

# **DISCIPLESHIP AND ITS IMPACT IN THE CHURCH**

**BY**

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## INTRODUCTION

The call to discipleship involves Jesus' unique invitation to become like Him (Luke 6:40) and to be a full participant in His mission. "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" links discipleship with carrying the good news to all (Mark 1:15,17; Luke 5:10), while the occasions on which Jesus sent the twelve or the seventy out in two's (Mark 6:7-13; Luke 10:1-20) show that He expects disciples to be fully involved in service to others.

Discipleship is both personal and public. It is comprised of our private daily walk of prayer, fasting, worship, and studying God's Word. These are all things that people don't see us doing. Then there is the public part of witness, ministry, and serving. These are things that are visible. Some have called this our "journey inward" and our "journey outward." Discipleship is both.

Discipleship is a foundational aspect of Christianity, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ. It involves the process of nurturing and guiding individuals to grow in their faith, knowledge, and understanding of God, while also equipping them to live out their beliefs in their daily lives. In the context of the church, discipleship plays a vital role in fostering spiritual maturity among believers and empowering them to fulfill their mission in the world. This comprehensive write-up explores the concept of discipleship and its profound impact within the church community.

Discipleship in the church is a very important task of the church. It is the heartbeat of God and a basic necessity for a successful Christian life. The scripture revealed that Jesus called the twelve disciples from the beginning of His ministry. He taught them within a period of three and a half years. After the training and before the ascension to heaven, He commanded them to go and make more disciples from all over the world. Before then, He had already told them as follows:

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, of the son, and of the Holy Ghost and teach them to obey everything I have command you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age”* (Matthew28:18-20).

The great commission is all about making disciple. The command of God is not only to raise or make converts of all nations. This is crucial indeed, most especially for believers who are the disciple today and the disciples of the youth. It is sad today that many churches are filled with overgrown the youth; this is why the church in this generation has not been able to make real impact on the society. No doubt, there are many church auditoriums where people congregate every with high frenzy and excitement but the number of disciple are infinitesimal.....[1] A successful life is a fulfilled life; a fulfilled life is a life that pleases the Lord. The one who will please the Lord is one who has conformed to the image of the son of God (Romans8:29).

The effect shows the important of discipleship in the life of a Christians “Most churches grow by transfer”. The system of today is the rotation of the saints. To carry on with the work of His father, Christ had to commission his disciples, all believers inclusive. The numbers of real converts to Christ had to commission his disciples, all believers inclusive. The number of real converts to Christ by some “great churches is meager”, instead churches with strong preaching and music programmes attracts large numbers[2] . Therefore people think that the church is great and the workers do the job. In reality, the church with the restaurants and theatres becomes the mega one because they entertain[3] .

The relationship between the clergy and laity has become professional to that of performers and parishioners and audience, the better the show, the larger the crowd. All these show that

outstanding performance attracts people. It means little more than that in no way does it faithfully reflect the priorities of Christ for His church[4] . The lord said, ‘I go to conquer other worlds for my Father, so do a good job’[5]

The crucial questions arises again, “who is a disciple”? A disciple is one who follows Jesus Christ. Being Christians do not make one a disciple, even though members of His Kingdom.

Following Christ means acknowledging Him as Lord; it also means serving Him as a slave, just as unbelievers serve Satan. It also means loving and praising the father. Perhaps, the biggest problem in the church today is lack of grounded Christian journey, only a few get plugged in all the way enough to where they mature in the faith.

Incidentally, many Christians are easily beguiled with words and in turn they indulge in philosophy being established in faith and the act of making disciple is a process of building up preparing and equipping the body of Christ. To advance His kingdom should be the primary focus of every believer who is a disciple indeed and wants to be a disciple.

## **WHO IS A DISCIPLE?**

A disciple is a follower or student of a teacher, leader, or philosophy. In religious contexts, disciples often refer to those who follow the teachings of a particular spiritual leader or religious figure, such as Jesus Christ's disciples in Christianity or the disciples of Buddha in Buddhism. The relationship between a disciple and their teacher or leader typically involves learning, guidance, and adherence to certain beliefs or practices. The term can also be used more broadly to describe someone who follows or adheres to a particular ideology, philosophy, or school of thought.

## **What is a church?**

The church is the body of Christ that He nourishes and cares for as He does Himself, the church is His glorious temple in which He is pleased to dwell (revelation 21:3) it is His fullness. The word translated church in the English bible is Ekklesia, this word is the Greek word Kaleo meaning the (The called out ones).

## **What is Discipleship?**

Discipleship is a term commonly used in religious contexts, particularly in Christianity, but it can also be applied more broadly to various mentorship and apprenticeship relationships. In its Christian context, discipleship refers to the process of following and learning from Jesus Christ, as well as helping others to do the same. It involves deepening one's faith, understanding of scripture, and commitment to living according to the teachings and example of Jesus.

In practical terms, discipleship often involves a mentor-disciple relationship, where a more experienced believer (the mentor) guides and teaches a less experienced believer (the disciple) in matters of faith, theology, spiritual growth, and practical Christian living. This relationship typically involves regular meetings, study of the Bible, prayer, accountability, and encouragement.

Discipleship can be understood as a relational journey where mature believers, often referred to as mentors or disciplers, invest their time, wisdom, and spiritual guidance into the lives of newer or less mature believers, known as disciples. This relationship is characterized by trust, accountability, and a shared commitment to spiritual growth. At its core, discipleship is about following the example of Jesus Christ, who called his disciples to follow him and learn from his teachings.

## CONCEPT OF CHURCH GROWTH

### a. Church growth been qualitative and quantitative

Quantitative measures typically include numerical data such as attendance numbers, membership figures, baptisms, and financial contributions. These metrics provide a tangible way to assess the size and numerical growth of a church over time.

On the other hand, qualitative aspects of church growth focus on the depth of spiritual growth, discipleship, community engagement, and the overall impact of the church on individuals and society. Qualitative measures often involve assessing the level of spiritual maturity among members, the effectiveness of discipleship programs, the strength of relationships within the congregation, and the church's outreach efforts.

By considering both quantitative and qualitative factors, church leaders can gain a more comprehensive understanding of their congregation's growth and health. This balanced approach allows for a more holistic evaluation that takes into account both numerical growth and the spiritual vitality of the church community.

### b. Church growth is complex

Indeed, church growth is a multifaceted process influenced by various factors. Here are several aspects that contribute to the complexity of church growth:

- i. **Spiritual Factors:** The spiritual health and vitality of a church play a significant role in its growth. Factors such as prayer, worship, discipleship, and spiritual leadership contribute to the overall spiritual atmosphere of the church, which can impact its growth.

- ii. Leadership: Effective leadership is crucial for church growth. Pastors, elders, and other leaders play a key role in casting vision, providing direction, and creating a culture conducive to growth.
- iii. Community Engagement: Churches that actively engage with their surrounding communities often experience growth. This can involve outreach programs, community service initiatives, and partnerships with local organizations.
- iv. Relevance and Adaptability: Churches that are able to stay relevant and adapt to changing cultural contexts tend to attract and retain members more effectively. This may involve updating worship styles, embracing new technologies, or addressing contemporary social issues.
- v. Evangelism and Outreach: Proactive evangelism and outreach efforts are essential for reaching new individuals and families. This can include personal evangelism, evangelistic events, and outreach ministries targeted at specific demographics.
- vi. Discipleship and Membership Development: Growing churches prioritize discipleship and the spiritual growth of their members. They provide opportunities for individuals to deepen their faith, develop their spiritual gifts, and become actively involved in ministry.
- vii. Strategic Planning and Management: Churches that employ strategic planning and effective management practices are better equipped to pursue growth goals. This involves setting clear objectives, allocating resources wisely, and regularly evaluating progress.
- viii. Cultural and Demographic Factors: The cultural and demographic context in which a church operates can significantly impact its growth potential. Factors

such as population trends, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation patterns can influence the receptivity of communities to church outreach efforts.

- ix. **Technology and Communication:** Leveraging technology and effective communication channels can enhance a church's ability to connect with both members and non-members. This includes maintaining a strong online presence, utilizing social media platforms, and leveraging digital tools for ministry purposes.
- x. **Internal Dynamics:** Internal dynamics within a church, such as organizational structure, relational dynamics among members, and the overall health of church ministries, can either facilitate or hinder growth.

**c. Church growth is founded on God's word**

The concept of church growth being founded on God's word is deeply rooted in Christian theology and practice. In Christian belief systems, the Bible is regarded as the inspired and authoritative word of God. Therefore, any growth or expansion of the church is ideally based on the teachings and principles found within the Bible.

Here are a few key points to consider regarding this concept:

- i. **Biblical Foundation:** Many Christian denominations emphasize the importance of adhering to biblical teachings in all aspects of church life, including evangelism and growth strategies. This means that any efforts to grow the church should align with the principles and values outlined in the Bible.
- ii. **Evangelism and Discipleship:** The Bible contains numerous passages that encourage believers to spread the message of Christianity and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). This often involves sharing the gospel, teaching



others about Jesus Christ, and helping them grow in their faith through discipleship.

- iii. **Prayer and Guidance:** Christians believe in seeking God's guidance and direction through prayer and spiritual discernment. Therefore, church growth strategies are often accompanied by prayerful consideration and a reliance on God's wisdom to lead and guide the process.
- iv. **Spiritual Transformation:** True church growth, from a Christian perspective, involves more than just increasing numbers or attendance. It also encompasses spiritual transformation and the deepening of individuals' relationships with God. This transformation is believed to occur through the power of God's word and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- v. **Community and Fellowship:** Another aspect of church growth is the development of a strong Christian community where believers can support and encourage one another in their faith journey. The Bible emphasizes the importance of fellowship among believers (Hebrews 10:24-25), and a thriving church community can attract others to the faith.

## **TYPES OF CHURCH GROWTH**

- a. **Numerical Growth:** This type focuses on increasing the number of attendees, members, or participants within the church. It often involves strategies such as evangelism, outreach programs, and community engagement to attract new people to the congregation.
- b. **Biological Growth:** Biological growth refers to the natural increase in church attendance due to factors such as births, baptisms, and marriages within the existing congregation.

This type of growth is often seen in churches with established membership and strong family-oriented communities.

- c. Conversion Growth: Conversion growth occurs when individuals who were previously unaffiliated with the church or another religious tradition convert to Christianity and join the congregation. This type of growth is typically associated with evangelistic efforts and effective discipleship programs.
- d. Transfer Growth: Transfer growth involves individuals switching from one church or religious denomination to another. This may occur due to changes in personal beliefs, dissatisfaction with their current church, or attraction to the programs and community offered by another congregation.
- e. Spiritual Growth: Spiritual growth focuses on deepening the faith and discipleship of existing church members. This type of growth involves fostering spiritual maturity, biblical knowledge, and a deeper relationship with God through activities such as Bible studies, prayer groups, and discipleship courses.
- f. Structural Growth: Structural growth pertains to the physical expansion and development of church facilities, such as building new sanctuaries, adding additional classrooms, or establishing satellite campuses. This type of growth is often necessary to accommodate increasing attendance and ministry needs.
- g. Relational Growth: Relational growth emphasizes building strong interpersonal relationships within the church community. This involves fostering a culture of love, support, and unity among members, which can enhance retention rates and attract new individuals seeking community and belonging.

- h. Missional Growth: Missional growth focuses on fulfilling the church's mission to serve and impact the surrounding community and world positively. This type of growth involves engaging in outreach initiatives, social justice efforts, and missions work to address the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of others.
- i. Discipleship Growth: Discipleship growth centers on equipping believers to become committed followers of Christ who actively engage in serving and ministering to others. This type of growth emphasizes teaching sound doctrine, mentoring relationships, and opportunities for service and leadership development.

## **CONCEPT OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Discipleship is a foundational concept in many religious and spiritual traditions, particularly in Christianity, but it also has broader applications in mentorship and learning contexts.

In the Christian context, discipleship refers to the process of following and learning from Jesus Christ. The term "disciple" originates from the Latin word "discipulus," meaning learner or pupil. In the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus called individuals to become his disciples, inviting them to follow him, learn from him, and ultimately spread his teachings to others.

### **Key elements of discipleship in Christianity:**

- a) Following Jesus: Discipleship involves actively following the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. This includes both belief in his teachings and efforts to live according to them.

- b) **Learning and Growth:** Discipleship is a journey of continual learning and spiritual growth. Disciples are expected to deepen their understanding of scripture, develop their faith, and grow in their relationship with God.
- c) **Community and Fellowship:** Discipleship often occurs within the context of a community of believers. Disciples support and encourage one another, share their experiences, and hold each other accountable in their faith journey.
- d) **Service and Mission:** Discipleship extends beyond personal spiritual growth to include a commitment to serving others and participating in God's mission in the world. This may involve acts of compassion, justice, and evangelism.
- e) **Mentorship and Leadership:** Within the disciple-discipler relationship, there is often an emphasis on mentorship and leadership development. Seasoned disciples guide and mentor newer believers, helping them grow in their faith and become effective leaders themselves.

Outside of the religious context, the concept of discipleship can also apply to mentorship relationships in various fields. In mentorship, a more experienced individual (the mentor) guides and supports a less experienced individual (the mentee) in their personal and professional development. The mentor shares knowledge, advice, and encouragement, helping the mentee navigate challenges and reach their goals.

Overall, discipleship is a multifaceted concept that involves learning, growth, community, service, and mentorship. Whether in a religious or secular context, discipleship plays a vital role in personal development and the passing on of wisdom from one generation to the next.

## **Components of Discipleship:**

**1. Biblical Teaching and Study:** Discipleship begins with a solid foundation in the Word of God. Through regular study of the Bible, disciples gain insight into God's character, His will for their lives, and the principles that govern Christian living. Below are some Biblical teachings

- a. **Reading the Bible:** The foundation of biblical study is reading the Bible itself. This involves both regular reading of passages and studying specific books or themes in-depth.  
**Hermeneutics:** Hermeneutics refers to the principles and methods of interpreting the Bible. This includes understanding the historical and cultural context of the text, as well as interpreting passages in light of other biblical teachings.
- b. **Exegesis:** Exegesis involves critically examining and interpreting the meaning of biblical texts. This often includes analyzing the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) in which the Bible was written, as well as considering literary forms and structures.
- c. **Contextualization:** Contextualization is the process of applying biblical teachings to contemporary contexts. This involves understanding how the principles and messages of the Bible relate to modern issues and circumstances.
- d. **Theology:** The study of theology involves exploring the doctrines and beliefs taught in the Bible, such as the nature of God, salvation, and the role of humanity. This includes systematic theology, which organizes biblical teachings into coherent systems of thought.
- e. **Church Tradition:** Many approaches to biblical study also incorporate the teachings and traditions of the Christian Church throughout history. This includes the writings of theologians, creeds, and statements of faith.

- f. **Prayer and Meditation:** Prayer and meditation are important aspects of biblical study, as they allow individuals to seek guidance from God and reflect on the meaning of scripture in their lives.
  - g. **Application:** Ultimately, biblical study is not just about acquiring knowledge but also about applying the teachings of the Bible to one's life. This involves living out biblical principles in daily life and seeking to grow in faith and character.
- 2. Prayer and Spiritual Practices:** