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DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR BUILDING
A VIBRANT YOUTH MINISTRY IN EDEN GARDEN
CHRISTIAN CENTER IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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December 2024

APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR BUILDING
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Defense Date: September 17, 2024

To Esther, my best friend and companion in ministry.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
MNTC	MacArthur New Testament Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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PREFACE

This project stems from a deep passion to see the church thrive and grow in Christ's knowledge. The journey has been challenging, but I am immensely grateful to everyone who has supported and encouraged me along the way. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my wife, Esther Gbadebo, for her sacrifices and financial and emotional support throughout this project. Her unwavering support has been invaluable. I also wish to express my gratitude to my children, Emmanuel and Samuel Gbadebo, for their understanding and patience, especially when I missed their table tennis and soccer practices.

I want to acknowledge and thank my editors, Hannah Miller and Alex Duke, for their meticulous attention to detail and invaluable suggestions that enhanced the clarity and coherence of this work. Their expertise has significantly contributed to the quality of this dissertation.

My deepest appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Sam Emadi, for his patience and guidance throughout this research; his insights and constructive feedback have been instrumental in shaping this dissertation. Lastly, I want to thank the staff and members of Forest Park Community Church for their support and understanding throughout this process. Their encouragement has been a source of strength.

Isaac Oluwafemi Gbadebo

December 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was a transformational leader whose ministry on earth was characterized by discipleship. He chose twelve ordinary men and empowered them to achieve extraordinary things. He gave a universal command to every believer in Matthew 28:18 to make disciples of all nations. Making disciples, therefore, is a task the contemporary church must take seriously.

Context

This ministry project will take place in the context of Eden Garden Christian Center (EGCC) in the Shively neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky. EGCC is an independent Pentecostal church. Shively is in the southwest part of downtown Louisville with an approximate population of sixteen thousand. A large percentage of Shively residents are youth. Demographically, the low cost of living in Shively attracts youth and young adults to the area.

EGCC Louisville was established in 2010 by Eden Garden Christian Center Nigeria. The church started with five Nigerian families in 2012 and has grown over the years to over one hundred members. The church moved from its first location on Poplar Level Road to its present location to evangelize to the growing population of youth, especially black Americans. The youth (age 11–18) constitute 45 percent of the church's demographic makeup, many of whom are refugees from Nigeria, Liberia, South Sudan, and Sierra Leone.

The leadership structure of EGCC is made up of a senior pastor and an associate pastor for discipleship and evangelism. The mission statement of the church is,

“Welcoming all and uniting people back to Christ.”¹ Given its location, the growth of the church hinges on its evangelistic efforts to refugees and less privileged. These evangelistic efforts have helped plant another branch of the church in the Philippines. Unfortunately, the growing trend of false doctrines, such as the prosperity gospel and “reductionist evangelism”² are generating controversies in EGCC, especially among the youth.

EGCC has many notable strengths. These strengths include the church’s evangelistic nature, unity among the church pastors, and a dynamic worship and music ministry. However, there are also some visible weaknesses such as inadequate discipleship strategy for the youth, poor relationships between the older and younger demographics, and a lack of focus on spiritual formation for young people.

While EGCC is mission-minded, much of its mission activity is focused on the physical needs of the people at the expense of their spiritual needs. The church is focused on getting more members at the expense of the existing members’ spiritual growth. The faith-healing movement has negatively impacted most of the EGCC youth. The youth only attend prayer meetings because of what they think God will give them. Inadequate discipleship is also responsible for the decline in youth attendance at other church programs such as the midweek Bible study and evening worship service.

Furthermore, teachings emanating from liberal Pentecostal churches and televangelists in America, have worked against the spiritual maturity of the youth of EGCC. These teachings include the prosperity gospel, eternal security—which holds that believers are immune from sin after conversion. These teachings are appealing to EGCC youth and have immensely hindered their spiritual development. The effects of these teachings among the EGCC youth are materialism and disregard for the church’s vision

¹ Isaac Kolade, *History of Eden Garden Louisville*, 2014.

² John MacArthur, *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully*, MacArthur’s Pastors Library (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 152.

of making disciples.

Another weakness of this ministry context results from the generational gap between older church members and the youth. The youth see the older generation (many from Nigeria and other African countries) as being too conservative. These older people uphold the African Christian cultural values, but the youths hold that America is a land of freedom and self-expression. These differences have created a relational rift between younger and older attendees of EGCC.

Rationale

This project seeks to address the doctrinal and evangelistic challenges among the youth at EGCC. While EGCC is actively involved in outreaches and hospital evangelism, the spiritual development of young people has not been a point of focus. Therefore, a project like this is needed to mitigate this challenge.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul admonished Timothy “to entrust faithful men that will be able to teach others.” If discipleship is neglected in the church, especially the discipleship of young people, the church’s spiritual and numerical growth will be impacted negatively. Therefore, strategic discipleship will make the youth ministry of EGCC efficient. The spiritual growth of young people will edify the church, and their participation in church activities will increase.

One of the results of discipleship is evangelism. Christ instructed the apostles to evangelize the world (Act 1:8). When older believers properly disciple young Christians, the young believers are better prepared, more confident, and more motivated to reflect God’s glory among their peers in their various schools and workplaces. The intention of Jesus is for believers to be a shining light to others. Discipleship positively affects the one disciplined and, in turn, affects others in their sphere of influence.

Finally, “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for

reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:1).³ Therefore, the Bible stands as the manual for Christian discipleship. Discipleship is a means of training in righteousness, and those engaging in such training will be undaunted when encountering false teaching. Disciples are open to correction and view it as an opportunity to move toward unity of purpose with other members of the body of Christ.

Purpose

This project aimed to develop a discipleship strategy for building a vibrant youth ministry at Eden Garden Christian Center in Louisville, Kentucky.

Goals

To determine the effectiveness of this project, four goals were considered.

1. Assess the current discipleship practices in EGCC.
2. Develop a four-week (eight sessions) discipleship training curriculum that will equip selected youth.
3. Equip the youth of EGCC to make disciples.
4. Develop a ministry plan to grow the youth of EGCC in doctrinal understanding, evangelistic zeal, and missional focus through Paul-Timothy mentoring relationships.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included pre-project and post-project surveys and a rubric for evaluating the discipleship-training curriculum. The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices by identifying barriers mitigating the current practices of EGCC. This goal was assessed by administering a discipleship practice assessment survey, which was given to twelve youth, seven young adults in the church, and nine adults some of whom are youth leaders or volunteers.⁴ The discipleship

³ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotation will be from the English Standard Version.

⁴ See appendix 1.

survey focused on the effectiveness of current discipleship training and factors affecting the current practices. The questionnaires were completed within one week of the project and responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. This goal was considered successfully met when eight youth, three young adults, and six adults successfully completed the questionnaires, and the questionnaires were analyzed, yielding a clear picture of the current discipleship practices among the EGCC youth.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum. This curriculum covered discipleship issues such as consistently modeling character, creating ministry opportunities in the church, and developing a discipleship plan for spiritual development. This curriculum was measured by an expert panel that utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the teaching series. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip the youth of EGCC to make disciples. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey that measured the youth's scriptural knowledge and motivation to make disciples among their peers in their social circles. Additionally, elders at EGCC observed young people making disciples through personal evangelism and determined their competency level utilizing an evaluation rubric. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. Also, this goal was successfully met when each student scored at a sufficient or above level on the evaluation rubric.

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to grow the youths of EGCC in doctrinal understanding, evangelistic zeal, and missional focus through Paul-Timothy mentoring relationships. This goal was measured by a panel of discipleship experts (three church pastors and a music minister) who utilized a rubric to evaluate the plan's

functionality, communication processes, training elements, provision of discipleship resources, and action steps.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the implementation of this ministry project.

Discipleship. “Discipleship is the ongoing process of growth as a disciple; it means living a fully human life in this world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image.”⁶ In this project, discipleship is a process where the discipler, with the Holy Spirit’s help, influences the disciple to follow the footsteps of Christ. However, discipleship transcends nurturing; rather, it entails empowering the disciples to fulfill the Great Commission mandate of reproducing other disciples.

Evangelism. “Evangelism is announcing that God, creator, and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who the Lord of History, Savior and Liberator.”⁷ In this project, evangelism connotes announcing, proclaiming, and witnessing God’s mission.

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-training surveys depended on the participants’ willingness to be honest about their views and practices concerning personal evangelism. Keeping the confidentiality of the participants mitigated this limitation. Second, the effectiveness of the discipleship curriculum was dependent on the availability of the participants. If the participant was

⁵ See appendix 4.

⁶ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 41.

⁷ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniv. ed., American Society of Mission 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 412.

absent, the curriculum was not effective. A make-up section was conducted for those participants to mitigate this limitation.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project focused on the youth ministry of EGCC and not on the whole congregation. Second, the discipleship curriculum's span was just eight weeks and accommodated the participants' busy schedules.

Conclusion

This project aimed to develop a comprehensive discipleship strategy to equip the youth at EGCC with a strong foundation in their faith. By focusing on their spiritual growth, the project sought to prepare these young individuals to be effective disciples and, in turn, to share their faith with others. Recognizing that all EGCC youth are not Christians, the strategy also included elements of evangelism to reach and engage those who are not yet believers. This approach ensured that the EGCC youth were not only growing in their faith but were also empowered to evangelize and disciple their peers, creating a sustainable and impactful ministry. Chapter 2 of this project will focus on the biblical and theological basis for discipleship. Chapter 3 will focus on the historical and sociological issues in discipleship training. Chapter 4 will detail the project's methodology and description, while chapter 5 will evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of this project.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR DISCIPLESHIP AT EDEN GARDEN CHRISTIAN CENTER IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Introduction

Discipleship is the need of the hour. The church has drifted from its responsibility of grounding and empowering believers through effective discipleship. Discipleship simply refers to Christ's mandate to equip believers through the Holy Spirit for spiritual growth and maturity into the full image of Christ. Therefore, we need to feel a sense of urgency for discipleship among the youth of EGCC.

At creation, God gave man a mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28). God expects man to be fruitful, and to care for his orderly creation. God ordained man to reflect his character to the world in a unique way. Of course, sin distorted God's original design. God, however, did not give up on humanity. The story of the Bible ultimately culminates in how he restored his original intention through his Son Jesus Christ.

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives his disciples a redemptive reiteration of the creation mandate in the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:18–20)

The resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ means to equip believers through the Holy Spirit's help for the church's spiritual maturity. To accomplish this, our churches

need to reclaim the task of discipleship. Five statements about Scripture support this assertion. First, Scripture shows that Christ expects believers to be intentional about discipleship. Second, Scripture demonstrates that the Holy Spirit empowers us for discipleship. Third, Scripture illustrates that discipleship involves mentoring others. Fourth, Scripture presents discipleship as total submission to Christ's will. Fifth, Scripture exemplifies the posture of discipleship. Further exegetical analysis of these passages provides a biblical basis for a better understanding of Christian discipleship.

Christ Expects Believers to be Intentional about Discipleship

The fact that Christ expects believers to disciple one another is supported by his command in Matthew 28:18–20. Through the work of his cross and resurrection, Christ has intervened in the world's affairs to reveal God's redeeming grace to humanity. As a result, Christ is calling the church (EGCC included) into partnership with him for the expansion of his kingdom on earth. Christ could boldly proclaim that he possessed all authority in heaven and on earth because he defeated the sting of sin and death through his suffering, death, and resurrection. This is the bedrock for Jesus's command: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Before this universal command, Christ instructed his disciples to prioritize the lost sheep of Israel, but now he commanded the disciples to "go" and disciple other nations. Though discipleship should begin in Jerusalem, it will move outward from there to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

In light of the Great Commission, a church should cultivate a culture that prioritizes evangelism and discipleship. How does this happen? Through the proclamation of God's Word, prayers, the singing of hymns, and other God-ordained means of grace in the local church.

Craig Ott highlights the church's role in discipleship: "The church is the theater of the gospel, the place where reconciliation achieved by the cross is to be played out in the scenes large and small. The church is the company of players gathered together

to stage scenes of the kingdom of God for the sake of a watching world.”¹ Ott’s metaphor suggests that the church should prioritize nurturing and developing its members to conform to Christ’s image in its assembly. When Christ’s disciples are equipped, they understand their calling to make other disciples in their families, communities, marketplace, and the world.

Christ’s command to “go and make disciples” is still in effect today. Believers must obey the clarion call of their master. The apostles obeyed. They preached the gospel faithfully, and many believers were added to the faith. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that EGCC youth are grounded in their own faith and have a deep understanding of the gospel message. Once they are grounded and deeply rooted, they should be encouraged to emulate the apostles’ commitment to intentional disciple-making.

The Principles of Discipleship: Baptizing and Teaching

Christ not only entrusted his disciples with the task of discipleship. He also clearly states the principles needed to achieve this task. The end goal is clear: make disciples. But Jesus gives other instructions to achieve this Great Commission mandate. In short, Christ’s disciples are told to make disciples by baptizing and teaching all that Christ commanded. The baptism of a new believer means that he or she has publicly confessed the faith. Baptism symbolizes both a new Christian’s identity with the body of Christ, and their submission to the Lordship of Christ.²

Believers should be baptized in the name of the Triune God because the Triune God accomplished the redemption of humanity. In response to God’s call, believers must submit to Christ’s authority and pledge their allegiance to him. The apostles faithfully

¹ Craig Ott, *The Church on Mission: A Biblical Vision for Transformation among All People* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 79.

² R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1987), 537.

carried out baptism as commanded by Christ. Consider the conclusion of Peter’s post-Pentecost sermon: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Cornelius and his household were baptized even after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44–47). The book of Acts in particular and the New Testament in general consistently show that the church of Christ has the responsibility to baptize new converts.

Unfortunately, EGCC has not faithfully carried out Christ’s instruction of baptizing new believers. Baptism of believers transcends denominational or institutional beliefs. It is a biblical command. Therefore, EGCC should prayerfully seek to understand Christ’s intention for his church through expository teaching. Once these principles are seen in the Word, the saints of EGCC will be motivated to obey God’s instruction of baptizing new converts.

But Christ instructed his disciples to do more than merely baptize. They are told to nurture new converts by “teaching them to obey all that He commanded.” In essence, Christ’s teaching ministry should influence the disciples as they train other believers. These believers must, in turn, reproduce other disciples as God builds his church.

Scripture contains what we ought to teach. Before disciples can teach others, they must know the Word for themselves. In other words, a Christian needs to be disciplined before he can easily disciple someone else. The best discipleship happens in the church. God’s church is where God’s truth is upheld, taught, and modeled. Making disciples is like sowing seeds. Growth takes time and requires consistent watering and nurturing. For EGCC, our elders and the parents of our youth must be committed to patiently teaching the Word and humbly modeling obedience to that Word. The Scriptures stress that God’s Word makes the way of the youth pure (Ps 119:9).

The Promise of Christ's Presence

Thankfully, Christ not only instructed his disciples; he also promised to equip and empower them with his divine presence. This promise propelled the disciples as they evangelized the world. Christ abides with his church forever, until his people behold the Lamb that sits upon the throne. As William Hendrickson notes, “The church has nothing to fear because the grace of Christ is sufficient until the close or consummation of the age.”³

The eternal presence of Christ implies that the commission transcends the eleven disciples but extends to believers in perpetuity.⁴ Although Christ is not on earth physically today, he has given his disciples the Holy Spirit who abides in his disciples' hearts. The Holy Spirit activates the minds of disciples with Christ's instructions and teachings (John 14:26).

The redemptive love of the Triune God is revealed throughout the pages of the Scriptures. Since man's fall in the Garden of Eden, God's redemptive plan has been set in motion and is carried out by Father, Son, and Spirit. Since Jesus's ascension, God sent the church to seek out the lost. The church's mission works in two ways. On one hand, the church is a light to the nations that sows the seed of the gospel (centrifugal); on the other hand, it is God and God alone who builds his church and brings the increase (centripetal). God has entrusted and empowered the church with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:11–6:13). The church as Christ's ambassadors should proclaim God's redemptive plan to the world by making disciples of the nations as commanded by Christ.

The Holy Spirit Empowers for Discipleship

Acts 1:6–8 teaches that discipleship occurs in the church according to the

³ William Hendrickson, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 1003.

⁴ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 1073.

guiding and empowering of the Holy Spirit. To effectively fulfill Christ's mandate, both locally and globally, the apostles need divine empowerment. Initially, the apostles were sent to the lost sheep of Israel, but the broader mandate involved reaching all nations. This required a shift in focus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1, the apostles were ecstatic about the “gift of the Father” (Holy Spirit). At first, they thought the Holy Spirit was the gift needed for Israel’s liberation. So, they asked Jesus about the restoration of Israel: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Clearly, the apostles had not fully comprehended Christ’s teaching on servanthood, submission, and perseverance. They were concerned about an earthly kingdom. John Calvin emphasizes this point, writing, “The apostles ask about a kingdom but dream of an earthly kingdom, rolling in wealth, with every luxury, and outward peace. . . . They want victory without a battle, and wages without work. And they set limits to Christ’s kingdom.”⁵ Christ refocuses their understanding when he says “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:7–8). Christ’s response connotes that the Holy Spirit’s empowerment is not for political liberation but for discipleship.

The primary assignment of the church is to make disciples by the proclamation of the gospel. French L. Arrington stresses this when he writes, “The church is not promised political power but power for service—not power to rule but the power to serve.”⁶ Christ’s disciples must understand that their core message is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the fulcrum upon which God’s missional intention rests. Social

⁵ John Calvin, *Acts*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995), 16.

⁶ French L. Arrington, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 10.

injustice, political instability, natural disaster, and sickness will abound in the world until the coming of the Lord. Even as the church seeks to address those issues carefully, we must never minimize the importance of preaching the crucified and risen Christ.

Sound teaching on Christ's post-resurrection mandate should create a sense of urgency for witnessing among EGCC youth. By hearing this teaching and hopefully responding in faith, the youth will understand their identity as God's children and hold on tenaciously to their faith until they behold Christ in his kingdom.

Jesus's earthly ministry demonstrates the Holy Spirit's presence. The Holy Spirit affirmed Christ's identity and mission (Matt 3:17); the Spirit led him through the wilderness (Matt 4:1); the Holy Spirit anointed him for great exploits (Acts 10:38); and the Spirit raised him from the dead (Rom 8:11). Jesus then sent the Holy Spirit to empower the twelve in fulfilling their Great Commission mandate. Then he implored them to wait in Jerusalem until they were empowered for service. They obeyed by tarrying in God's presence until they were "all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1–6). As a result, the apostles preached the gospel with boldness and urgency, and many people were added to the church. That is the story of the book of Acts. The local church began as a global mission. Its success is dependent on the Holy Spirit. Believers can sow the gospel's seed, but only the Holy Spirit brings about a transformational change in men's lives. James Dunn writes,

The impact of the Spirit is, therefore, characteristically one of transformation, of enabling what would be impossible in human strength alone. In this case, it is an enabling to live and speak in such a way that bears witness to the risen Christ. It is only in the strength of this power which comes from on high, that the mission of witness can be carried through.⁷

Consider the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip was a facilitator, not the initiator (Acts 8:26–40). In essence, the Holy Spirit helps Christ's disciples discern where God is working so that they can partner with him. The church is the medium by

⁷ James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 10.

which the Holy Spirit operates. In fulfilling the Great Commission mandate, the church is free to proclaim the gospel through various strategies. But only the Holy Spirit can make the gospel stick. Only he can impress the gospel in unbelievers' hearts and bring about lasting change. Discipleship, church growth, and all other evangelistic endeavors depend on the Holy Spirit working through the church.

In Acts 1:8, the Greek word for “power” is δύναμις (dynamis), which means to have the “potential to function in some way.”⁸ As the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to preach the gospel in their domain and beyond, believers today have been empowered for the advancement of God’s kingdom. Furthermore, Christ’s disciples should witness to the world not only in words but in deeds.⁹ Jesus emphasizes this in his Sermon on the Mount: “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

Many contemporary young people encounter false teachings about the Holy Spirit. Some of them are confused about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. The charismatic movement, famous prosperity gospel preachers, and other false teachings seem attractive or at least normal. Therefore, biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit is essential for edifying the youth of EGCC. The Holy Spirit comes to bring glory to Christ, not man; he is the one who must bring sinners to the saving grace of God (John 3:1–21). The Spirit of truth illuminates man’s heart by applying the Word (both written and spoken).

Discipleship Involves Mentoring Others

An analysis of 2 Timothy 2:1–2 supports discipleship as mentoring others. Paul strategically partnered, trained, discipled, deployed, and influenced believers that the

⁸ Eckhard Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 77.

⁹ William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, rev. ed., Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 13.

Lord brought his way. Paul was a trailblazer. He was passionate about the church's expansion, especially among the Gentiles. He strategically mentored local leaders to oversee the churches he planted. Paul remained faithful to the mandate he received from the Lord at conversion. Christ's instructions constantly resonated in his heart. Even while in prison, he explicitly affirms his conviction. He said, "O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19a).

Timothy is perhaps the most obvious example of Paul's Holy Spirit-led mentoring. With the Holy Spirit's help, he encouraged Timothy to follow in the footsteps of Christ. In sum, spiritual mentoring connotes discipleship. Paul concerned himself with young Timothy's spiritual development. He passionately influenced Timothy to follow God's agenda. Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 2:1–2 summarizes Paul's mentoring strategies. These strategies are interest and relationship, exhortation, and empowerment. Through these strategies, young Timothy was equipped to make other disciples in the local church and beyond.

Interest and Relationship

By "interest," I am simply referring to showing curiosity about another person's life. It begins when the mentor, who, through the Holy Spirit's inner witness, notices the integrity, skills, or other attributes in another.¹⁰ Paul noticed the fervent faith of young Timothy. Timothy, on the other hand, noticed Paul's godly lifestyle and charisma. He wanted to learn under an old soldier of the cross. Of course, Paul was not the first Christian Timothy knew. He was spiritually nurtured by his mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Louis). This maternal influence informed his understanding of the Old Testament writings and his unwavering faith. Paul attested to this: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Louis and your mother

¹⁰ Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 63.

Eunice, and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 Tim 1:5).

There are many lessons worth mentioning from Timothy’s testimony. Perhaps the most vital is that the Christian home should be the first school of discipleship.

Genuine interest is the soil in which any relationship thrives; it is the vehicle that drives the relationship. Paul’s relationship with Timothy culminates in Timothy’s ability to make disciples. Paul refers to Timothy as his spiritual son: “You then my child” (2 Tim 2:1). This mentoring relationship forms the bedrock for Paul to entrust Timothy with the task of discipling other believers. Paul affirmed this intentional relationship in his letter to the Corinthians. He writes, “That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (1 Cor 4:17). Philip Towner stresses that “this relationship, consisting of elements of authority and intimacy, will be the basis for urging Timothy to press on in Paul’s work.”¹¹

On the one hand, Paul entrusted his spiritual son with the gospel. On the other hand, Timothy was loyal to his mentor. Trust and loyalty were the products of their relationship. As one theologian notes, “None of Paul’s disciples had shown greater loyalty to Paul than Timothy (Phil 2:19–24).”¹² This mentor-protégé relationship had a transformational influence on Timothy’s ministry. Spiritual leaders at every level should emulate the Paul-Timothy model by creating an intentional mentoring relationship with their mentees. They should motivate their mentees to follow them as they follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1).

Exhortation

Paul understood the herculean task ahead of young Timothy. To equip Timothy as a leader, he exhorted Timothy about his ministry. Paul pushed Timothy toward

¹¹ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 453.

¹² Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 185.

maturity with the tool of exhortation. For example, he tells Timothy, “Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:1). Paul knows what it is like to experience hardship and persecution. He had suffered a thorn in his flesh, and now he was writing from prison. However, God sustained his faith by reminding him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). In other words, Paul encouraged Timothy to be strengthened in God’s grace because he knew how necessary this was from personal experience. Robert H. Gundry remarks that “to be strengthened” is a present command that implies Timothy must depend on God through the Spirit as his source of power to guard the gospel against misinterpretations.¹³ Gundry’s assertion implies that the grace of God stimulates Christ’s disciples for accurate presentation of the gospel. In other words, the grace of God in Christ is a source of strength or power.¹⁴

In redemption, Christ extends his grace to humanity. Unwavering faith in Christ and devotion to him produce the strength needed to reflect his glory. Paul F. Barackman argues that “grace is both a gift in which we rejoice and an energy by which we are sustained.”¹⁵ Paul understood that this grace-induced strength would keep Timothy from worldly indulgences because he understood the salvific grace of God sustains believers from all forms of ungodliness (Titus 2:11).

To fulfill the Great Commission mandate, believers today should draw strength from the Scriptures by faithfully reading the Bible missionally and messianically. EGCC youths must be admonished that union with the crucified Christ is the source of strength against worldly indulgences and oppression. Also, grace-driven obedience to these admonitions will keep the youth on the path of purity (Ps 119:9). John MacArthur put it

¹³ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on First and Second Timothy, Titus*, Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 87.

¹⁴ Carl Spain, *The Letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus*, Living Word Commentary, vol. 14 (Austin, TX: R. B. Sweet, 1970), 123.

¹⁵ Paul F. Barackman, *The Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, Proclaiming the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), 99.

succinctly,

God's continuing grace in the lives of believers operates in justification and sanctification, in forgiveness and in holiness, and in His grace applied to our service. The same grace that forgives us and makes us holy is the grace that empowers us. Because we belong to Christ, we are continually in the sphere of grace. But to enjoy the sphere of blessing, we must live in the sphere of obedience.¹⁶

Empowerment

The apostle Paul, toward the end of his ministry, had found a successor in his friend Timothy. He understood the necessity of multiplication in his letter to Timothy when he writes, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). He also understood the need for his disciples to be empowered. Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese argue that empowerment is "releasing the mentoree for continued growth through an empowered awareness of intimacy with God, identity as a child of God, and a unique voice for the kingdom responsibility."¹⁷ Paul instructed Timothy to proclaim the Christocentric gospel, which must be the central theme of his ministry. Many witnesses had affirmed the credibility of Paul's gospel (Gal 2:2–10). These witnesses will prevent Timothy from drifting from Paul's original gospel. Gundry argues that "a description of the witnesses as 'many' reinforces the point, which amounts to the warning that Timothy won't be able to get away with subverting Paul's gospel."¹⁸ Thomas Lea affirms that these witnesses include Barnabas, Eunice, Lois, and other significant Christian leaders.¹⁹ Gundry further stresses that Paul was concerned about the integrity of the gospel even as he gave Timothy control in directing the affairs of the community of faith.²⁰

¹⁶ John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 38.

¹⁷ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 59.

¹⁸ Gundry, *Commentary on First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 88.

¹⁹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 202.

²⁰ Gundry, *Commentary on First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 89.

Paul also commanded Timothy to “entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy must replicate the mentoring instructions he received from Paul to reliable men who would reproduce other disciples for the church’s expansion. Paul wanted to preserve the gospel by guarding against heresy. That is why these men must be sincere and devoted to faithfully making disciples. Hans Finzel summarizes Paul’s strategy: “Paul is asking those to whom he delegated the task of spreading the gospel to delegate it down the line to a third and fourth layer of individuals.”²¹

The truths of the gospel are unchanging. However, these truths must be introduced and then applied in new ways in each new generation and in brand-new contexts.²² The core of this work is evangelism—that is, persuading non-believers to turn away from their sins and to place their faith in Christ. But after evangelism and conversion comes discipleship and leadership development. In raising spiritual leaders, the church needs to emulate the Paul-Timothy model of discipleship.

The field is ripe for harvest, but the laborers are few. Jesus’s words to the twelve apply equally today. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of laborers in the contemporary church. This shortage has many causes. But perhaps chief among them is because the church has drifted away from the Christocentric and Pauline model of mentoring. There is no quick fix to the current leadership challenge. We simply need to refocus our commitment to Christ’s command to make disciples. Too many churches are happy with drawing large numbers, while not giving enough concern to whether these individuals are being discipled and growing. Harry Reeder supports this when he writes that “man-centered tactics may draw large numbers, but in fact, it’s an allusion of

²¹ Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007), 128.

²² Philip H. Towner, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, IVP New Testament Commentary 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 170.

growth.”²³ Unfortunately, Reeder is right more than we would like to admit. Therefore, it behooves church leaders, Christian scholars, and other spiritual leaders to make the church a leadership factory and distribution center.²⁴ The church needs more Pauls to mentor and empower more Timothys who will train other leaders.

