow him.

Making disciples today will require a deliberate effort to consider the culture and the context. Christians today will have to embrace their experience and accept the challenge of this century and face the cost of making disciples. The Holy Spirit remains the source of power that transforms lives and regenerates new believers. Therefore, making disciples should be the task of all church members today.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to increase knowledge of discipleship and disciple-making through a preaching and teaching series delivered to church members at East Audubon Baptist Church. Jesus commanded his followers to bring more people into God's kingdom. The Great Commission is the Christian's call to evangelize, and further discipleship training is required for the spiritual growth of every new believer.

This project was implemented in eight sessions over a four-week period. Implementing the project included selecting participants, assessing their current level of discipleship knowledge, delivering training on discipleship and disciple-making, and re-assessing the participants after the project.

#### **Project Preparation**

The process of implementation started with a church meeting on August 7, 2022. I organized this meeting to inform members about the project and request their involvement and support during the implementation. A small number of members attended the meeting and had no questions concerning the project. The dates for the project implementation covered the four-week period between August 14, 2022, and September 4, 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath had reduced the number of those attending church worship regularly. Even though all church members were invited to participate, only six members were able to participate from beginning to end: completing the pre-training survey, attending the teaching sessions, and completing the post-training survey. Each participant was a baptized member of EABC who regularly attended

worship services. Prior to giving the participants the pre-training survey, I informed them of the necessity of discipleship training. Most of the participants were enthusiastic about attending training because they had not had the privilege of attending such training.

### **Pre- and Post-Training Survey Development**

To measure the change in participant understanding before and after delivering the discipleship curriculum, I developed the Discipleship Knowledge Practice Survey (DKPS). The purpose of administering this survey before the training was to better understand who had attended discipleship classes or been discipled by someone in the past. The pre-training survey revealed that two participants had attended discipleship classes before; the other participants had received no past discipleship. Those who had never been discipled had no understanding of discipleship and its implications on their lives and the life of the church.

I also administered the DKPS after the conclusion of the preaching and teaching series to determine if the participants' level of understanding had increased. The results of this survey and the analysis of the change in understanding will be covered in chapter 5.

### **Discipleship Curriculum Development**

To develop church members in the areas of evangelism and discipleship, I created a biblical curriculum for the church. This curriculum was designed to be delivered in eight sessions over a four-week period: four Sunday sermons and four Wednesday night Bible studies. To demonstrate the importance of discipleship, I decided to use the story of John the Baptist as told in the Gospel of John for the first three weeks of training. I used the Great Commission from the Gospel of Matthew for the fourth week of training.



When writing the curriculum, I focused on how the biblical discipleship model prepares Christians for godliness and righteousness. John's Gospel showcased how John the Baptist revealed Jesus Christ to his disciples. John the Baptist taught his followers about the coming Messiah. When Jesus visited, John was anxious to introduce Jesus to his own disciples. He encouraged his disciples to visit Jesus, and they stayed with Jesus overnight. Even though we cannot exactly apply John's model of introducing disciples to Jesus Christ in the flesh, we can introduce non-churched people and church members to Jesus through evangelizing the non-churched and discipling the believers. In so doing, we share with others the biblical truth about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and other subjects in the Scriptures.

I wanted the training to reflect and fulfill the biblical imperative that Jesus gave to his disciples before his ascension: the Great Commission. I heavily emphasized the Great Commission as the responsibility of every participant.

### **Discipleship Curriculum Review**

The materials for each week's sermon and Bible study were evaluated by a panel of four qualified reviewers: three pastors and one deacon.<sup>1</sup> Each reviewer evaluated one week of material using a rubric I developed for the project. These reviewers included (1) the pastor of Redemption Hill Baptist Church and church planting strategist for the Louisville Regional Baptist Association, (2) the pastor of Farmdale Baptist Church and adjunct professor of leadership at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, (3) the youth minister at Forest Baptist Church, and (4) the head deacon at East Audubon Baptist Church.

I provided each reviewer with a sermon manuscript for one of the four weeks. The Sunday sermon manuscript was also the basis for the Wednesday night Bible study.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for panel review scores and comments.

The reviewer completed the assessment form, and we then had a phone conversation to clarify any questions. I made adjustments to the curriculum based on the reviewer's comments and recommendations.

### **Project Implementation**

The following sections outline the presentation of the discipleship training in each week of the project implementation.

#### **First Week**

In our first meeting, project participants returned the Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey. As mentioned, I noted that most participants had not participated in prior discipleship training and had not been disciplined by anyone in the past. The survey also revealed an insufficient level of awareness of discipleship and how to become a discipler.<sup>2</sup>

The focus of the first sermon was explaining what a disciple is; to do this, I used John the Baptist as a model. This sermon was an introduction to the rest of the series. It did not contain everything a disciple should know. Rather, it provided basic knowledge about discipleship and disciple-making and prepared participants for the upcoming training and the possibility of organizing future discipleship training for church members.

The panel member that reviewed this sermon commented that the material used was true to the biblical text and theologically sound. His comments focused on connecting what John the Baptist did (e.g., he shared with his disciples about Jesus, and two of his disciples became Jesus's disciples). I adjusted my sermon material to include his suggestions before preaching the sermon.

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<sup>2</sup> See appendices 2 and 3.

## **Second Week**

In the second week's sermon, I described the discipleship training model of John the Baptist as found in the apostle John's Gospel. I presented the details of John the Baptist's discussion with his disciples about Jesus. John the Baptist revealed Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. He clarified his standing in relation to Jesus. Many people who followed John the Baptist or listened to his teaching thought that he was the Messiah. John the Baptist debunked this and said the Messiah was coming. In the Wednesday night Bible study, the training participants studied this further, learning how John the Baptist said that Jesus was the Lamb of God. They studied how this name, Lamb of God, related to Jesus's atoning sacrifice on the cross.

The reviewer for this week's sermon was the pastor of Farmdale Baptist Church. He wrote, "I would like to see a clearer thesis statement given at the beginning that drives the whole lesson." I adjusted my sermon to ensure that the thesis was very clear before I shared the message.