Unfortunately, most EGCC youths are raised by single parents. Some of their parents still live in Africa. Despite the difficulties, the church’s youth ministry must equip these single parents to disciple their children. The church—from elders to volunteers to church members—should intentionally develop a mentoring relationship with the EGCC youth. Such relationships would bridge the generational gap that mitigates effective discipleship at EGCC. In addition, the youth ministry of EGCC must identify the gifts of the believers and deploy these gifts for the church’s edification and the advancement of God’s kingdom. They should be given responsibilities in the church. Devoted seniors among the youth should be encouraged to mentor the juniors. In sum, the youth must heed Christ’s call of discipleship. They must be equipped for gospel proclamation in the Shively area and beyond. As they do, they must rely on God’s grace through his Spirit. Why? Because it is God who brings the increase. The gospel is a seed that brings fruit into the heart of men according to the work of God’s Spirit.

Discipleship Involves Submission to Christ’s Will

Jesus once told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Anyone willing to follow Jesus must wholly submit to his will. Jesus further states three essential prerequisites for discipleship.

First, a disciple must deny himself. According to Jesus, self-sacrifice and

²³ Harry L. Reeder and Rod Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic: A Biblical Model for Raising Effective Leaders* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 26.

²⁴ Reeder and Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic*, 139.

perseverance are the hallmarks of discipleship. Therefore, anyone willing to enlist as a follower of Christ must sacrifice. Obedience to Christ's instruction must be paramount in the life of a disciple; in short, Christ must take preeminence in their life. Jesus explains what it means to deny oneself in his own life. Mere hours before his death, on the cusp of going to the cross, he prayed to his Father, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Similarly, a disciple must be ready to say, "not my will but your will." Darrell L. Bock offers a helpful summary of discipleship: "Discipleship requires a basic shift of orientation as we align ourselves with God's will through humble renunciation of our agenda."²⁵

Second, Christ tells his people that a disciple "must take up his cross daily." The cross symbolizes pain, suffering, shame, persecution, and death. At the same time, through the cross, Christ achieved the salvation of his people. Therefore, discipleship is a call to die to self and be alive in Christ's righteousness. This righteousness was imputed to his children by virtue of Christ's work and their faith in him. Christ died a painful and shameful death on the cross on behalf of his people, so Christ's disciples have no reason to be ashamed to proclaim the gospel. The disciples understood what it meant for someone to carry his cross. As Leon Morris writes, "When a man from one of their villages took up a cross and went off with a little band of Roman soldiers, he was on a one-way journey. He'd not be back."²⁶ They knew that Jesus was calling them to radical sacrifice. Luke emphasizes that a disciple must carry his cross daily because discipleship is a lifelong commitment. In other words, we would not be back. Bock stresses that "the cross Jesus bore is the cross the church is to bear. Giving oneself on behalf of sinners is

²⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Text*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 397.

²⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 11.

just as integral to the gospel today as it was in the days of old.”²⁷

EGCC youths are grappling with an anti-Christian culture. Their minds are preoccupied with pleasure and convenience; they crave things that make them happy, even at the expense of their beliefs. That is why these youths must be taught the biblical principles of perseverance, suffering, contentment, and selflessness. EGCC youth must see themselves as Christ’s ambassadors who are called to reflect God’s glory among their peers. They should also be assured of Christ’s abiding presence when facing persecution or hatred. Christ will repay the labor of love of his disciples. Jesus himself promises this: “There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29).

The third command by Christ is the simplest: “Follow me.” The call to discipleship is a call to servitude; it is a call to follow in the footprint of the master, not only in words but in action. Grant Osborne highlights that following Christ “flows out of the denial of self and . . . dying to the things of the world.”²⁸ Christ must be Savior and Lord in the disciple’s life. There may be many distractions on the way to following Christ. However, the love of the Master keeps a disciple on track. A disciple should be motivated to follow Christ because he is the way, the truth, and life (John 14:6). The way will be hard because the world is hostile to Christ’s disciples. As Arthur A. Just Jr. puts it, “To follow Jesus means to open oneself to the contempt of the world.”²⁹

To apply this, believers must be taught the importance of self-denial. They must understand that a disciple must forsake all and trust in the saving grace of Christ.

²⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, IVP New Testament Commentary 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 168.

²⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 388.

²⁹ Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1996), 397.

Furthermore, EGCC youth must be taught from the Scriptures that following Christ requires a complete repudiation of what the world has to offer. Instead, we trust and obey the words of the Master. Christ has brought those who believe in him into communion with him as they follow in his footsteps. This communion also means we partake in the suffering of Christ. The Lord Jesus has called his church to make disciples, which is the need of the hour. EGCC youths must imitate Christ as they walk alongside him by becoming fishers of men (Matt 4:19). They must prepare for suffering even though they are empowered for the task of evangelism.

The church on mission is Christ's mouthpiece. Discipleship begins at the cross and culminates in partnering with God in missions. Gundry writes, "Picking up the cross and following Jesus is a figure of speech for willingness to endure social persecution because of open discipleship to him. This willingness defines the self-denial he demands."³⁰ A total detachment from the world is not easy, but Christ will never leave his children; instead, he calls them to himself. Disciples are dead to the world but alive in Christ's righteousness. In essence, the call to discipleship means to eschew the world and its passions while taking on the yoke of Christ. The apostle Paul put it succinctly when he writes, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). With the Holy Spirit's help, these truths must be taught and exemplified to the youth of EGCC for them to understand the Great Commission mandate effectively.

Christ Outlines the Posture of Discipleship

The fifth statement from the Scripture supports discipleship as Christ's mandate for the church is based on Christ's instruction to his disciples. This statement

³⁰ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on Luke*, Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 204.

stresses that discipleship requires total submission to God's will. Jesus says, "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43b–45). This passage vividly shows that the posture of discipleship is servanthood. Servanthood displaces selfishness because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6).

The whole story of redemption depicts the concept of servanthood. Christ's unconditional love toward humanity constrained him to give his life for humanity's deliverance from sin. But as you read the Gospels, the disciples misconstrued servanthood. Hence there was an argument about who is the greatest among them. James and John went the extra mile; they implored Jesus to sit by his side in heaven. At this stage, the disciples were selfishly controlled by inordinate ambition. They had not yet comprehended the teachings of their master on self-denial. Sensing this, Jesus privately instructed the twelve disciples on what servant leadership entails.

Most EGCC members, including youth who are members, are African immigrants. The African culture favors the autocratic style of leadership. Unfortunately, this autocratic style of leadership is evident among the African Christian congregation. Many ministers in Africa abrogate titles such as general overseer, his eminence, and apostle to themselves. Members revere these preachers so much that it is considered a sin to critique them. In these cases, ministers of the gospel are not accountable to their members. That is why Christ's approach to servant leadership must be taught and modeled for EGCC youths. The apostle Paul summarizes the servanthood posture of Christ in redemption, he writes:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. (Phil 2:5–8)

The leadership style of the world is autocratic, self-seeking, dictatorial, and oppressive. But Christ explicitly told his disciples that the secular leadership model is not the case in God's kingdom. John MacArthur lays out the attributes of the secular leadership model when he writes, "The world has always been filled with ambitious, overconfident, competitive self-promoters, who know no limits to their ambition."³¹ Jesus told his disciples that other people's interests ought to take preeminence in God's kingdom because Christ's love motivates us to serve others. R. T. France argues that "Christ reversed the natural expectations of the society. Leadership is characterized by service, by being under the authority of others."³² Put simply, Christ is calling his disciples to self-sacrifice, meekness, and humility. The pathway to greatness in God's kingdom is to be a servant. Therefore, it is imperative that EGCC youth put on a servant's posture and reflect Christ's love as they make disciples of all nations.

Disciples of Christ should influence the world by demonstrating Christ's love through servanthood and humility. Servanthood borne out of Christ-like love attracts the world to Christ because the world desires leaders who exemplify servanthood. James Edwards argues that "the preeminence of service in the kingdom of God grows out of Jesus's teaching on love for one's neighbor, for service is the love made tangible."³³ The world needs servant leaders driven by the interest of others. Christ's disciples must step up and redefine leadership. Again, the only route to greatness, as stressed by Christ, is to be a slave of all. Mark L. Strauss argues that Jesus's statement to be "slave of all" is an "indication of leadership that is radically other-centered, focused on meeting the needs of others rather than controlling others to meet one's ends. The values of the kingdom turn

³¹ John MacArthur, *Mark 9–16*, MNTC, vol. 6 (Chicago: Moody Press, 2015), 108.

³² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 419.

³³ James R. Edward, *The Gospel according to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 326.

the world system upside down.”³⁴ A posture of servanthood will make the gospel more effectively communicated to the lost. Yet again, the apostle Paul put it succinctly:

To the Jews, I became as a Jew, in order to win the Jews; To those under the law, I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law that I might win those outside the law. To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means, I might save some. (1 Cor 9:20)

Paul’s statement implies that servanthood is a vital virtue needed to break the barrier of ethnocentrism in cross-cultural missions. Since EGCC is an African church located in Louisville’s Shively area, it behooves EGCC youths to assume a servant’s posture to make disciples of the nations.

Christ’s incarnation perfectly demonstrates his teaching of servanthood. Christ willfully took on the posture of a servant to lift humanity from his lowly, sinful state. His love for humanity constrained him to give his life for humanity’s deliverance from sin. Jesus was not concerned about vainglory nor men’s applause; he came not to be served but to serve by giving his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). God became man to deliver him from the grip and consequences of sin. Christ did not come to the world in glory. Instead, he came in the form of a servant to take everyone who believes in him to glory. Daniel L. Akin summarizes Christ’s work as a servant leader: “The greatest and best person who ever lived and walked on this earth was a humble servant. He got down low that He might lift others.”³⁵ Christ desires that his disciples should emulate him in this respect. Jesus is telling his disciples to replicate this servanthood principle to the world.

EGCC youth ministry leaders should practically demonstrate Christ’s service through their words, actions, thoughts, character, and habits. Youth ministry leaders

³⁴ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 458.

³⁵ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014), 229.

should constantly adorn themselves with a servant's heart. As one writer explained, the world is "looking for demonstration, not explanation."³⁶ A practical demonstration will have a lasting impression on the youth, and the youth will be inspired to reproduce other servant disciples. Perhaps Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges are correct when they argue that the "next great movement in Christianity will be demonstration."³⁷

Conclusion

Young people everywhere are constantly facing radical cultural ideologies that are counter scriptural. Therefore, the EGCC youth ministry needs to be able to equip them well. For that to happen, the EGCC youth must understand that discipleship means submitting to the will of God. The will of God and not self should be the priority. As their youth leaders model for them the servant-hearted posture of Christ, they will be instructed as to how they should relate with other people around the world. It is our hope that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the youth of EGCC will believe the gospel and their hearts and eventually proclaim the good news through both words and actions.

³⁶ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 69.

³⁷ Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 223.

CHAPTER 3

THE STRATEGIC USE OF CATECHESIS IN CHURCH HISTORY

Throughout church history, discipling has been the cornerstone of the spiritual formation of believers and the expansion of the church. The intentional use of catechesis as a “vital element of discipleship”¹ has played a crucial role by providing structured and systemic instruction. J. I. Packer and Garry Parrett note that “historically, the church’s ministry of grounding new believers in the rudiments of Christianity has been known as Catechesis.”²

This chapter explores the historical application of catechesis by the church, emphasizing its role in discipling and spiritual formation. I will begin by defining the term “catechesis” followed by an examination of its presence in the ministry and teaching of the apostles. Second, I will consider the importance of Augustine’s catechetical instruction in the fourth century. Third, I will consider Martin Luther’s catechetical instruction during the Reformation period. Finally, I will explore the implications of catechesis in contemporary contexts.

¹ J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 24.

² Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 24.

Catechesis

The word *Catechesis* derives from the Greek verb *katecheo* which means to teach or instruct.³ The word *katecheo* also means to resound, repeat, or echo.⁴ Throughout history, God has instructed his people to resound, repeat, or proclaim his loving kindness and righteousness to the world, starting from their homes. In Deuteronomy 6:7, the command to “teach diligently is derived from the Hebrew verb *shaman*, meaning to whet or sharpen, implying teaching in a way that makes a deep impression upon the learner.”⁵ Essentially, God commands Israel to diligently teach their children everything he has commanded them in the Torah, which provides guidance, instruction, and direction for God’s people. The Torah was the curriculum of instruction that parents were expected to use in discipling their children.

In summary, God mandates Israel to catechize their children (next generation). Catechesis would illuminate their path and reveal the mighty acts of Yahweh in history. Therefore, believers are called to make their homes places where the Word of truth is rightly divided. King David in Psalm 78:2–7 emphasizes the necessity of proclaiming God’s sovereignty and loving kindness from generation to generation. He writes,

I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from old, things we have heard and known, things that our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done . . . So, the next generation will know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn will tell their children. Then they will put their trust in God and will not forget his deeds but will keep his commands.

Although oral tradition was primarily used as a form of instruction in the early church, over the years, catechesis has evolved beyond oral tradition due to technological advancements in pedagogy.

³ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 39.

⁴ John A. Westerhoff and Otis Carl Edwards, *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1981), 2.

⁵ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*.

John A. Westerhoff defined catechesis from an intentional and relational standpoint, arguing that it is a “deliberate, systematic and sustained interpersonal helping relationships of acknowledged value, aiding persons and their communities to know God, to live in relationship to God and to act with God in the world.”⁶ To be a catechumen is to be a pilgrim, but the catechists encourage and motivate the catechumen on a pilgrimage journey towards a closer and deeper walk with God. The catechumen through the help of the Holy Spirit then reflects Christ in the church and community.⁷ Catechism goes beyond a doctrinal ritual rather, it involves a personal relationship with Christ, encompassing both Kerygma and Didache. Kerygma focuses on the proclamation of the gospel, highlighting the divine action of God in Jesus Christ. Didache involves illuminating and making sense of our experiences, interpreting, and applying faith, and constituting teaching for the formation of a Christian lifestyle.⁸ Therefore, catechesis is not discipleship in itself; instead, it constitutes an integral part of discipleship. Catechesis as a means provides foundational knowledge required for spiritual formation while discipleship, as the end, seeks transformative change in the life of a believer.

Catechesis in Apostolic Ministry and Teaching

The rapid expansion of the early church was a direct result of the apostle’s obedience and application of Christ’s discipleship principles. The apostles adhered to the methodological approach of their Master; resulting in strengthened faith and daily growth for the churches (Acts 16:5). The Old Testament (OT) serves as the foundational cornerstone for apostolic teaching and discipleship.

The extemporaneous sermon delivered by Peter in Acts was deeply rooted in the OT writings. Peter astutely leveraged his audience’s profound Old Testament

⁶ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 3.

⁷ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 4.

⁸ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 3.

understanding to present a Christological sermon, teaching them from the theological past into the present and then to the eschatological future. The Old Testament, representing the past, provided the bedrock (substructure), while Christ's ministry provided the dynamic superstructure (present) for Peter's teaching.

In essence, Peter taught his audience from the known to the unknown. His exegesis, drawing from the Torah, writings, and the prophets, vividly presents Christ as the epitome of all revelation. Tom Nettles writes, "The entire history of Israel was catechetical preparation for Peter's sermon at Pentecost."⁹ Peter interpreted the Hebrew writings in the light of Christ's redeeming mission. Nettles argues that "Peter's appeal to the attestation of Jesus ministry by miracles, wonders, and signs (Acts 2:22) was consistent with their understanding of God's activity in the pivotal redemptive eras of their history."¹⁰

Peter's instructional model at Pentecost was subsequently employed by the apostles for discipleship and spiritual development throughout the New Testament. Paul, through the Holy Spirit, disciplined Timothy by building on Timothy's catechetical instruction received from his mother and grandmother (1 Tim 1:1–5). Freddy Cardoza writes, "Paul's letters to churches and church leaders are filled with instruction handed down from the Old Testament and early Christian teaching, (Catechesis) encouragement of moral formation and education (exhortation), and instruction for living in light of Christ's coming."¹¹ It is in this context that the New Testament Christians found firm grounding, enabling them to declare their faith boldly. John the beloved attests to this enduring faith, proclaiming, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard,

⁹ Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life*, Calvary Press Baptist Heritage (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1998), 29.

¹⁰ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 29.

¹¹ Freddy Cardoza, ed., *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 54.

which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). These sets of reproductive believers were not swayed by the gnostic teaching of their time they upheld their faith even to the point of death. Nettles succinctly affirms that “the apostles and other teachers in the New Testament worked with several clear, concise, verbally friendly confessional and catechetical devices to establish a foundation for the entire teaching ministry.”¹²

The apostle’s teaching established a strong foundation for the early Christian’s faith and practice, using catechesis to endure doctrinal soundness and spiritual growth. This method of structured instruction, deeply rooted in the Old Testament, was essential for grounding new believers, as exemplified in the ministries of Peter and Paul. The practice of catechesis was inadvertently inherited by the early church fathers in the first and second centuries. The church fathers built on the apostle’s framework, providing guidance and instructional materials to edify and equip the community of faith. Their contributions ensured that the core tenets of faith were systematically passed down, preserving theological integrity and supporting church growth in subsequent eras. As Shawn J. Wilhite notes, “the church fathers serve as a window into theological trajectories and themes that emerged in early Christianity,”¹³ highlighting their role in maintaining the catechetical tradition. This enduring practice underscores the strategic importance of catechesis in discipleship and spiritual formation throughout church history, from early church to contemporary contexts.

St. Augustine Discipleship: Forming Believers through Catechetical Instruction

The post-apostolic era gave rise to bishops in the early church. These bishops, referred to as the church fathers, were responsible for teaching and preaching the gospel

¹² Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Heart*, 36.

¹³ Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 10.

truth passed down by the apostles.¹⁴ The early church fathers contended with many issues during this period, including cultural and religious pluralism that gave rise to Gnosticism, Montanism, and other heretical teachings that attempted to subvert the apostolic teachings. Therefore, to preserve the apostle's teaching, the early fathers established catechumenate schools where children, new converts, and laymen were nurtured to maturity. The catechumens were expected to defend the faith, identify, and guard against heresy, and interpret the Scriptures accurately.¹⁵

St. Augustine who served as the Bishop of Hippo was one of the notable figures during this period, he encouraged the catechesis of new believers. Augustine, famously called the "theologian of grace" emphasized man's depravity. He argues that salvation is found through God's grace and by faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ The autobiography of Augustine, *Confessions*, is a catechetical masterpiece for the church throughout history. It details Augustine's testimony before and after his conversion, asserting that God's love has beckoned on humanity through Christ's propitiation on the cross. Only the grace of God will keep a Christian from worldly desires and sin. Augustine's testimony and openness in *Confessions* had a transformational effect on the catechumens in the early church and beyond. *Confessions* teaches that God can save the vilest person who believes in his saving grace. To make catechesis effective, Augustine emphasized sharing personal testimonies as an effective tool for spiritual formation. Christians should emulate Augustine by intentionally sharing their salvation experience within and outside the church, which helps to build faith and inspire others.

The apostle Paul's approach to sharing his salvation testimony serves as a biblical model that Augustine would have appreciated. Paul boldly proclaimed his

¹⁴ Cardoza, *Christian Education*, 53.

¹⁵ Cardoza, *Christian Education*, 54.

¹⁶ C. B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 85.

testimony before the hostile Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3–22) and before Agrippa and Festus in Caesarea (Acts 26:10–19). His confession was so compelling that Agrippa remarked, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” (Act 26:28). Similarly, Augustine was influenced by the testimonies of Victorinus, (a prominent pagan who came to faith) and Ponticanus (Augustine’s friend who forsook his ambitions to serve God).¹⁷

Augustine’s Narrative Approach in Catechesis

Augustine also highlighted the importance of the narrative approach (*narratio*) as the starting point of catechesis (*procatechesis*).¹⁸ The *narratio* is the process by which stories are coherently used to convey the central idea of the gospel (truth) “from creation to the current age of the church.”¹⁹ *Narratio* is not an end but a means to an end. Therefore, it should be used to simplify and not complicate the communication of the biblical truth, the overarching aim is the gospel of Christ. Augustine stresses that the narration should be presented in a “compelling fashion”²⁰ to satisfy the curiosity of the seekers who might be willing to join the church. An excellent example of this narrative approach is seen in the story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. In Acts 7, Stephen delivers a powerful speech that narrates the history of God’s dealing with Israel, starting from the call of Abraham and leading up to the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus. Stephen’s speech is a comprehensive recounting of God’s redemptive plan, emphasizing key events and figures such as Moses and David. Despite being met with hostility and ultimately being stoned to death, Stephen’s narration conveyed the continuity and

¹⁷ Bryan M. Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 364–66.

¹⁸ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 130.

¹⁹ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 130.

²⁰ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 130.

fulfillment of God's promises, serving as a potent witness to the Gospel truth. Terry Linhart stresses the importance of narration in discipleship he writes, "Narrative is a way of doing God-talk whereby we recount the story of God and invite the listener to become a participant in that story."²¹

In contemporary discipleship, Augustine's narrative approach remains relevant. The church can achieve transformational change by retelling the gospel story in a way that resonates with the lives of the youths and young adults. Utilizing technology, social media, and relatable life experiences can help convey the gospel's message. However, care should be taken to avoid gospel reductionism and ensure that the essential truths of Scripture and the gospel are preserved.

Augustine argues that the four-plot movement (creation, fall, redemption, and restoration) can be used in grounding and equipping believers. Youth should be taught that the Old Testament is rooted in the revelation of God as the creator, sustainer, enabler, restorer, and deliverer. Creation was the evidence of God's goodness.

The creation story, in particular, is seen as an expression of God's love towards humanity. God loved the world even before the foundation of the earth. Man is the uniqueness of God's creation. God was in the business of creation for six days; he intentionally made man in his image to reflect his glory.

In the fall, man's image was distorted and the relationship between man and God was broken, leading to alienation from God. Despite man's limitations in fulfilling God's mandate, God, out of an abundance of love, clothes man's nakedness. Bruce Riley Ashford notes that "God is always speaking two languages at once: both wrath and mercy. In wrath, there is always mercy. And in mercy, there is always wrath. These two languages became audible in the fall and culminated at the cross of Christ."²² God's

²¹ Terry Linhart, ed., *Teaching the Next Generations: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 354.

²² Bruce Riley Ashford, ed., *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 166.

intention to save humanity, despite the fall, remains unchanged. Man ran away from God in the garden, but the compassionate God has always been seeking for man. This is a foreshadowing of God's plan for redemption. In redemption, God sent forth his son to repair man's battered image at the fullness of time. Jesus expressed the image of the invisible God. It was Jesus who was seeking sinners and not vice versa. The apostle Paul stresses this in his letter to the Romans he writes, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5:8). The mission of God culminates in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Biblical narration should be historical, Christocentric, and missiological. The narration approach is expected to whet the youth's appetite, leading them to dig deeper and move from being seekers/inquirers to a catechumen.

Augustine's Theological Virtues

Augustine, in his manual of instruction, argues that the Creed and the Lord's Prayer should be used for the interpretation of the three "theological virtues" (faith, hope, and love) and Christians must be grounded on these virtues.²³ He argued that, on one hand, the exposition of the Creed will train believers about faith while on the other, the Lord's Prayer provides a bedrock for teaching these virtues. He writes, "Faith believes; hope and love pray. Yet without faith nothing else is possible; thus, faith prays too."²⁴ He noted that, although reason is used by God to attract men to himself, faith supersedes when reason fails to understand God's truth.²⁵

Faith according to Augustine, is the cornerstone of Christian belief. He based his argument on two biblical passages: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen," (Heb 11:1) and faith is ignited by hearing God's Word

²³ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion: On Faith, Hope and Love* (Floyd, VA: SMK Books, 2019), 9.

²⁴ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 11.

²⁵ Michael J. Anthony, ed., *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 29.

(Rom 10:17). He asserts that faith is essential for understanding and accepting the truth of the gospel, even when reason is insufficient to grasp the full extent of these truths. Faith enables believers to trust in God's promises, as articulated in the creed.²⁶

Augustine makes a clear distinction between faith and hope. He argues that faith alludes to an event in the past, (Christ's death and resurrection), while hope is oriented towards future promises. He stated that hope is "futuristic" and involves anticipating the fulfillment of God's promises, particularly the second coming of Christ and the ultimate restoration of creation.²⁷ Hope sustains believers through trials and tribulations, encouraging them to look beyond present suffering to the eternal joy that awaits them. In the context of catechesis, instilling a sense of hope is crucial for maintaining the vitality of believers. By grounding catechumens in the hope of the gospel, they are encouraged to persevere in the faith journey. The Lord's Prayer, which petitions for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done, reinforces this forward-looking aspect of Christian hope.

Augustine argues that love is the greatest of all theological virtues. He asserts that love fulfills the law and is the ultimate expression of faith and hope. In his exposition of the Lord's Prayer, Augustine emphasizes that the Lord's Prayer teaches believers to love God and other people, reflecting the dual commandment to love that Jesus highlights in the Gospels (Matt 22:37–40). Augustine summarizes his argument by writing, "Love is not without hope, hope is not without love, and neither hope nor love is without faith."²⁸ Augustine's teachings shaped the theological belief of the reformers and are crucial for spiritual formation in the contemporary church. In catechesis, teaching the virtue of love involves more than just understanding; it requires practical application. The Lord's Prayer

²⁶ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 11.

²⁷ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 11–12.

²⁸ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 13.

serves as a daily reminder for believers to live out their faith through acts of love and service. By incorporating practices of love, such as charity, kindness, and forgiveness, catechumens learn to embody the gospel in their daily lives, thus fostering a holistic spiritual formation.²⁹

Augustine's teachings which shaped the theological beliefs of the reformers, remain crucial to spiritual formation in the contemporary church. His integration of the theological virtues (faith love and hope) with his narrative approach to catechesis, provides a framework for spiritual growth and discipleship. The church can efficiently use Augustine's narrative method to efficiently communicate the gospel and address the Spiritual needs of the younger generation, fostering a deeper and more resilient faith.

Martin Luther's Catechism for Discipleship and Leadership Development

Catechism played a pivotal role in the significant growth of the church from ancient times to the Reformation period. Unfortunately, it faced some challenges in the Middle Ages, where the lack of catechumens contributed to its decline. As Rome became Christianized, fewer seekers required initiation and baptism, leading to a widespread practice of infant baptism throughout Europe.³⁰ However, the church was not intentional about the spiritual development of these infants. The Middle Ages church drifted from the ancient church's intentional, dialogical, transformational, and relational catechesis to ritualistic practices such as sermons, hymns, liturgical commemoration, and arts.³¹ The medieval church failed to view catechesis as an ongoing process; rather, they believed that catechesis ended at baptism. Consequently, older believers were not nurtured in faith. Hence, nominal Christianity was common during this period.

²⁹ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 25.

³⁰ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 81.

³¹ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 242.

Packer notes that although, the medieval church paid attention to liturgy, “the practice of serious and sustained catechesis for both newer and older believers was largely abandoned.”³² As the church drifted from the church father’s catechetical instructions, heretical teachings and corruption began to find a foothold among the church leadership. This decline in doctrinal fidelity set the stage for the Reformation. The reformers were passionate about catechizing believers, both new and old. John Calvin writes, “Believe me, Monseigneur, the Church of God will never be preserved without catechesis.”³³ The reformers viewed catechesis and spiritual development as ongoing processes beyond baptism and Holy Communion.

Martin Luther, the founder of the Reformation, revitalized the catechetical teachings of the early church fathers. Luther advocated a return to the ancient and sound biblical teachings of the apostles and the early church fathers. He argued that Scripture should be the true source of faith and practice. Luther’s conviction emphasized that the Bible is God’s inspired Word and the ultimate authority for the Christian faith.

Luther’s catechesis had a profound influence on the sixteenth-century church and beyond. The invention of the printing press in 1439 helped circulate Luther’s printed *Small Catechism*.³⁴ John A. Westerhoff and Otis Carl Edwards note, “Written catechism was born among the Lutheran and Reformed, taken up by their associates in England, adopted by the Jesuit for counter-reformation use, and employed more sparingly by Anabaptist, and essential for grounding believers today.” Luther leveraged catechesis as a form of instruction for the children or young believers at home, church, and school, and large catechism for the spiritually matured believers and the clergy.³⁵

³² Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 91.

³³ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 127.

³⁴ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 94.

³⁵ Cardoza, *Christian Education*, 62.

The small catechism teaches young converts the rudiments of the Christian faith. Luther encouraged the use of a question-and-answer didactic style to stimulate critical thinking in young believers.³⁶ Westerhoff and Edwards quoted Luther writing, “Children and servants must be questioned point by point and give answer what each part means and how they understand it.”³⁷ This approach helps believers to commit what is being taught to memory. Luther urged parents, most especially fathers, to passionately nurture their children in the Christian faith and not to leave this responsibility to the church.³⁸ Parents should examine children once a week to evaluate what they have learned, and provide further clarity through repetition, memorization, and illustration Luther added.³⁹

Luther expounded the content of his catechesis using Augustine’s framework of Creed, Faith, and the Lord’s Prayer. He emphasized three important steps needed for salvation. He affirms that the Ten Commandments (law) guide individuals to discern good from bad and understand their depravity. The Creed teaches them to uphold the commandments through God’s mercy and grace revealed in Christ, and the Lord’s Prayer helps them seek the grace needed for sustenance.⁴⁰ Luther’s catechetical contents underscore Paul’s assertion that “Through the law, we became conscious of our sin” but justified by grace through Christ’s redemption, and God’s righteousness is imputed to us through faith in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:20–24). The commandments reveal God’s expectations for humanity and guide the preservation of God’s creation.⁴¹ Kevin De

³⁶ Cardoza, *Christian Education*, 61.

³⁷ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 122.

³⁸ Anthony, *Introducing Christian Education*, 35.

³⁹ Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloat, eds., *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 80.

⁴⁰ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 127.

⁴¹ Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008), 67–68.

Young writes,

The Ten Commandments were given to Israel after God delivered them from Egypt. The law was a response to redemption, not a cause of it. We must never separate the law from the gospel. In one sense, the law shows us our sin and leads us to the gospel, but in another sense, the law ought to follow the gospel just as the giving of the Decalogue followed salvation from Egypt.⁴²

Luther also employed catechetical sermons and singing of hymns and psalms to instruct believers in faith, restoring public congregational singing to the church.⁴³ Despite some reformers, like Zwingli, being averse to music, Luther argued that music was a crucial means of communicating theological beliefs.⁴⁴ He stressed that music has a profound and positive impact on the human soul, stating, “Noble music is next to God’s Word, the highest treasure on earth: it governs all thought, perception, heart, and mind.”⁴⁵ Luther succinctly explained his motive for blending music and the Scripture: “Our plan is to follow the example of the prophets and the ancient fathers of the church and to compose psalms for the people in vernacular, that is, spiritual songs, so that the Word of God may be among his people also in the form of music.”⁴⁶

The Implications of Catechesis for Discipleship Today

The church today faces the danger of drifting away from the foundational beliefs established by the early church, thus eroding the ancient landmarks set by these pioneers (Prov 22:28). The primary mission of the church is to make disciples, but flawed discipleship principles by church leaders have hindered the execution of this crucial task.

Effective discipleship is vital for the spiritual health and growth of the church.

⁴² Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 206.

⁴³ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 32.

⁴⁴ Robin A. Leaver, *Luther’s Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications*, Lutheran Quarterly Books, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 132.

⁴⁵ Leaver, *Luther’s Liturgical Music*, 224.

⁴⁶ Paul J. Grime, “Changing the Tempo of Worship,” *Christian History Magazine* 39, no. 12 (1993): 16.

However, this essential mission is being undermined by a significant challenge: the declining attendance of youth and young adults in church. James Emery argues that there is spiritual emptiness among the youth and young adults in the American church today because they do not have a memory of the gospel.⁴⁷ Many youths find the chapters of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, difficult to relate to, contributing to their waning participation.

Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby assert that “the American Church is dying and losing influence because of lack of strong leadership.”⁴⁸ Some leaders opt for quick fixes and embrace false teachings, such as the prosperity gospel and the faith healing movement, among others, to attract the youths back to the church. These rapacious leaders employ unscriptural, secular models that emphasize quantity over quality. Unfortunately, this quick-fix approach has done more harm than good to the body of Christ, most especially to the youth and young adults. The church has drifted from its vision of influencing the world through effective discipleship, forgotten its identity, and lost its voice in a dying world. Hence, the youth are more alienated from the church.

Therefore, it behooves church leaders and believers to imbibe the biblical and Holy Spirit-inspired strategy of the old and contextualize it for a transformative change in our churches, especially among the youth. Believers and new converts should be grounded in the “old-fashioned way.” The Scripture explicitly says, “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jer 6:16). The church needs to seek the ancient paths before walking in them. Westerhoff and Edwards emphasize this, writing, “A church which has lost its memory of the past can only wander about aimlessly in the

⁴⁷ James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 44.

⁴⁸ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B & H Books, 2011), 29.

present and of its future . . . The church needs the past, if only for the sake of the present and the future.”⁴⁹

For discipleship to be effective, youth need to be connected to their roots. Contemporary superficial teachings have failed to connect the youth to their biblical and old-fashioned Judeo-Christian beliefs. Consequently, the youths are losing their identity in a pluralistic, multicultural, and interconnected society that vehemently challenges their Christian beliefs. To counter this, believers must follow in the footsteps of the apostles and early church fathers, utilizing approaches such as the question-and-answer method, repetition and memorization, family catechesis, devotion and prayer, and the centrality of the Scripture.

Question and Answer Approach

The question-and-answer approach is an important strategy to teach believers today. This approach fosters a cordial relationship and openness between the teacher and learner, it also helps the teacher or mentor to identify areas where the disciple needs help. Christ’s question-and-answer approach led to a transformational change in the lives of those He encountered. For example, His series of questions to the Samaritan woman at the well illuminated her heart and led to the profound understanding that Jesus is the Messiah. This newfound understanding had a great impact on her to the extent that she shared her conviction with others in her community resulting in many believing in Christ (John 4:1–26).

Another example is when asked his disciples, “Who do people say the son of man is?” This question initiated a discussion that revealed the disciples’ understanding and misconceptions about His identity. Peter inspired by the Holy Spirit, responded, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God (Matt 16:13–17).” This exchange highlights how

⁴⁹ Westerhoff and Edwards, *A Faithful Church*, 9.

questions can provoke critical thinking and lead to revelational knowledge about Christ's identity.

The question-and-answer approach is a highly effective strategy that the church can employ in contemporary catechesis. This method is versatile and can be used in various settings such as Sunday school classes, small groups, youth and young adult ministries, and one-on-one mentoring. It promotes participative engagement, helping to unravel misconceptions and facilitate deeper understanding. William J. Abraham emphasizes the importance of the question-answer approach, he writes, "Dialogue is essential in teaching as it allows learners to articulate their thoughts and receive immediate feedback, leading to deeper understanding."⁵⁰

Repetition and Memorization

In the same vein, parents and church leaders should adopt Luther's strategy of repetition, illustration, and memorization in disseminating biblical truth to the youth. Therefore, parents and church leaders should model the way and teach children and youth. Constant scriptural emphasis will help youth understand and memorize biblical truth. Memorization helps in spiritual formation; it helps believers retain the Scriptures in their hearts and teaches them from within to understand Christ's truth and apply this truth to their lives. Therefore, Believers will eschew sin when the Word of God is retained in their hearts.

Just As Jesus Christ was able to resist the devil's temptation by quoting the Scripture, youth today can also rely on the power of memorized Scripture to resist negative influences. Rapid technological advancement and social media have a significant impact on the faith, beliefs, and character of the youth. On one hand, media can be important in communicating Christian ideas and values, on the other, a larger

⁵⁰ William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 74.

percentage of the American media industry portrays things that are against Christian values and beliefs. The social media industry is polluting the minds of Christian youths by promoting immorality, violence, and rebellion. These influences, it difficult for youth to retain the gospel in their hearts, as they are more influenced by other people’s opinions and words. The constant distractions and the instant gratification provided by technology hinder the youth from dedicating time to Scripture memorization and spiritual growth. This highlights the importance of repetition and memorization, as parents should constantly reiterate and illustrate biblical principles to their children so that they can retain the gospel truth despite these external influences.

Donald Whitney lists four imperatives of Scripture memorization: It supplies spiritual power, strengthens faith, prepares for witnessing and counseling, and provides means of God’s guidance.⁵¹ Therefore, the strategy of repetition and memorization is essential for the youth, as it empowers them to overcome the undue challenges posed by modern technologies and other social influences.

Family Catechesis

Augustine, in his various writings, emphasized the responsibility of parents to instill Christian values and teaching in their children from a young age.⁵² Therefore, the church should intentionally equip parents to disciple and nurture their children in the way of the Lord. Tom J. Nettles argues that “Catechizing from an early age sensitizes and conditions the person to consider God and his attributes as an essential part of knowledge, indeed foundational for all true learning.”⁵³

Kenda Dean, in her book *Almost Christian*, argues that “the religiosity of

⁵¹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 61–62.

⁵² Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 21–22.

⁵³ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 44.

American teenagers must be read primarily as a reflection of their parent’s religious devotion (or lack thereof) and, by extension, that of their congregation.”⁵⁴ Unfortunately, parents cannot influence their children if they are not well-grounded in the orthodox Christian faith. Christian Smith in his book “*Soul Searching*” argues that “the best way for youth to become more serious about religious faith is for parents to be more serious about theirs.”⁵⁵

The Bible explicitly instructs fathers to nurture their children in the way of the Lord; fathers should be intentional, consistent, diligent, and exemplary in discipling their families (Eph 6:4). Therefore, any husband, father, or pastor who reveres God should echo Joshua’s declaration that in my household, we are committed to serving the Lord (Jos 24:15). Our family will actively seek, worship, and pray to him together. We will engage with His Word, filled with guidance, and consistently uphold its teaching within our family.⁵⁶ In situations where the father is absent, the church should walk alongside the mother to disciple the children. Family catechesis fosters unity of purpose and love in the family and community Nettles writes, “The discipline of catechizing draws parent and child, student and teacher, together in the most helpful and edifying of all activities—the submission of heart and mind to the teachings of the Bible.”⁵⁷ Terry Linhart asserts that when a disciple receives instruction within a relationship that is driven by love rather than a set of agendas, like the bond between a parent and child, the teachings of a disciple shift from mere intellectual understanding to a heartfelt conviction, evolving from a state of

⁵⁴ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵⁵ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Souls Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 191.

⁵⁶ Joel R. Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 13.

⁵⁷ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Heart*, 38.

“mere learning” to a profound state of being “convinced of.”⁵⁸ Linhart’s assertion implies that catechesis provides a bedrock on which discipleship thrives. Simply put, catechesis can provide the content for discipleship.

The Role of Prayer in Contemporary Catechesis

Prayer is vital in discipleship; it is communion with God; it is an act of utter dependence on His sovereignty. Historically, catechesis contents included teaching believers to pray emphasizing that prayer shapes the life of the disciple. Luther stresses the importance of prayer he writes, “As it the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.”⁵⁹ Augustine also stresses the importance of prayer in his confession he writes, “true whole prayer, is nothing but love.”⁶⁰ Christ’s disciples were challenged by the exemplary prayer life of their Master to the extent that they said, “Lord teach us how to pray!” In response, Christ gave them a prayer pattern (Luke 11:1–5), which serves as a foundational element of Christian catechesis. This pattern, known as the Lord’s Prayer, should be followed by believers today as a template for all prayers. J. I. Packer asserts that “Jesus is teaching that prayer will be acceptable when, and only when, the attitudes, thoughts, and desires expressed fit the pattern. That is to say: every prayer of ours should be a praying on the Lord’s Prayer in some shape or form.”⁶¹

Catechesis must emphasize the cultivation of a lifestyle of prayer among believers, especially spiritual leaders, and parents, who are key figures in discipleship. Pastors and other spiritual leaders should facilitate prayer meetings and model a robust

⁵⁸ Linhart, *Teaching the Next Generations*, 32.

⁵⁹ John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold: A Treasury of Quotations for Christians* (Hertfordshire, England: Evangelical Press, 1984), 227.

⁶⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 397.

⁶¹ J. I. Packer, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 20.

prayer life, thereby influencing God's people and reinforcing the teachings of catechesis. Parents should lead prayer meetings in their homes, teaching their children about their utter dependence on God, a crucial aspect of Christian discipleship.

Religious leaders and parents must constantly intercede on behalf of God's people, echoing the intercessory role highlighted in biblical narratives such as Moses's prayer for Israel (Num 14:13–30) and the priestly intercession described by Joel (Joel 2:17). This intercessory role is vital for the spiritual growth and protection of the community, a concept that should be ingrained in catechetical instruction. The writer of Hebrews encourages believers to “approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need” (Heb 4:16). This reinforces the catechetical teaching that unwavering trust in God's sovereignty and continuous prayer are essential for discipleship. The apostle Paul's teachings further emphasize this, he writes, that God can do “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20). Leonard Ravenhill in his book *Why Revival Tarries* argues that “Prayer is as mighty as God because He has committed Himself to answer it.”⁶² Therefore catechesis must stress that prayer is not just a practice but a powerful means through which believers draw close to God, reinforcing their faith and dependence on him.

Prayer as emphasized in catechesis, brings believers into deeper communion with God, strengthening the relationship between the divine and the human. Whitney notes that “Prayer is in one sense an expression of a Christian's unbroken relationship with the father.”⁶³ Prayer is vital as the intake of God's Word; presenting revelational knowledge that guides believers in their daily walk with God. E. M. Bonds stresses the need for consistency in prayer, reflecting the catechetical principle that regular,

⁶² Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House, 1987), 139.

⁶³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 113.

disciplined prayer is crucial for spiritual growth and defense against spiritual warfare. E. M. Bounds writes, “He that has prayed well has studied well If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer.”⁶⁴

For catechesis to be effective today, it must integrate robust teaching on prayer and its importance in discipleship. When these practices are instilled, catechesis ensures that believers are empowered to engage in intentional and sincere prayer, thereby drawing closer to God and strengthening their spiritual resilience.

Centrality of the Scriptures in Contemporary Catechesis

Luther’s catechetical teachings have profound implications for contemporary discipleship, particularly in emphasizing the centrality of Scripture. Scripture should be the source and central theme for discipleship. Luther’s doctrine asserts that Scripture alone is the ultimate authority in matters of faith and practice. Luther contends that the Bible must hold primacy over the traditions of the institutional church.⁶⁵ Luther’s assertion implies that the Scripture is the fountain that produces water needed to quench the thirst of any soul, it reproves, corrects, and trains in righteousness (2 Tim 2:16), it searches every heart, provides help in time of need, and leads to the path of righteousness. In addition, the nature, character, and God’s love are explicitly revealed in Scripture. Thus, to truly know God and cultivate godliness, it is imperative to intimately understand the Word of God.⁶⁶

Therefore, to grow spiritually, believers must consistently drink from the oasis of God’s Word as they daily walk with him. Whitney writes, “No Spiritual discipline is

⁶⁴ E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer* (New Orleans: Scriptura Press, 2015), 36.

⁶⁵ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 89.

⁶⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 39

more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of the Scripture.”

In contemporary times, certain churches are compromising the authority of Scripture in pursuit of cultural approval. Some preachers prioritize teaching what their congregation desires to hear over conveying scriptural truth. The church, as God’s mouthpiece, must uphold the reformer’s conviction of *Sola Scriptura*; biblical principles and truth should take precedence over cultural and emotional bias. The Bible must be the standard where all beliefs, faith, and character are tested. R. Albert Mohler Jr. rightly argues, “When the Bible speaks, God speaks . . . without a total commitment to the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the Bible, the church is left without its defining authority, lacking confidence in its ability to hear God’s voice.”⁶⁷

Effective catechesis today should incorporate Luther’s principles by emphasizing both private and communal study of Scripture. The Berean Christians who examine the Scripture daily (Acts 17:11), provide a model for this practice. This daily engagement ensures that all teachings align with biblical truth. This will promote a strong and biblically grounded faith.

Conclusion

The enduring practice of catechesis throughout history underscores its efficacy as a foundational tool for discipleship. By reflecting on its historical significance and the wisdom it imparts, contemporary believers are encouraged to embrace its enduring value. The Scriptures enjoin the church with the profound responsibility to not neglect the great salvation that was proclaimed by the Lord and affirmed by those who earnestly followed him (Heb 2:3). Therefore, in our pursuit of spiritual growth and maturity, we must heed the call to engage in catechesis, recognizing its enduring relevance in shaping faithful

⁶⁷ R. Albert Mohler Jr., et al., *Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy*, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

discipleship for generations to come.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The primary aim of the project was to develop a comprehensive discipleship strategy to address the spiritual needs and growth of the youth at Eden Garden Christian Center in Louisville, Kentucky. The strategy was designed to bridge the generational gap within the church, counteract the influence of heretical teachings, and empower the youth to become effective disciples of Christ.

The project was implemented in eight sessions over four weeks. The project implementation process included selecting participants, assessing their current level of discipleship knowledge, equipping them through teaching on discipleship and how to make disciples, and reassessing the participants at the conclusion of the project. This approach ensured that the youth were better equipped to be Christ's disciples.

Project Preparation

The project preparation process started with an announcement on March 31, which coincided with Easter Sunday. The church pastor announced my intention to develop a discipleship strategy for the youth ministry of the church. He encouraged the older population to attend the sessions, emphasizing that such initiative had never been undertaken in the church before. The members of the church were excited about the announcement. The dates for the implementation covered a four-week period between June 2, 2024, and June 26, 2024. The teaching period was on Sunday mornings during Sunday school and Wednesdays during the church's Bible study meeting.

Due to the tight schedule of the youths, eight youths (ages 11–18), three young adults (ages 18–24), and six adults were able to participate from the beginning to the end:

completing the pre-training survey, attending the teaching sessions, and completing the post-training survey. Out of these participants, only three had been baptized by total immersion. Before administering the pre-training survey, I had a brief discussion about the importance of discipleship training to ensure that the participants understood the significance of the project and were motivated to engage fully.

Pre- and Post-Training Survey Development

I developed a Discipleship Knowledge Practice Survey (DKPS) to measure the change in participant understanding before and after delivering the discipleship curriculum. The purpose of this survey was to determine and measure participants' previous knowledge about discipleship. The DKPS was designed to assess key areas such as biblical foundations for discipleship, discipleship-making practice, and perception of discipleship. The pre-training survey indicated that only three participants had been discipled or attended a discipleship training program before, while the remaining participants had no prior experience with discipleship.

The DKPS was administered again after the completion of the four-week training program to determine if the participants' level of understanding had increased. The post-training survey results, along with detailed understanding and practices among the participants will be addressed in chapter 5.

Discipleship Curriculum Development

To promote discipleship among participants, I developed a biblical curriculum for the EGCC youth ministry. This curriculum was structured to be delivered over eight sessions across a four-week period, with sessions held on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. Each session began and ended with a hymn that I specifically prepared for this purpose.

The curriculum was grounded in biblical teachings, focusing on the models set

forth by Christ and the apostles. The first week explored the teachings of Christ in Luke 9:23–26. This session unpacked the meaning and prerequisites of discipleship. The second week analyzed the Paul-Timothy model of discipleship (2 Tim 2:1–2), the third week focused on the posture of discipleship (Mark 10:43–45), the last week focused on the Great Commission mandate (Matt 28:18–20).

In the initial sessions, I explained key terms such as “disciple” and “discipleship” using stories and illustrations. I stressed the importance of knowing Christ and having a relationship with him. I referenced Romans 10:8–10 as the foundational step to follow the Master. I then laid out other prerequisites for discipleship: taking up the cross, denying oneself, and following Christ’s lead.

Following the establishment of these prerequisites, I challenged the elders and parents in attendance to nurture and train the youth using the Paul-Timothy approach. This model emphasizes interest and relationship, exhortation, and empowerment. I stressed that the older generation and parents must be deeply rooted in God’s Word to effectively guide the younger generation. Simultaneously, I encouraged the youth and young adults to adopt Timothy’s humble posture and learn from the older people in the church.

The final two sessions focused on the reproduction of disciples, based on the Great Commission message in Matthew 28:18–20. I emphasized the importance of not being ashamed to proclaim the gospel through our words, actions, character, and habits. These sessions aimed to inspire participants to actively engage in making disciples, thereby fulfilling the mandate given by Christ.

Discipleship Curriculum Review

The materials for each week’s teaching sessions were evaluated by a panel of

four qualified reviewers: Three church pastors and one music pastor¹ Each reviewer evaluated one week of material using the rubric I developed for the project and completed an assessment form for the assigned material. The reviewers included, (1) the pastor of Forest Park Community Church who is also an adjunct professor; (2) the pastor of East Audubon Baptist Church who also moderates the Louisville Regional Baptist Association; (3) the music minister of East Audubon Baptist Church; and (4) The pastor of Eden Garden Christian Center. Based on the reviewers' comments and recommendations, I made necessary adjustments to the curriculum to ensure it was comprehensive and effective

Project Implementation

Week 1

The participants had returned the completed DKPS forms before our first meeting. The survey revealed that a significant percentage of the participants had not been baptized by immersion before; it also indicated an insufficient level of discipleship awareness among the participants.

This week's focus was to explain the concept of discipleship. I unpacked the need to be a disciple and how to become Christ's disciple. This initial week also provided a framework for the remainder of the curriculum. I led the participants in singing a hymn, "Wherever He Leads I Go," at the beginning and end of each session. One panel member (Forest Park Community Church pastor) commended the teaching content as "biblically sound and well needed at this moment," but advised adding more "practical examples and interactive activities to better engage the participants and reinforce the teachings." I incorporated these suggestions by including role-playing scenarios and small group discussions to allow participants to practice and discuss the principles being taught. This

¹ See appendix 1.

adjustment aimed to make the sessions more engaging and applicable to everyday life.

Week 2

This week's discussion was focused on the Paul-Timothy model of discipleship (2 Tim 2:1–2), and it highlighted the importance of mentorship. The teaching method was based on an in-depth Bible study, mentorship role plays, and group discussion. The objective was to understand the biblical basis and principles of mentoring using the Paul-Timothy model. The hymn for this week was "It Pays to Serve Jesus I Speak from My Heart." I taught mentorship in the context of discipleship and its resultant effect on spiritual growth. In addition, qualities and characteristics and the process of mentoring were discussed. Some of Paul's strategies, such as interest and relationship, exhortation, and empowerment, were also discussed. I implored the participants to emulate the exemplary attributes of Paul in mentoring Timothy. I engaged the participants in a question-and-answer session at the conclusion of the teaching by dividing the participants into two groups, so that each group could answer some questions.

The reviewer for this week, (the music minister of East Audubon Baptist Church), argued that "the material is biblically and theological sound, but it will be difficult if not impossible to unpack the curriculum in two sessions." Taking his advice, I compressed the curriculum before embarking on teaching. He also advised that I change my hymn from "Trust and Obey" to "It Pays to Serve Jesus."

Week 3

The third week's focus was on the posture of discipleship, drawing from Mark 10:43–45. The aim was to emphasize humility, service, and the right attitude towards discipleship. The hymn for this week was "I Surrender All to Jesus." I explained that Jesus's teaching about humility contrasts with that of the world; Christ specifically taught that the posture of discipleship is servanthood.

I explained that although the high-powered African culture is at odds with

Christ's teaching, being a disciple of Christ involves a servant's heart, exemplified by Jesus's teaching that "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." I contrasted the secular leadership model with Christ's teaching in the passage. While secular leadership is often autocratic and self-serving, this text illustrates how Christ transformed societal norms of leadership by showing that genuine leadership is defined by serving others and placing oneself under their authority.² I challenged the youths to submit to godly leaders and authority in the church. To deepen understanding, we had small group discussions where participants shared their thoughts on how they could apply these principles in their daily lives. This was followed by a plenary session where each group presented their insights.

One of the panel reviewers, the pastor of East Audubon Baptist Church, noted that the inclusion of practical examples and interactive activities greatly enhanced the engagement level of the participants, but he advised that I focus more on Christ's servant position in redemption.

Week 4

The fourth week concluded the curriculum with a focus on the Great Commission mandate from Matthew 28:18–20. This week's hymn was "I Have Prepared My Heart for You." The objective was to inspire participants to actively engage in making disciples and to understand their role in fulfilling Christ's mandate. I explained that, at the end of his ministry, Jesus, having fully developed and mentored his disciples, deployed them into the world to preach the gospel. He commanded them to "Go," not to stay.

I challenged the participants to go out and preach the gospel in their workplaces, homes, among friends, and everywhere they go. I echoed Jesus's command

² John MacArthur, *Mark 9–16*, MNTC, vol. 6 (Chicago: Moody Press, 2015), 108.

to “baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). Consequently, I encouraged those participants who had not yet been baptized to take the bold step of getting baptized, so they could inspire others to do the same. I reiterated Christ’s words from Luke 9:26: “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

The reviewer for this week, the pastor of Eden Garden Christian Center, highlighted that the materials were thorough and practical, providing a solid foundation for the participants to carry out the Great Commission. He recommended additional follow-up sessions to support participants in implementing their action plans.

Post-Implementation Activities

On July 10, 2024, a week after completing the teaching series, I conducted a follow-up meeting during the youth and young adult Bible study to reassess the participants’ understanding of discipleship and disciple-making. I re-administered the DKPS to measure the difference in understanding since the beginning of the training. The detailed results of this reassessment will be covered in chapter 5. I was pleased with the overall results, which indicated a higher level of awareness among those who received the training. Several other qualitative changes were observed because of the training.

First, on Sunday, July 14, four participants discussed with me their intention to be baptized by immersion. Following this discussion, I spoke with the church pastor and advised the creation of a baptismal class for new converts. After concluding the training, I scheduled future training sessions to further support the participants’ spiritual growth.

The post-training survey also revealed an improvement in the participants’ ability to share the gospel with others, especially with their peers. The participants clearly understood the necessity of sharing the gospel, as reflected in the biblical invitation to “taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Recognizing the need for continuous training for their spiritual development, the participants and I adopted two training manuals for ongoing instruction: *Follow the Master* by Paul Barecca,³ and *Serve the Master* by Richard Blackaby.⁴ *Follow the Master* will guide new converts and prepare them for baptism, addressing various aspects of Christian faith such as prayer and Bible study. *Serve the Master* will be used to further ground mature believers in their faith.

Conclusion

The project implementation was challenging but effective. Although I am not new to the EGCC family, this project has fostered greater openness between the youth ministry and the entire church. The implementation of the ongoing discipleship program is expected to enhance growth in the EGCC ministry and church and greater sense of community at EGCC. The church is committed to maintaining the efforts about this project, and ensuring that all members, most especially the youth, are well-equipped to live out their faith and contribute positively to the church's mission. This commitment to discipleship and spiritual development is vital for the church's long-term growth and vitality, paving the way for a more engaged, active, and spiritually mature congregation.

³ Paul Barreca, *Follow the Master: How Jesus Made Disciples* (Larkspur, CO: Grace Acres Press, 2017).

⁴ Richard Blackaby, *Serve the Master: How to Grow as a Disciple* (Nashville: Blackaby Ministries, 2015).

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Discipleship is the path designed by God for believers to grow and mature in their faith after having been brought into God's redemptive plan through his work alone. However, discipleship is a lifelong process; it does not stop at baptism or conversion. It should also be noted that discipleship is not merely a set of programs organized by the church. Rather, it is an ongoing journey of transformation and growth in Christ, supported by the church community. Therefore, the task of making disciples should be undertaken by every believer. The church should be intentional about discipleship; the church should become a leadership factory where leaders are developed and deployed to the world. Therefore, it behooves church leaders, Christian scholars, and other spiritual leaders to make the church a leadership factory and distribution center by raising reproducing disciples.¹

This ministry project aimed to develop a comprehensive discipleship strategy for the EGCC youth ministry. Throughout the implementation, I discovered that the multigenerational composition of EGCC holds significant benefits. The older members can mentor and invest in the youth, while the unique spiritual gifts and talents of the youth can invigorate and sustain a vibrant and healthy church environment.

This chapter evaluates the 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.

¹ Harry L. Reeder and Rod Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic: A Biblical Model for Raising Effective Leaders* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 139.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a discipleship strategy for building a vibrant youth ministry at Eden Garden Christian Center in Louisville, Kentucky. This objective was driven by the recognition of critical needs within the youth ministry such as, doctrinal clarity, spiritual growth, effective evangelism, and bridging generational gaps. The successful achievement of this purpose was pivotal in fostering a vibrant and spiritually mature community of young believers at EGCC.

As discussed in chapter 4, EGCC faces unique challenges, including the influence of various doctrinal teachings, the impact of cultural differences between older and younger generations, and the need for effective evangelistic efforts. Some negative Western influence has further complicated these challenges causing a lot of the youth to lose their African identity; key elements such as communal values and respect for elders are being diminished. The youth are confused and question their beliefs. This project aimed to address these issues through a structured and intentional discipleship program.

During the implementation of the project, significant emphasis was placed on introducing the youth to Christ and encouraging their active participation in church activities. The project involved a series of preaching and teaching sessions designed to deepen the youths' understanding of the Great Commission and their role in fulfilling it. The purpose was not only to educate but also to inspire and equip the youth to become effective disciples and disciple-makers.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The successful achievement of this project was measured by the attainment of four distinct goals: assessing current discipleship practices, developing a discipleship training curriculum, increasing participants' knowledge of discipleship, and creating a strategic plan for ongoing discipleship.

Goal 1

The first goal was to evaluate the current discipleship practices at EGCC. This involved administering a DKPS to a representative sample of eight youth, six adults, and three young adults who were former youth members. The survey aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of current discipleship efforts, understand barriers, and gather insights into the specific needs of the youth. The pre-training assessment revealed that only three of the participants had prior knowledge about discipleship or discipleship training. It also revealed significant gaps in the spiritual formation, doctrinal understanding, and inadequate biblical foundation for discipleship among the participants. For instance, before the project implementation, the mean score for item seven, “I can effectively use the Scripture to explain discipleship” was 3.00 (“Disagree Somewhat”). This indicated that most of the participants lacked understanding in this area. Therefore, the need for a more structured and intentional discipleship approach. However, item 30, “I cherish my fellowship with other brethren in Christ” revealed that most of the participants deeply value fellowship with other believers. This is encouraging as this will create a conducive atmosphere for discipleship. The first goal was successfully met when a representative sample of seventeen participants at EGCC completed the DKPS, which informed the subsequent development of the curriculum.²

Goal 2

The second goal was to create a four-week (eight sessions) discipleship training curriculum designed to equip selected youth with essential discipleship skills and knowledge. This goal was completed through eight teaching sessions held on Sundays and Wednesdays over four weeks. The curriculum covered topics such as spiritual mentorship, ministry opportunities within the church, and developing personal discipleship plans for spiritual growth. An expert panel evaluated the curriculum using a

² See appendix 4.

rubric to assess its biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance. I made necessary corrections to the curriculum as advised by the expert panel. This goal was considered successfully achieved as the curriculum was well-received and effectively laid the foundation for practical discipleship among the youth.

Goal 3

The third goal of this project was to equip the EGCC youth to make disciples by implementing the developed curriculum in eight sessions over a four-week period. To achieve this, I employed a combination of question-and-answer and narration approaches during the teaching sessions. This interactive method facilitated deeper understanding and engagement. After each session, participants were divided into three groups to deliberate and answer further questions, this significantly helped in collaborative learning and discussion. To aid the learning process, I used visual materials from Lifeway such as *Revival Generation: Awakening to a Movement of God* by Shane Pruitt, which provided additional context and support for the teaching.³

To determine the achievement of this goal, I reassessed the participants using the DKPS that was administered prior to the project implementation. I was pleased to see a positive change in attitude between the first and second surveys. The results showed a positive and statistically significant improvement in the youth's understanding and enthusiasm for discipleship. After the training, some specific items that showed significant improvement included item 8, "I can use the Scripture to explain discipleship." The mean score for this item increased from 4.67 to 4.83, with six participants moving from "disagree somewhat" to "strongly agree." This improvement indicates that the participants now have a solid understanding of the biblical basis for discipleship.

³ Shane Pruitt, *Revival Generation: Awakening to a Movement of God* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2024).

Item 15, “I should be able to disciple someone now,” saw an increase in mean score from 5.17 to 5.83 with many participants moving from “agree somewhat” to “agree,” demonstrating that participants felt equipped to disciple others. This was evident as one of the parents expressed her determination to increase devotion in her home. Similarly, item 20, “I am part of the body of Christ,” showed an increase in mean score from 4.17 to 4.50 with some participants moving from “agree somewhat” to “agree” and some from “agree to strongly agree.” This was demonstrated by two of the youths deciding to be baptized, and one adult indicating the desire to be baptized by immersion to fully integrate into the body of Christ. Another measure that showed significant improvement was item 21, “I have a hunger to read and study the Bible personally,” which saw the mean score increase from 4.67 to 5.50 with participants moving from “disagree somewhat” to “agree,” indicating a heightened devotion and discipline among participants in studying God’s Word.

The overall results from the pre- and post-training surveys revealed a statistically significant change, as the absolute value of $t_{(5)} = 2.9065$ and $p < 0.05$ in the participants’ understanding of discipleship and disciple-making. The pre-test mean score of 114.833 versus the post-test score of 124.166 demonstrated an increase of 9.33 in the overall mean score. This improvement indicates that the teaching series effectively created a greater level of awareness among church members and underscored the need for ongoing training at EGCC.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to grow the youths of EGCC in doctrinal understanding, evangelistic zeal, and missional focus using discipleship training manuals such as *Follow the Master* and *Serve the Master*. EGCC’s new pastor (a current student of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is interested in the growth of the youth in the church. To achieve this goal, I collaborated with the pastor and the youth

ministry leader to create a comprehensive ministry plan. This plan included regular training sessions, mentorship programs, and practical evangelistic activities designed to deepen the youth's doctrinal knowledge and foster a passion for sharing the gospel.

By the end of the project, the ministry plan had been successfully integrated into the regular activities of the youth ministry at EGCC. The positive feedback from the participants and the observed changes in their commitment to discipleship and evangelism confirmed the effectiveness of the plan. This goal was successfully met, laying a solid foundation for ongoing discipleship efforts that will continue to nurture the spiritual growth of the youth at EGCC.

Strengths of the Project

One of the strengths of this project was its inclusive approach, involving participants from all age groups within the church. This inclusivity meant that older participants, who were passionate about mentoring the younger generation, were actively involved. The presence of older members and parents provided a sense of unity and purpose. Group discussions and question-and-answer sessions created opportunities to bridge generational gaps between adults and youths, allowing them to see things from each other's perspectives. Some difficult questions were referred to me and were effectively answered during the teaching sessions. The engagement of older members in the project helped foster collaboration within the church community, ensuring that the teachings were not only theoretical but also practically applied through real-life mentoring and support.

Additionally, the incorporation of Christian hymns in the teaching sessions created an atmosphere of worship and prepared the way for the lesson. The hymns connected the participants, most especially the youth, to the rich tradition of Christian worship. Hymns, as Luther rightly said, are used to convey theology in a memorable and

emotive way.⁴ The hymns helped to reinforce the lessons taught during the sessions. The participants, especially the youth, were eager to sing some of the hymns with different contemporary tunes. The act of communal singing also instilled a sense of unity and shared purpose among the participants, making the learning experience more engaging and spiritually enriching.

Another notable strength of the project was its strong biblical foundation. I ensured that the participants based their convictions on scriptural injunctions rather than prophecies, visions, and other charismatic gifts that may be at variance with the Scriptures. I encouraged them to test all spirits with the Scripture, emphasizing the importance of grounding their beliefs and practices in the Word of God. This approach helped to safeguard the participants against false teachings and ensured that their faith was built on a solid biblical foundation. I challenged the participants to read the Bible in one year.

Weaknesses of the Project

First, the availability of the participants for the teaching series, especially the youth, was inconsistent. Attendance was particularly low during the eight teaching sessions held on Wednesday nights. Although many youths cited their work schedules or other sport-related activities as a barrier to punctuality, I anticipated that attendance would be more regular given that it was the summer break. This inconsistency in attendance hindered the continuity and effectiveness of the teaching sessions, as participants missed key lessons and discussions.

Second, there was an insufficient follow-up mechanism to track the progress of the participants after the conclusion of the project. While I have volunteered to teach and preach at EGCC in the past, my recent transition to a new role as the youth pastor at

⁴ “Theology that Sticks: The Life-Changing Power of Exceptional Hymns,” The Gospel Coalition, accessed July 25, 2024, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/theology-that-sticks>.

Forest Park Community Church may make it difficult to monitor the progress of the participants post-teaching. Although the initial engagement was strong, inadequate structured follow-up might hinder the knowledge imparted during the project from being effectively implemented in the participants' daily lives. This gap might hinder the long-term impact and sustainability of the project's outcomes.

Another Weakness is that my DKPS did not appropriately focus on theological foundations necessary for evaluating participants' theological knowledge. While the project did cover essential theological concepts such as the character of God, the work of Christ, the doctrine of the trinity, and the nature of salvation, the DKPS did not adequately measure participants' theological understanding in these areas. Therefore, I revised the DKPS to better assess the theological foundations that were taught to ensure a closer alignment with the project.⁵

What I Would Do Differently

The first thing that should be done differently is to increase the duration of the project. I will ensure the extended timeframe allows for more interactions and questions to enable deeper discussions and a better understanding of the material. A longer duration will provide ample time for participants to reflect on the teachings, engage in meaningful dialogue, and integrate the lessons into their daily lives. This extended period will also help to build stronger relationships among participants, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

Second, I will leverage technology more effectively, using platforms such as Zoom, Instagram, and TikTok to enhance the discipleship process. Since many youths are more inclined to use these platforms, incorporating them into the project will make teaching more accessible and engaging. I will teach participants how to use these tools

⁵ Appendix 3

for spiritual growth, enabling them to share their faith and experiences in a medium they are comfortable with.

Additionally, I will establish a robust follow-up system to ensure continuous engagement and support for the participants. This system will include regular check-ins, mentorship programs, and the creation of small accountability groups that meet frequently to discuss progress, challenges, and spiritual growth. These groups will help maintain the momentum gained during the project and create a supportive community for ongoing discipleship.

Personal Reflection

With 15 years of experience in youth and young adult ministry, I have often struggled to understand why youth become disconnected from the church after turning eighteen. This project has helped me identify some of the reasons behind this phenomenon. I discovered that many churches lack a discipleship program for the youth once they leave the youth ministry for college. Some churches encourage these young adults to attend men's or women's small groups, but most of these young adults are not interested. As a result, they feel alienated from the church and see themselves as misfits. Therefore, the church should be intentional in establishing a young adult ministry to ensure that youth discipleship is an ongoing process within the church. The church must understand that the youths and young adults have strengths and gifts that can be used for the church to grow in grace. God has gathered a dynamic group of young adults, presenting church leaders with an opportunity to witness a generation poised to impact the culture profoundly. Despite their potential, this vibrant army often remains the most overlooked within the church.⁶

I also discovered that youth discipleship requires a lot of patience. The youth

⁶ Tim McKnight, *Engaging Generation Z: Raising the Bar for Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2021), 24.

often believe they know everything and desire independence. Their minds are troubled with many questions. This is why parents, and the church must walk alongside them and model the way for them since these youth are more influenced by what they see and hear. This project has also deepened my appreciation for the role of mentorship in discipleship. The involvement of older members as mentors was a crucial element that contributed to the project's success. It emphasized the value of leveraging the wisdom and experience of seasoned believers to guide and nurture the younger generation. Moving forward, I am committed to integrating mentorship as a core component of my ministry approach.

Sports are an important tool that the church can use to engage the youth in discipleship. Through interaction with some of the youth and young adults, I discovered that their language and attitude are sometimes influenced by the sporting activities they engage in. Therefore, I am reflecting on ways by which discipleship can be incorporated into the sport ministry of the church. This approach can help to create a more relatable and engaging environment for the youth, using their interests will help their spiritual growth.

Theological Reflection

Jesus's command to his disciples was clear: they were to continue his work by making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all that he commanded (Matt 28:18–20). Christ's directive emphasizes the importance of the church as the primary vehicle for nurturing and guiding believers in their faith journey. Through this project, I have seen firsthand how critical it is for discipleship to be anchored in the church community, where believers, especially the youth, can grow together in faith, and use their spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ.

One key theological insight that emerged from this project was the understanding that true discipleship directs individuals to follow Jesus, not any human leader. Humans are fallible and can make mistakes, but Christ is infallible. The Bible

affirms that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet he did not sin (Heb 4:15). Therefore, to follow the Master, his words must be the guiding principle in discipleship. His words provide faith that dispels doubt and offers divine assurance. Additionally, we should rely on the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrance all that he has taught us (John 14:26).

Conclusion

The development of a discipleship strategy for the youth ministry at Eden Garden Christian Center has been a transformative journey aimed at addressing both doctrinal and practical challenges. This project has highlighted the necessity of grounding young believers in their faith, equipping them with the tools needed for spiritual growth, and fostering a culture of evangelism and mentorship.

The church should follow the discipleship model set by Christ, the apostles, and the early church fathers. The Bible says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb 2:3). By adhering to these established models, the church ensures that its discipleship efforts are rooted in strong biblical foundations and historical precedent.

A significant challenge to youth ministry is that the church addresses “behavior rather than the heart.”⁷ An intentional discipleship strategy should point the youth to Christ, and the Holy Spirit will transform their heart through this process. The church provides the bedrock necessary for effective discipleship. The church is the place where believers are equipped to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and to make disciples of others.

⁷ McKnight, *Engaging Generation Z*, 24.

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 table below presents the data, including comments from the panel members (if any), in aggregate form.

Disciple Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of disciple-making.			2	2	It is clearly link to discipleship
The material is biblical and theologically sound.			2	2	This is the strongest advantage to this study. The study is faithful to the biblical narrative
The material is faithful to personal Christian development of a believer.			1	3	Yes, speaks directly to each individual believer
The material is clear and lays out the basics for one to mentor another believer.			1	3	It will be most effective if the material is modelled and taken first before the attempt to teach it.
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.		2	1	1	State your thesis statement at the beginning. This will help your reader
The lesson contains points of practical application.		1	1	2	Most Application will emerge organically with the discussion questions
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			1	3	Yes, this study is representative of how much content is packed into a short selection of text
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			2	2	

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 Develop a Discipleship Strategy for EGCC Youth Ministry. Isaac O. Gbadebo 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. What is your current age group?
 A. 18-24
 B. 25-34
 C. 35-44
 D. 45-54

- _____E. 55-64
- _____F. 65 and over

6. Have you been baptized by total immersion?
- A. Yes
 - B. NO

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

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 7. | I can effectively use the Great Commission to explain discipleship to others. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. | I can use the Scripture to explain discipleship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. | I can use several Bible texts to share my faith with others. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. | I can explain salvation to other through discipleship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. | I can pray more using biblical principles of prayer | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. | I can use the Bible to explain God's purpose for my life. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. | I have a functional understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. | I can use the Bible to lead another. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Part 3: Disciple-Making Practice

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 15. | I should be able to disciple someone now. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. | I acknowledge the efforts of the person who discipled me. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

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

APPENDIX 3

REVISED DISCIPLESHIP KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE SURVEY (DKPS)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to Develop a Discipleship Strategy for EGCC Youth Ministry. Isaac O. Gbadebo 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 participated in discipleship class before?
 A. Yes
 B. No
2. Are you currently serving as a minister in this church?
 A. Yes
 B. No
3. Do you currently hold a specific position in this church (Sunday School Teacher, Trustee, Usher, Nursery Volunteer, Staff Member, Worship Ministries Member, etc.)?
 A. Yes
 B. No
4. At what age do you begin your personal relationship with Jesus?
 A. 0-5
 B. 6-10
 C. 11-15
 D. 16-20
 E. 21-25
 F. 26 and over

5. What is your current age group?
- A. 18-24
 - B. 25-34
 - C. 35-44
 - D. 45-54
 - E. 55-64
 - F. 65 and over

Part 2: Theological and 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 could explain the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) and understand the role they play as means of grace in the Christian life.
- A. Very Limited
 - B. Basic
 - C. Moderate
 - D. Strong
 - E. Very Strong
7. I clearly understand these theological themes and feel confident in explaining them to others: (Select all that apply)
- A. The Nature of God
 - B. The Doctrine of Man
 - C. Salvation and Redemption
 - D. Christian Ethics
 - E. The Christian Life and Discipleship
8. I understand the biblical story line of redemption (Creation, fall, Redemption and Restoration) and how that storyline explains Scripture's metanarrative
- A. Very Limited
 - B. Basic
 - C. Moderate
 - D. Strong
 - E. Very Strong
9. I could effectively use Scripture to explain the following concepts to others.
- Discipleship:
- A. Not Comfortable
 - B. Somewhat Comfortable
 - C. Comfortable
 - D. Very Comfortable

Salvation:

- A. Not Comfortable
- B. Somewhat Comfortable
- C. Comfortable
- D. Very Comfortable

God's Purpose for Life:

- A. Not Comfortable
- B. Somewhat Comfortable
- C. Comfortable
- D. Very Comfortable

Christian Ethics:

- A. Not Comfortable
- B. Somewhat Comfortable
- C. Comfortable
- D. Very Comfortable

11. I could effectively use the Great Commission to explain discipleship to others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. I could use the Scripture to explain discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I could use several Bible texts to share my faith with others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I could explain salvation to others through discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. I could pray more using biblical principles of prayer	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I could use the Bible to explain God's purpose for my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. I have a functional understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I could use the Bible to lead another.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Part 3: Disciple-Making Practice

19. I feel prepared to disciple someone currently.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	
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20. I recognize and appreciate the efforts of those who disciple me.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
21. I am actively discipling another person currently.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
22. I am enthusiastic about making new disciples.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
23. I see myself as an integral part of the body of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
24. I feel more informed and equipped to serve as a worker/officer in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
25. I maintain a consistent prayer life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
26. I am conscious about the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
27. I cherish my fellowship with other brethren in Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A
28. I am aware that my spiritual growth is important and accountable to other believers in Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A

APPENDIX 4
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 5
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 6

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 discipled me.	5.17	5.83	+0.67
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	+0.67
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
	Total	114.83	124.17	+9.33

APPENDIX 7
T-TEST RESULTS

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

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<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 8
TEACHING SERIES OUTLINE

The following outlines were the basis of the teaching series on discipleship at Eden Garden Christian.

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Scripture: Luke 9:23

“23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Hymn: Wherever He Leads I go (McKinney, B.B)

Introduction

Jesus explicitly pointed out the requirements and steps needed to become a disciple. He affirmed that a disciple should “deny himself, carry his cross daily and follow him.” He demonstrated obedience and sacrifice with his death on the cross, setting the ultimate example for his followers. Christ understood that it’s impossible to follow someone that you did not know or have encountered, so he asked His disciples a fundamental discipleship question in the preceding verse: “Who do you say that I am?” The question today remains, who is Christ to you?”

Who is a Disciple?

A disciple is a person who follows in the footsteps of another. Greg Ogden writes, “A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call to follow Jesus Christ. Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us.” “Discipleship is the ongoing process of growth as a disciple; it means living a fully human life in this world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image.” This process involves regular self-reflection, repentance, and a willingness to learn and grow. Discipleship is marked by a transformation of the heart and mind, aligning one’s thoughts, actions, and desires with the teachings and example of Jesus.

- In Luke 9:23, Jesus made a universal call to discipleship: “If anyone would come after me.” This implies that Christ is calling anyone, anywhere and

anytime. Therefore, the first step in discipleship is to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

- The starting point is to confess and believe as stated in Rom 10:8–10.

Discussion: What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus today?

Prayer: Lord, I offer myself to you as a living sacrifice. I surrender my totality unto you.

Session 2: Prerequisites for Discipleship

- “Deny himself.” Discipleship is a call to sacrifice. Sacrifice in our devotion, obedience, and love towards God. Christ must take preeminence in the life of a disciple. A disciple should say not my will but your will.
- “Take up your cross daily”. The cross symbolizes pain, shame, suffering and persecution. To be determined to follow Christ is to die with him at the cross (Gal. 2:20).
- Baptism by total immersion (*baptizo*) symbolizes death (immersion in water) and resurrection (
- In the same vein Christ Redeemed us to the father through the cross, therefore the joy of our salvation lies in the cross. To carry the cross daily connotes that discipleship is a lifelong endeavor.
- “Follow me.” We should be motivated to follow Christ because He is the way (John 14:6). To follow Christ is to emulate him in words, action, thoughts, character and habit. It is a continuous journey of learning, growing, and becomes more like Jesus.

Discussion

- How Do the Apostles and Matriarchs of old live out these prerequisites in their daily Lives?
- How can we live out these Prerequisites in our daily lives. –

- What are we expected to deny?

Conclusion

Discipleship means eschewing the world and its passions while taking on the yoke of Christ. The apostle Paul captures this essence, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

SPIRITUAL MENTORING: PAUL-TIMOTHY MODEL

Scripture: 2 TIMOTHY 2:1–2

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

Hymn: “*It Pays to Serve Jesus*” LaVarnga Hubbard

Introduction: Spiritual mentoring is used by many to depict discipleship.

While this is true, the Apostle Paul captures the essence of mentoring with his exhortation, “follow me as I follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1).” Spiritual mentoring is a process where the mentor with the help of the Holy Spirit influences the mentee in following the footsteps of Christ. Anderson and Reese argue that “spiritual mentoring is a triadic relationship between mentor, mentee and the Holy Spirit, where the mentoree can discover, through the already present action of God, intimacy with God, ultimate identity on a child of God and a unique voice for the kingdom responsibility.”¹ This implies that spiritual mentoring transcends nurturing; rather it entails empowering the mentee to fulfil the Great Commission mandate.

Characteristics of Spiritual Mentor as Portrayed in Paul-Timothy Model

- Maturity in Faith: Spiritual Mentors should be matured believers with close relationship with Christ (Gal.1:11–17).
- Visionary: Spiritual Mentors should be visionary (Acts 26:19a).
- Encouragement: Spiritual mentors should be source of encouragement that helps others grow in the knowledge of Christ. (2Tim 2:1)
- Partnership with the Holy Spirit: Spiritual mentors should Partner with the Holy Spirit: The growth of the mentee is dependent on the Holy Spirit and

¹ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 15.

not on the mentor. The mentor partners with the Holy spirit to facilitate the growth process. Henry and Richard Blackaby assert that “Spiritual leaders cannot produce Spiritual change in people; only the Holy Spirit can do that. Yet through the Spirit, God often uses people to bring spiritual growth in others.”² (Romans 1:11)

Discussion: What are the Characteristics of effective mentoring relationships?

Prayer: Lord! raise more Paul that are willing to mentor others in our generation.

Session 2

Characteristics of Mentee

- Teachability: A mentee must be open to correction and reprove.² Tim 3:16–17
- Faithfulness: a mentee must be a faithful follower of the mentor. (1 Tim 1:13–14)
- Commitment: A commitment to the mentoring relationship (2 Tim 2:2)

Paul Mentoring Strategies

- Interest and relationship: Paul recognized Timothy’s fervent faith, and Timothy admired Paul’s godly lifestyle and charisma (2 Timothy 1:5). Genuine interest is essential for any relationship to thrive.
- Exhortation: Paul consistently encouraged, guided, and nurtured Timothy.
- Empowerment: Empowerment involves releasing the mentee for continued growth through an empowered awareness of intimacy with God, identity as a child of God, and a unique voice for kingdom responsibilities (2 Timothy

² Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 29.

2:2).³ 2Tim2:2.

Discussion: How can we identify and nurture youths and young adults in our church today?

Conclusion: The Paul-Timothy exemplifies the importance of spiritual mentoring in the church. Therefore, mentors should be intentional in identifying and nurturing mentees in the church.

³ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 59.

THE POSTURE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Scripture: (Mark 10:43b–45)

““But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”

Hymn:

Introduction: Discipleship requires a total submission to Christ will. Christ is calling his disciples to self-sacrifice, meekness, and humility. The pathway to greatness in God’s kingdom is to be a servant. Therefore, it is imperative that we put on servant’s posture and reflect Christ’s love as we make disciples of all nations. Jesus contrasts the worldly leadership style with the Kingdom style. In the world, leaders often exert authority over others, but in the Kingdom, greatness is defined by servanthood. Servanthood displaces selfishness because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6).

Principles of Servanthood

- Jesus is the ultimate example of a servant leader (Mark10:45): Jesus’s ministry exemplifies servanthood. He washed the apostle’s feet, and willing laid down His life on the cross.
- Servanthood is the way to the top (Mark 10:43b): Jesus identified with the lowly, poor and destitute. He defined leadership as humility, not autocracy.
- Servanthood is other-centered: It involves meeting the needs of others. It requires believers to look beyond their comfort and needs; rather, servanthood instills in us how we can help the lost.
- Servanthood influences others and bring them to the saving grace of Christ (1Cor 9:20): We reflect Christ love when we selflessly serve others. The

“next great movement in Christianity will be demonstration.”⁴

Discussion: what are the practical ways to embody a servant’s heart?

Session 2

The redemption Story and the implication of servanthood

The Redemption story depicts:

- Christ incarnation: Jesus humbled Himself and took the form of man, he lives among us (John 1:14). Through incarnation, Christ understands our struggles. Heb (4:15–16). Therefore, we must empathize with the lost.
- Crucifixion: Christ willfully laid than His life for the world to redeem them from sin. (1 John 3:16). Therefore, we should love others, even our enemies.
- Resurrection: Christ gave us hope through victory over death. (1 Cor 15:55–57). His resurrection power enables us to live out a life of servanthood empowered by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). This implies that we should be an agent of hope in this hopeless world.
- Ascension: He ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us, so that we can be like him and live with Him forever (John 14:23). In ascension, He rendered every captivity captive. (Eph 4:8).

Discussion: How can the church youth group engage in acts of service?

Closing: Lord! Please help us embody the posture of discipleship through servanthood in all ramifications of life.

⁴ Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 223.

CHRIST EXPECTS HIS DISCIPLES TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT MAKING OTHER DISCIPLES.

Scripture: Mathew 28:18–20

“18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Hymn: *I have prepared my Heart for You.* (Writer unknown)

Introduction: Jesus explicitly commanded His disciples to “Go and make disciples of all nations” Christ instruction implies that His followers are to be proactive, intentional, and passionate about spreading the gospel and nurturing new believers. The Great Commission mandate was the last command that Christ gave His disciples. “God want every believer to be fruitful and multiply.” (Gen1:28) Therefore Jesus commands believers to multiply spiritually by making disciples.

Believers Authority in Christ’s Authority

- The Authority of Jesus: Jesus began this discourse by asserting, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” This declaration provides the basis for the Great Commission. This also affirms Christ absolute power over all things.
- Believers makes disciples with Christ Authority: As disciples, we operate under the authority of Jesus. This empowers and compels us to go forth confidently to make disciples, knowing that we are backed by the ultimate authority.

Session 2

Go and Make disciples

- Based on this authority, Christ then gave a command
- Go and not stay. It's a command, not an advice.
- "In Jerusalem" connotes that the apostles must first make discipleship in their domain such as: homes, schools, and workplaces.
- You must be a disciple to make disciples.

Question: how can we start making Disciples in our immediate circles?

Prayer: Lord, please grant us the strength to fulfill the Great Commission.

Session 2:

Practical Steps in Making Disciples

- Reach out to your friends on your phone.
- Be intentional about Discipling the younger ones: children, youth etc.

Teaching and Baptizing

- To teach means to educate, to illuminate towards transformation.
- The baptism of a new believer means that he or she has publicly confessed the faith.

The Promise of Christ's Presence

- Christ not only gave His disciples clear instructions, but He also assured them of His ongoing support and empowerment through His divine presence. This promise motivated the disciples as they spread the gospel across the world.
- Christ's presence is a perpetual comfort to His church, remaining with His people until they finally behold Him, the Lamb on the throne.
- Despite the enemy's attacks and a hostile culture, even in the face of persecution, Christ is always with us, providing strength and assurance.

Question: Is baptism necessary after believing Christ?

Prayer: Lord gives us boldness, wisdom, and perseverance in making disciples.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR BUILDING A VIBRANT YOUTH MINISTRY IN EDEN GARDEN CHRISTIAN CENTER IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
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This project aimed to develop a discipleship strategy for building a vibrant youth ministry at Eden Garden Christian Center in Louisville, Kentucky. The focus of this project evolved to address the doctrinal and spiritual needs of the youth, integrating them into the life and mission of the church through intentional discipleship.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the context of Eden Garden Christian Center and the Shively neighborhood in Louisville. Chapter 2 presents a biblical basis for discipleship as commanded in the Scripture; It stressed the importance of intentionality in discipleship. Chapter 3 examines historical and contemporary approaches to catechesis and discipleship and their relevance to youth ministry. Chapter 4 details the methodology and implementation of the project, including the development of an eight-week discipleship curriculum. Chapter 5 is an assessment of the ministry project that emphasized the effectiveness youth discipleship.

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