## **Third Week**

The third sermon reviewed the mentoring model of John the Baptist, presenting it as a case study. The apostle John, writer of the fourth Gospel, did not provide details on how John the Baptist mentored his disciples. However, Matthew wrote about John the Baptist's lifestyle (Matt 3:4). Luke also records that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray like John the Baptist taught his disciples (Luke 11:1). John the Baptist mentored his disciples and maintained a strict religious lifestyle. The reviewer of this week's teaching material was the youth minister at Forest Baptist Church. He commented, "The material is clear and lays out the basics for one to mentor another believer." He said that mentoring new believers is a task for mature believers. Again, I included this feedback in my training material before preaching the third week's sermon.

## **Fourth Week**

The fourth sermon was centered on the Great Commission, which was given by Jesus Christ to the disciples who met with him on a mount in Galilee. Jesus gave this deliberate order to his disciples to make new disciples and baptize and teach them to obey everything he had taught them. He promised to be with them till the end of the age (Matt 28:18–20). Jesus knew his disciples would continue the ministry after his ascension. This Bible study focused on the necessity of obeying the Great Commission as an imperative for building the kingdom of God on earth. The disciples continued to spread the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Repentance and conversion took place, then baptism and further teaching (discipleship) followed. The panel member that reviewed this week's content considered it satisfactory.

## **Post-implementation Activities**

On September 21, 2022, approximately two weeks after concluding the preaching and teaching series, I conducted another meeting in which I re-assessed the participants' level of understanding of discipleship and disciple-making in the church. I again administered the DKPS to measure the difference in understanding since the beginning of the training. The results of this re-assessment will be covered in more detail in chapter 5; however, the overall results indicated a higher level of awareness among those who received training. There were several other qualitative changes as a result of the training.

First, participant responses showed a readiness and desire to continue with discipleship training.<sup>3</sup> One participant asked whether this training would continue because of her appetite to know more about Jesus Christ. I responded yes to this question; my intention for this training was to set up a program for delivering this discipleship

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<sup>3</sup> This section is a summary of the meeting with participants; however, notes of the meeting are not available.

training to the entire body of EABC. After concluding the training, I scheduled a future training; however, this future training will be set up for different levels. I arrived at this decision based on interactions with individual participants and in the second meeting with all participants. EABC members have a diverse background; there are individuals from Catholic, Pentecostal, and Christian backgrounds. I would like for the first level of training to be general training and the second level of training to be for leaders and those who might be interested in ministry.

The post-training survey results demonstrated that the training also improved the participants' desire to share the gospel with their friends and co-workers. Some participants noted an increase in their ability to freely discuss the gospel as it became a greater part of their lifestyle. The next goal for the entire church is to increase awareness of the need for discipleship, as we recognize that knowledge results in freedom because it delivers us from ignorance. John recorded Jesus's testimony to this fact: "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31–32). These statements became a reality as the training participants put this into practice.

In a meeting with all participants after the project, we adopted additional materials for future training. This includes the *Baptist Faith and Message*, which will be used to inform church members about Southern Baptist beliefs and practices.<sup>4</sup> It will also help in their understanding of the major topics discussed in the Bible study series, including God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, salvation, grace, and the church.

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<sup>4</sup> Southern Baptist Convention, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, accessed May 5, 2022, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/>.

## **Conclusion**

Implementing this project had the typical challenges that a discipler should expect from training others. Some participants were enthusiastic; others were skeptical. The most important result of the project implementation was seeing the results produced by a discipleship program at East Audubon Baptist Church. Implementing an ongoing program should help in creating steady growth in the church as evangelism and discipleship are emphasized and encouraged.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

It is the responsibility and privilege of every believer to obey the Great Commission by making disciples and training them toward spiritual maturity. However, the process of discipleship requires consistent practice. Most Christians regularly attend church, and many become members of a church. However, not all will be engaged in evangelism and discipling others. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be transformed daily by the knowledge of Christ. It can seem like a daunting task; most people prefer something that lasts only a few weeks, yet discipleship is a lifelong experience. Growing in faith does not end with baptism. Rick Warren writes, “Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment. You must want to grow, decide to grow, make an effort to grow, and persist in growing.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ taught his twelve disciples and many others for more than three years. Before he ascended to heaven, he encouraged them to grow spiritually and evangelize others. These disciples grew in faith as they relied on the power of the Holy Spirit. They continued to study the Scriptures and teach what they had learned from Jesus. They set an example of becoming mature believers by staying devoted to the teaching of Christ and the reading of Scripture.

This chapter evaluates this project’s purpose and goals, explains its strengths and weaknesses, describes changes I would make, and includes theological and personal reflections gleaned from the completion of this project.

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 179.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a discipleship program for the men and women at East Audubon Baptist Church. As stated in chapter 4, the membership of EABC church was drastically reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the training, I emphasized the importance of introducing people to Christ and encouraging them to attend church. There are several reasons why members were reluctant to return for congregational worship after the pandemic. Some were still struggling with the effects of the government's restrictions during the pandemic. Some were concerned about wearing a face mask, hugging, or shaking hands with others in church. It was important to encourage members to reach out to people and invite them back to church. During this project, deacons also visited church members to encourage them.

As a result of this project, many of those who attended both the preaching and teaching sessions became committed to discipleship. Those who participated in the project training are ready and eager to make disciples and be discipled. This is encouraging and a fulfillment of this project's purpose. As the church members developed a greater understanding of the Great Commission, they realized the necessity of witnessing about Jesus Christ. They understood the example of the early disciples of Christ, who learned (through Jesus's training) to witness to those around them, multiply the believers, and create a strong community (Acts 2:41–47). Their purpose was to glorify God and to invite people into his kingdom; this is the same driving force for EABC members. Of course, some Christians have difficulty submitting themselves to training because following Jesus requires determination and can come at a cost (Matt 16:24). In this generation and shifting culture, it is especially necessary to encourage church members to set aside time in their "busy schedules" to commit to discipleship training.



R. Albert Mohler Jr. describes this culture shift and the challenges it presents to Christians:

How are Christians to think about these new cultural challenges? Some Christians prefer not to think seriously about these issues. This falls far short of an acceptable posture, however. Those who do not think seriously about how Christians should respond to these challenges will find that the dominant culture will simply pull them into its vortex. They will simply fail to live and think as Christians. Others think they can somehow evade the culture. In reality, this is impossible. We may try to remove ourselves and our children from the culture, but the culture will find us. We use language, wear clothing, and engage as consumers in a world of continuous cultural invasion. The culture is a vast network of institutions, laws, customs, and language that is a constant part of our lives, like it or not.<sup>2</sup>

Culture shift is a fact of life, and Christian ideals and practices will always be under attack. Christians will be challenged to live according to Christ's teaching and the Holy Spirit's conviction; this may be a difficult task. However, Christians know that the Bible is a guide for navigating daily human experiences. Christians must interact with the culture, learn how to answer challenging questions, and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The purpose of this project was considered successful with the achievement of four distinct goals. These goals served to help develop, implement, and measure the impact of this ministry research project. The first goal of this project was to assess the current level of discipleship training in a representative sample of church members at EABC. The second goal was to develop a curriculum for training these church members in discipleship and disciple-making. The third goal was to increase the participants' knowledge of discipleship and disciple-making by implementing the curriculum in eight sessions over a four-week period.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Culture Shift: Engaging Current Issues with Timeless Truth* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2008), xii.

## **First Goal**

The first goal of this project was to assess the current level of discipleship training in a representative sample of church members at EABC. Six EABC church members agreed to participate in the project, and each participant completed the Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey. The results of this pre-training assessment revealed that only two of the six participants had received prior discipleship or discipleship training. It also revealed a lack of awareness of the need for discipleship. For example, prior to the project, the mean score of 3.00 (“Disagree Somewhat”) for question 16, “I am discipling another person currently,” revealed that most of the participants did not understand the importance of discipleship and disciple-making. However, question 19, “I am part of the body of Christ,” revealed that the participants loved the church and felt part of the body of believers. This was encouraging because it meant they were more likely to understand training on the importance of disciple-making. The first goal was successfully met when a representative sample of six church members at EABC completed the DKPS.<sup>3</sup>

## **Second Goal**

The second goal of this project was to develop a curriculum for training church members in discipleship and disciple-making. I completed this goal by developing a series of sermons and Wednesday night Bible studies that could be delivered in eight sessions over a four-week period.<sup>4</sup> I asked a qualified panel of evaluators to assess the training materials, and I adjusted my sermons and studies for their feedback. Because EABC members come from a diverse religious background (e.g., historical Baptist, Pentecostal, and Episcopal), it was essential to ground the series in the truth of the Bible. For doctrinal belief and practice, I also referred to the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 7.

### **Third Goal**

The third goal of this project was to increase the participants' knowledge of discipleship and disciple-making by implementing the curriculum in eight sessions over a four-week period. When coordinating the implementation of this training, it was helpful to work with a small group of participants. The small group environment also improved our interaction and encouraged assimilation of the teaching. I used some virtual teaching aids (a computer connected to a television screen) in the training to help in the learning process. I noticed that the level of understanding and assimilation was different from one person to the other. Some asked questions about being a disciple and about the Great Commission. Surprisingly, the phrase "Great Commission" was a new phrase and concept to most of the participants. It revealed that even the regular attendees of EABC are not familiar enough with the processes of evangelism and discipleship. I appreciated the candid responses from each participant, as their answers revealed their stage of spiritual maturity and helped me better understand the culture of EABC.

To demonstrate achievement of this goal, I re-assessed each participant using the same Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey that I administered to the participants prior to project implementation.<sup>5</sup> After the training, the mean score of 4.33 ("Agree Somewhat" to "Agree") for question 16, "I am discipling another person currently," revealed a significant increase in the participants' active discipling. The mean score for question 19, "I am part of the body of Christ," increased from 5.50 to 5.67, with one participant moving from "Agree" to "Strongly Agree." This demonstrates that participants continued to grow in love for the church. This was evident when one of the participants invited a friend to church, and this visitor eventually joined EABC on January 1, 2023. Question 18, "I am excited to make new disciples," showed a similar increase in mean score, from 4.33 ("Agree Somewhat" to "Agree") to 5.33 ("Agree" to

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 4.

“Strongly Agree”). This shows that some of the participants were more excited about disciple-making after the training.

Two other measures showed significant improvement related to Bible study. Question 12, “I have a better understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament,” demonstrated the impact of biblical training on the understanding of the participants. The mean score increased from 3.67 to 5.00 (“Disagree Somewhat” to “Agree”). Likewise, question 21, “I have a hunger to read and study the Bible personally,” showed a positive influence on some of the participants in terms of Bible study. The mean score for this question increased from 4.67 to 5.50 (“Agree” to “Strongly Agree”).

A comparison of the results from the pre- and post-training surveys revealed a positive, statistically significant change ( $t_{(5)} = -2.9065, p = 0.1676$ ) in the participants’ understanding of discipleship and disciple-making.<sup>6</sup> The pre-test mean score of 114.83 versus the post-test score of 124.17 demonstrated an increase of 9.33 in the overall mean score.<sup>7</sup> The preaching and teaching series created a greater level of awareness among church members and demonstrates the need for ongoing training at EABC.

### **Strengths of the Project**

One of the strengths of this project was its focus on training church members to become more like Jesus Christ. The curriculum focused on helping members understand that they can develop a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ through Bible study and practicing personal spiritual disciplines. I reminded them that discipleship should equip church members to practice a Christlike character daily. In turn, this helps us to develop stronger relationships with others who are members of our small group and church.

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix 6.

<sup>7</sup> See appendix 5.

Another strength of this project was its focus on evangelism. I encouraged members to reach out to non-churched acquaintances, friends, and neighbors. Many people still struggle with changes that occurred during the pandemic (e.g., wearing masks and gathering in large numbers), and that has kept them away from attending church. As the training progressed, I learned that members were reaching out to people and inviting them to church. Deacons were also visiting church members and encouraging them to return to church. Some remarkable changes were seen throughout this project. As the Great Commission became clearer to members, the readiness to obey it became stronger.

This project also focused on being in the Bible, especially during our worship time. Before this project, the church had scheduled daily Bible readings, which encouraged and strengthened members. During the sermon series and Wednesday night Bible studies, I asked church members to read the Bible aloud. Most of them do not read the Bible regularly, or they only listen to the Bible when it is read in the worship service. During this series, more people were encouraged to read the Bible aloud, and many more members participated in this activity. This even increased church attendance because friends and family attended our services to listen to their loved ones reading the Bible.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

There were two major weaknesses in this project. Through careful observation, I noticed that some of the participants were involved primarily because they were physically present at the church services, not necessarily because they were interested or invested in the purpose of the project. Future implementations of discipleship training will be affected by the level of commitment involved, the limited number of people that can attend, or the time required to attend training. This situation differs from one person to another. The younger generations may also struggle with faithfulness to their commitment because they are dealing with a culture that attacks and challenges their faith. To address these issues in the future, I aim to implement annual training

opportunities focused on developing all members, especially new believers, in their knowledge of the purpose of the Great Commission. Also, participants will be encouraged to have an accountability partner who will follow up with them to encourage and assist when necessary. Jesus modeled this by pairing his disciples whenever he was sending them on missions, and this helped them to achieve their missions (Luke 10:1). This should help to maintain the morale created at the beginning of the discipleship training.

The second weakness was the difficulty in measuring how each participant was learning during the project implementation. Humans tend toward weakness and weariness; we battle with a sinful nature. We are weary due to physical and spiritual factors like stress, disappointment, and unanswered prayers. Sometimes these result in a lukewarm attitude towards the things of God. In turn, a discipler may also be weary when they do not see the person they are discipling continue to develop spiritually. To address this challenge in the future, I will encourage program leaders to challenge their disciples to be in the Word and seek the help of the One who is able to give strength (Matt 11:28–30).

### **What I Would Do Differently**

Overall, I gained a significant amount of knowledge about discipleship and about our church membership in implementing this ministry research project at East Audubon Baptist Church. If able to do some things differently, I would begin by seeking specific people who are interested in learning about discipleship and disciple-making. As mentioned, membership dropped significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic, so I trained those who were available. This resulted in different levels of commitment to the training, as demonstrated in their pre- and post-training assessments. People who want to gain knowledge have a greater level of interest and commitment. Their performance is greater because they *want* to be present rather than participate out of necessity. They are more

intentional, they assimilate the knowledge more easily, and they have the ability and desire to stay on board with the project for a longer time.

Discipleship training is a spiritual engagement, so the interest of the discipler is as important as the disciple. It is important to select disciplers out of those who are interested in leading and teaching others. They recognize that discipleship does not duplicate a Sunday sermon or Sunday school class but complements it. Selecting the right disciplers will sustain overall program commitment and participation.

I would also increase the amount of training time so that I could cover more material in the training. Becoming a disciple is a continuous process and takes time. Spiritual growth has many stages and components. Ultimately, learning and knowing the truth found in the Word of God will result in actively spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. I would take more time to develop additional preaching and teaching materials from the New Testament that are focused on models of discipleship. I would allow more time for questions and answers to clarify further what was taught. I would make sure to answer individual questions raised during and after the training so that everyone is confident in what they have learned.

Finally, I would encourage even more people to participate in the training for their personal spiritual growth and to increase their engagement in the ministry of the church. During this project, additional people showed a readiness to be trained after hearing the sermon series and Bible study teaching. The more the church membership can be trained, the more it will help the overall discipleship effort at EABC.

### **Theological Reflections**

The name Christian was first used for believers in Antioch because they represented Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26). Jesus described himself as the vine and his disciples as the branches (John 15:4–5). Christians will be found faithful if they abide in

Jesus, focusing on his example and studying his Word. Christians have the benefit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who helps them to emulate Jesus in action and words.

Throughout this project, I have reflected on discipleship as modeled by Jesus Christ. It was not a program to finish but a modeling of the life of Christ. Jesus's disciples followed him and developed a personal relationship with him. Rick Warren writes, "Christlikeness is the result of making Christlike choices and depending on his Spirit to help you fulfill those choices. Once you decide to get serious about becoming like Christ, you must begin to act in new ways."<sup>8</sup> Some Christians today move from one church to another (or leave the church) because they have not been properly disciplined. Some churches do not have discipleship training and so do not create confessional Christians who pursue a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Discipleship training is not a program with a defined end. It is a means to a lifelong knowledge of and devotion to Christ.

The Holy Spirit helps both the discipler and the disciple to remain committed. As training continues, the Spirit helps us to overcome our weaknesses. He helps the disciplers remain humble and ready to teach and the student motivated and ready to learn. The Holy Spirit helps all disciples persevere under temptations. He illuminates the Word of God to the simple and gives understanding (Ps 119:130). The ministry of the early apostles flourished under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This has been the pattern for the spread and growth of Christianity.

### **Personal Reflections**

This project has been both personally helpful and challenging. We live in a time of secular attack against Christian culture, values, and practices. Divisions in Christian organizations due to differences in doctrine and belief sometimes cause others

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<sup>8</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 180.



to reject evangelistic efforts or invitations to church. There does not appear to be regular discipleship in some churches that is reflective of the discipleship of Jesus's followers or the early church. Discipleship training is a foreign concept to many church members, or it is assumed to be a program for church leaders and elders only. Therefore, many adherents of the Christian faith do not embrace discipleship as a lifestyle.

Today's global political climate is chaotic. Humanity witnesses the fulfillment of biblical prophecies about the end time (Matt 24; Rom 8:22). The daily news is usually negative, family structures are being destroyed by government policies, and communities are experiencing increased pain and sorrow. Discipleship can be considered a challenge in this environment; however, Christians must realize that to follow Jesus Christ requires us to carry our cross and follow him daily. The lasting effect of discipleship is our spiritual maturity and close relationship with Jesus Christ and others.

### **Conclusion**

Discipleship is a lifetime commitment. Just as the apostles followed Jesus's model, all Christians should emulate the method that Jesus used to disciple his followers. This will result in multiplying the church, just as it did in the early church (Acts 5:14). Christianity spread beyond Jerusalem because of the power of the gospel. As new believers are added to the church, they must be disciplined, for people who are not disciplined can fall into apostasy. Gregg Allison writes,

That the church is called to disciple those who have embrace Jesus Christ through the gospel is abundantly clear from Scripture. Discipleship is explicitly commanded of the church as it engages in its missional enterprise (Matthew 28:19–20), an imperative that the early church obeyed (Acts 2:42). Given such a lofty aim, it should come as no surprise that discipleship is a lifelong and multipronged intentional process. The church can never be done discipling its members, and it must adapt many resources and avenues in seeking to perform this task.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 441.

If discipleship is neglected, this will result in a community of believers being tossed here and there by winds of doctrines and worldly philosophies. Jesus put this system in place for his church to emulate. The obedient church will be faithful to Jesus's command by reaching out to unbelievers and discipling those who embrace Christianity.

## APPENDIX 1

### DISCIPLE-MAKING CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

The following rubric was used by a panel of evaluators to evaluate the disciple-making curriculum implemented in this project. Each panel member evaluated one week of curriculum. The tables below present the data from each of these evaluations, including any comments from the panel member's form.

**Reviewer:** Pastor of Redemption Hill Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, and church planting strategist for the Louisville Regional Baptist Association

<b>Disciple Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of disciple-making.			X		
The material is biblical and theologically sound.		X			I'm not convinced John the Baptist taught everything in John 1:14–18. I believe John the apostle is writing truths about Jesus.
The material is faithful to personal Christian development of a believer.			X		
The material is clear and lays out the basics for one to mentor another believer.			X		The author is developing a series of lessons that lay out the basics.
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			X		
The lesson contains points of practical application.			X		
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			X		It is sufficient but I think it could be helped by a bit more coverage.
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			X		

**Reviewer:** Pastor of Farmdale Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, and adjunct professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

<b>Disciple Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of disciple-making.				X	It is clearly linked to the issue of disciple making.
The material is biblical and theologically sound.			X		I think it is clearly biblical and sound. However, I would like to see more clarity between the apostles, then pastors, and then the average church member.
The material is faithful to personal Christian development of a believer.				X	It is personalized for the individual believer.
The material is clear and lays out the basics for one to mentor another believer.			X		It does cover a basic topic for discipleship.
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.		X			I would like to see a clearer thesis statement given at the beginning that drives the whole lesson.
The lesson contains points of practical application.				X	The lesson does seek to pursue practical outworkings.
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.		X			The content of the Great Commission cannot be thoroughly covered in a short Bible study. This study covers some aspects, but much more would be needed to cover all that this passage has to unpack.
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			X		

**Reviewer:** Youth Minister at Forest Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky

<b>Disciple Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of disciple-making.			X		
The material is biblical and theologically sound.				X	
The material is faithful to personal Christian development of a believer.				X	
The material is clear and lays out the basics for one to mentor another believer.		X			
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.				X	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			X		
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.		X			
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			X		

**Reviewer:** Head Deacon of East Audubon Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky

<b>Disciple Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of disciple-making.				X	
The material is biblical and theologically sound.				X	
The material is faithful to personal Christian development of a believer.				X	
The material is clear and lays out the basics for one to mentor another believer.				X	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.				X	
The lesson contains points of practical application.				X	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				X	
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.				X	

## APPENDIX 2

### DISCIPLESHIP KNOWLEDGE PRACTICE SURVEY

The following instrument is the Discipleship Knowledge Practice Survey (DKPS). The purpose of this instrument was to assess each participant's level of knowledge concerning discipleship and disciple-making. This assessment was administered before and after the training in discipleship. The DKPS is divided into three parts: (1) personal information on the participant, (2) the participant's biblical foundation, and (3) the participant's knowledge of disciple-making practice. Parts 2 and 3 are measured on a six-point Likert scale and form the basis for the project's statistical analysis.



DISCIPLESHIP KNOWLEDGE AND  
PRACTICE SURVEY (DKPS)

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of biblical discipleship and the practices of disciple making of men and women at EABC. Adeyemi O. Ibikunle is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry 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 identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- I agree to participate I.D. # \_\_\_\_\_  
 I do not agree to participate

**Part 1: Personal Information**

The first section of this questionnaire will obtain some personal information.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

1. Have you ever taken discipleship class before?  
\_\_\_\_ A. Yes  
\_\_\_\_ B. No
2. Are you a minister in this church?  
\_\_\_\_ A. Yes  
\_\_\_\_ B. No
3. Which position do you hold in this church (Sunday School Teacher, Trustee, Usher, Nursery Volunteer, Staff Member, Worship Ministries Member, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_ A. Yes  
\_\_\_\_ B. No

4. When did you give your life to Jesus?  
 A. 0–5  
 B. 6–10  
 C. 11–15  
 D. 16–20  
 E. 21–25  
 F. 26 and over
5. Which age of these is your age?  
 A. 18–24  
 B. 25–34  
 C. 35–44  
 D. 45–54  
 E. 55–64  
 F. 65 and over

**Part 2: Biblical Foundations**

Directions: Answer the questions and statements below using the following options: (1) place a box by multiple-choice answers, and (2) based on the following scale, circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat, AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 6. I can effectively use the Great Commission to explain discipleship to others. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I can use the Scripture to explain discipleship.                              | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I can use several Bible texts to share my faith with others.                  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I can explain salvation to other through discipleship.                        | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I can pray more using biblical principles of prayer.                         | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I can use the Bible to explain God’s purpose for my life.                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I have a better understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament.        | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. I can use the Bible to lead another.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

### Part 3: Disciple-Making Practice

14.	I should be able to disciple someone now.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	I acknowledge the efforts of the person who discipled me.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	I am discipling another person currently.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	I can share my testimony with others now.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	I excited to make new disciples.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	I am part of body of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	I am better informed to serve as a worker/officer in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21.	I have hunger to read and study the Bible personally.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA)
22.	I create a personal time for devotion every day.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23.	I understood how to disciple people in any location.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24.	I desire to mentor other believers now.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25.	I pray for lost souls in my quiet time daily.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26.	I have a consistent prayer life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27.	I am aware of opportunity to share my faith every day.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28.	I am conscious about the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29.	I cherish my fellowship with other brethren in Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30.	I am aware that my spiritual growth is important and accountable to other believers in Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

### APPENDIX 3

#### PRE-TRAINING DKPS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Table A1. Pre-training assessment results for questions 6–18

Partic.	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18
1	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	6	4	5	5
3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	2	5	4
7	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	6	4	5	5
8	1	3	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	4	2	4	3
9	4	4	5	4	4	4	0	4	2	5	2	2	4
Mean	4.00	4.17	4.67	4.50	5.00	4.67	3.67	4.67	4.33	5.17	3.00	4.33	4.33
Mode	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
Median	4.50	4.00	5.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	4.50
StdDev	1.55	0.75	0.52	0.55	0.63	0.52	1.97	0.52	1.21	0.75	1.10	1.21	0.82

Table A2. Pre-training assessment results for questions 19–30

Partic.	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	SUM
1	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	130
3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	125
4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	117
7	6	4	4	6	2	4	6	6	4	5	6	6	117
8	6	2	4	4	2	2	6	6	5	4	6	4	101
9	5	3	4	5	2	4	5	5	5	6	5	6	99
Mean	5.50	4.17	4.67	5.17	3.50	4.17	5.33	5.33	4.83	5.00	5.50	5.17	114.83
Mode	6	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Median	5.50	4.50	4.50	5.00	3.50	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.50	5.00	
StdDev	0.55	1.47	0.82	0.75	1.64	1.17	0.52	0.52	0.41	0.63	0.55	0.75	

## APPENDIX 4

### POST-TRAINING DKPS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Table A3. Post-training assessment results for questions 6–18

Partic.	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18
1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	6	5
3	6	6	6	5	5	6	5	6	6	6	5	6	6
4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	6	4	5	5
7	4	4	4	4	6	4	5	3	4	6	4	4	6
8	6	6	5	6	5	4	5	5	5	6	5	5	5
9	2	3	5	5	3	4	5	5	4	6	4	4	5
Mean	4.50	4.67	4.83	5.00	4.83	4.67	5.00	4.83	4.67	5.83	4.33	5.00	5.33
Mode	6	6	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	6	4	6	5
Median	4.50	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.50	6.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
StdDev	1.52	1.21	0.75	0.63	0.98	0.82	0.00	0.98	0.82	0.41	0.52	0.89	0.52

Table A4. Post-training assessment results for questions 19–30

Partic.	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	SUM
1	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	5	131
3	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	143
4	5	4	6	6	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	120
7	6	4	6	6	4	5	6	6	5	6	6	6	124
8	6	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	121
9	5	3	4	5	2	3	5	4	5	5	6	4	106
Mean	5.67	4.50	5.50	5.33	4.00	4.50	5.33	5.17	4.83	5.33	5.50	5.00	124.17
Mode	6	4	6	6	4	5	5	5	5	6	6	5	
Median	6.00	4.00	6.00	5.50	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.50	6.00	5.00	
StdDev	0.52	1.22	0.84	0.82	1.10	1.05	0.52	0.75	0.41	0.82	0.84	0.89	

APPENDIX 5

PRE- AND POST-TRAINING MEAN SCORES

Table A5. Pre- and post-training mean scores

No.	Question	Pre-training Mean Score	Post-training Mean Score	Difference
6	I can effectively use the Great Commission to explain discipleship to others.	4.00	4.50	+0.50
7	I can use the Scripture to explain discipleship.	4.17	4.67	+0.50
8	I can use several Bible texts to share my faith with others.	4.67	4.83	+0.17
9	I can explain salvation to others through discipleship.	4.50	5.00	+0.50
10	I can pray more using biblical principles of prayer.	5.00	4.83	-0.17
11	I can use the Bible to explain God's purpose for my life.	4.67	4.67	0.00
12	I have a better understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament.	3.67	5.00	+1.33
13	I can use the Bible to lead another	4.67	4.83	+0.17
14	I should be able to disciple someone now.	4.33	4.67	+0.33
15	I acknowledge the efforts of the person who disciples me.	5.17	5.83	+.67
16	I am discipling another person currently.	3.00	4.33	+1.33
17	I can share my testimony with others now.	4.33	5.00	+.67
18	I excited to make new disciples.	4.33	5.33	+1.00
19	I am part of body of Christ.	5.50	5.67	+0.17
20	I am better informed to serve as a worker/officer in the church.	4.17	4.50	+0.33

No.	Question	Pre-training Mean Score	Post-training Mean Score	Difference
21	I have hunger to read and study the Bible personally.	4.67	5.50	+0.83
22	I create a personal time for devotion every day.	5.17	5.33	+0.17
23	I understood how to disciple people in any location.	3.50	4.00	+0.50
24	I desire to mentor other believers now.	4.17	4.50	+0.33
25	I pray for lost souls in my quiet time daily.	5.33	5.33	0.00
26	I have a consistent prayer life.	5.33	5.17	-0.17
27	I am aware of opportunity to share my faith every day.	4.83	4.83	0.00
28	I am conscious about the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life.	5.00	5.33	+0.33
29	I cherish my fellowship with other brethren in Christ.	5.50	5.50	0.00
30	I am aware that my spiritual growth is important and accountable to other believers in Christ.	5.17	5.00	-0.17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>114.83</b>	<b>124.17</b>	<b>+9.33</b>

APPENDIX 6  
T-TEST RESULTS

Table A6. Results of *t*-test for dependent samples

<b>T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means</b>		
	<i>Pre-Test Total</i>	<i>Post-Test Total</i>
Mean	114.8333333	124.1666667
Variance	156.9666667	151.7666667
Observations	6	6
Pearson Correlation	0.799724759	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	5	
t stat	-2.906591795	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.016766199	
t Critical one-tail	2.015048373	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.033532398	
t Critical two-tail	2.570581836	



APPENDIX 7  
SERMON SERIES

The following manuscripts were the basis of the sermon series on discipling at East Audubon Baptist Church.

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP FROM GOSPEL OF JOHN  
JOHN 1:29–37 ESV

<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup> And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup> I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

### Introduction

Discipleship training was common before Jesus started his ministry. There were rabbis who trained people in Old Testament laws and Jews traditions. When John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness and was baptizing people at Jordan, he had his own disciples. Because of his ministry some people assume he was the messiah. He declined this claim by telling them about the Messiah and showing Christ to them. John told his disciples that Jesus “is the Lamb of God.” What we are going to do is to consider John and his discipling model, define who is a disciple? We will consider the truths about Jesus that John taught and how his teaching led his disciples to Jesus.

#### Who is a disciple?

Andrew Overman writes, “A disciple is one who understands, teaches, and does what Jesus taught and did.”<sup>1</sup> A Christian by default should fall under this category of definition. Therefore, John reveals the characteristics of the Christ to his disciples. He describes him as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> J. Andrew Overman, “Disciple,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 169.

- The Lamb of God v29. John described Jesus as the sacrificial lamb alluding to Old Testament. Theologically, John the Baptist was reinstating the physical deliverance of Israelites from Egypt and the description of Isaiah. St Helen's Church Bishopsgate writes "the likely answer is that John the Baptist has in mind both the Passover lamb of Exodus 12 and the Servant of Isaiah 53."<sup>2</sup>
- He takes away the sin of the world v29. Jesus's mission was unfolded by John the Baptist as the agent of change. Upon his death on the cross and shedding of his blood, the wrath of God on sin was settle with those who put their faith in him as Lord and Savior.
- The Messiah surpasses John spiritually v30. Jesus is the Son of God incarnate, eternal word with the Father.
- His water baptism was to reveal him to Israel v31. Bishopsgate in his exposition writes, "The divine and the divine sign (v33) enable the Baptist to appreciate just who Jesus is the Son of God."<sup>3</sup>
- The Holy Spirit will descend on him in bodily form v32. Bishopsgate further opined that, "The Spirit has come on Jesus both as Servant and as King, and so He will fulfill all that is anticipated by these Old Testament 'types' as he deals with his people's sin."<sup>4</sup>

### **How to replicate John's model?**

Discipleship training should be organized, efficient, and become the DNA of the church since we have more materials for teaching and training in righteousness and godliness. Our training should not end at baptizing the people but encourage commitment

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<sup>2</sup> St. Helen's Church Bishopsgate, *Read/Mark/Learn John: A Small Group Bible Study* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013), 22.

<sup>3</sup> St. Helen's Church Bishopsgate, *Read/Mark/Learn John*, 32.

<sup>4</sup> St. Helen's Church Bishopsgate, *Read/Mark/Learn John*, 32.

for spiritual growth (Matthew 28:19–20). Each follower of Christ should obey this teaching differently by considering their context, culture, and time. This area of mentoring new believers or new converts should be embraced among matured Christians.

### **Conclusion**

Two of his disciples heard him describing the Christ and became Jesus's disciples after his revelation. John initiated the process of introducing people to Jesus. This truth as revealed by John is one of the major methods of bringing people to Jesus till today. Christians should learn to emulate John by telling their family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers about Jesus Christ. This sermon is an introduction, in our subsequent teachings we shall consider how to model John in proclamation, mentoring, and apply his method to today's reality.

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP FROM GOSPEL OF JOHN  
JOHN 1:14–20 ESV

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) <sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

<sup>19</sup> And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

### **Introduction**

John the Baptist was a teacher sent from God v6. He primarily proclaimed, “the Word which became flesh.” The prophets in the Old Testament prophesied about this messiah but did not see him as John. Today we cannot see Jesus standing before us like John saw him at Bethany near Jordan. However, Christians today have the written word of God as the Bible. Proclaiming the Gospel of grace and truth which Jesus Christ represents primary duties of Christians. In Christianity, proclaiming the Word who is in person of Jesus is mandatory as did by John.

#### **What are some of the proclamations of John the Baptist?**

- Jesus was before him v15. John acknowledged the preexistence of Christ. God manifesting through Jesus as God the Son. This truth was demonstrated through Jesus’ ministry and life.

The writer comments:

- Grace to be saved comes from Jesus Christ v17. Grace to save come through repentance from sin and accepting Jesus Christ as Savior. Bishopsgate writes, “for

the grace and truth that law pointed to has arrived in Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

- Jesus is the truth from God v17. The truth about God became evident through his Son who lived a sinless life among sinful humanity.
- Jesus is only the one that had ever seen God v18. No one has ever seen God face to face and live after the fall of Adam. The Son, who was with the Father, was the one who knew his Father.
- Jesus made God known v18. “God has been fully revealed by the One who is in intimate union with Him. Note the negative. No—one has ever seen God—there is no claim to have seen God face to face in any other religion Exodus 33:19–23. Now he is knowable through the One and only who...has made him known.”
- John the Baptist confessed; I am not the Messiah” v20.

### **How should Disciples proclaim the Gospel?**

John spoke to both small groups (his disciples) and large audience (baptismal candidates) in John 1:37; Matthew 3:5ff. Teaching small groups could be one on one, and small groups within the church. Large group could be teaching the whole church about discipleship and its importance in Christianity. In proclaiming gospel, a disciple is one who had been changed by message about Jesus Christ v15a and who gives testimony to who Jesus is 15b. Also, a disciple-maker allows this message to transform others so they can share this message as well vv19–20.

### **Conclusion**

There are improved ways of communicating the Gospel today than it was during the time of John. John did not allow his limitation to stop him from proclaiming kingdom of God. The commission given by Jesus to his disciples was to move around and proclaim the coming kingdom of God until he returns Matthew 28:19–20.

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<sup>5</sup> St. Helen’s Church Bishopsgate, *Read/Mark/Learn John*, 25.

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP FROM GOSPEL OF JOHN.  
JOHN 1:35–40 ESV

<sup>35</sup> The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup> and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” <sup>39</sup> He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. <sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus<sup>[b]</sup> was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

### Introduction

John mentored his disciples although the writer of John did not write the process of his mentoring. Other gospel writer mentioned how he mentored his disciples about fasting in Matthew 9:14 and prayer in Luke 11:1. John as a well-known teacher mentored people in godliness. His lifestyle was recorded in Matthew 3:4. He had strict religious ethics which his disciples were following for their spiritual growth. Biblical discipleship and mentoring could result into spiritual maturity for Christians. Therefore, Bible does not encourage spiritual lone-rangers but showcase discipler-disciple pattern Hebrews 10:24–25.

#### How John mentor his disciples?

- Through training on location v35. John told his disciples that Jesus is the Lamb on the spot where Jesus met them. Witnessing about Jesus could take place in a location. However, it will be necessary to have a comfortable location for discipleship training.
- Teaching the truth about Jesus v36. John confirmed the prophecy of a fore runner of the Messiah.
- Allowing them to confirm his teachings from Jesus v37. John’s disciples visited

Jesus to have dialogue with him.

- These disciples stayed with the Lamb of God for a day v39. Staying with Jesus physically may not be possible today however, we counter a stay with Jesus in reading Bible and fellowshiping with other Christians.

### **Following John's Model of mentoring**

Matured Christians should be encouraged to disciple and mentor church members. It will be easy for people to backslide because of lack of spiritual mentors. We have Bible as the written word which could guide and inform people about Jesus. Bible contains who is Jesus, what he had done and what is doing now? Bible is a whole library which a Christian could consult like the disciples did and find all they need to know about Jesus. Hence, a matured Christian in the church should build a mentoring relationship with young Christians v38. Likewise, a young Christian who desires to grow deeper in Christ needs to be proactive in submitting to a matured believer for mentoring v39.

### **Conclusion**

These disciples of John did not allow their relationship with John to disturb developing relationship with Jesus Christ. They made efforts to find out from Jesus what their mentor had taught them by visiting him. Reading the Bible and understanding its content will prevent errors and heresies from the body of Christ. Mentoring new Christians will result into more matured believers.



BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP: AN IMPERATIVE FROM JESUS CHRIST  
MATTHEW 28 :16–20 NIV

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Introduction**

Discipleship training is a command from Jesus Christ to his disciples. Matthew’s narratives states what Jesus taught his disciples and others who he encountered physically Matthew 5–7. Jesus instructed his disciples to meet him in Galilee after his resurrection v16. These disciples obeyed his command by showing up to meet their leader although some were struggling to fully comprehend his mission. These disciples acknowledge his lordship and therefore “they worshiped him.” There were divisions among them because Matthew writes in verse 17 that, “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.” Jesus however did not rebuke them but revealed their next task or engagement in ministry. Christians referred to their next engagement as the Great Commission. Mark Denver in “Understanding the Great Commission” writes, “The Bible does not use the words Great Commission, but Christians have long used this phrase to describe the final glorious command that Jesus gave before ascending into heaven.”<sup>6</sup>

The content of Jesus’ discussion with his disciples:

- Jesus told them that he had all authority in heaven and on earth v18a. David Platt in *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, writes, “We have in here the fulfillment of Daniel’s

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1. <sup>6</sup> Mark Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission*, Church Basics (Nashville: B&H, 2016),

prophecy centuries earlier, when the prophet spoke of a son of man (Daniel 7:13—14).”<sup>7</sup>

- This authority was given to him by his Father v18b. This statement of Jesus affirming Daniel’s prophecy reinstates that he came to fulfill the law and the prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus’ authority is derived from his Father.
- Jesus needs to clarify who has the authority on earth because of his encounter with Satan in Matthew 4:9–10. Platt commented on this scenario when he writes, “Jesus chose to live a life of suffering obedience to the Father instead of sinful submission to Satan, and in the end, all authority in heaven and on earth was given to him Matthew 28:18.”<sup>8</sup>
- He gave them these commands to go, make disciples, baptizing, and teach everywhere vv19–20a.
- Matthew dedicates chapters 5–7 to his teaching to his disciples although the rest of his gospel account for further teachings.
- Jesus promised his disciples of his abiding presence always v20b.

### **Three major incidences in this narrative:**

- Disciple and disciple should worship God through Jesus Christ. These disciples worshiped Jesus after resurrection.
- Disciple should embrace those who struggle with doubt like some of Jesus’ disciples. Jesus did not condemn the doubters among those who came to see him.
- Disciple should allow spiritual growth to take place in their disciple. Jesus allowed for spiritual growth to take place in their lives.

### **What should be the process of discipleship training?**

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371. <sup>7</sup> David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: B&H, 2013),

<sup>8</sup> Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 73.

In his book “Deep Discipleship: How the Church can make whole Disciples of Jesus”

J.T. English suggests “A simple sequence of discipleship making looks like this:

1. A discipleship learning space that is for everybody.
2. A discipleship learning space that is for disciple-makers (Leaders).
3. A discipleship learning space that is for disciple-making movements (elders, deacons, and other mature disciples).”<sup>9</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Discipleship training is a life commitment which results in spiritual maturity. It is a process which a local church needs to develop and practice. The first stage in J.T. English will be where most local church stop.<sup>10</sup> However, the body Christ needs continuous training for spiritual growth.

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<sup>9</sup> J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 133–56.

<sup>10</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 133–56.

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM AT EAST AUDUBON BAPTIST CHURCH IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

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The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a discipleship program for the men and women of East Audubon Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Through this project, the participants developed a better understanding of the importance of teaching and training church members to become mature in the Christian faith and to make disciples, which helps in developing spiritually and growing the church. Chapter 1 presents a brief history of the church and the goals for this project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for making disciples of Christ. Chapter 3 delineates the theoretical, practical, and historical issues concerning disciple-making in the church. Chapter 4 expounds on the details of the project implementation. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of and reflection on the results of the project, including the responses of the project participants.

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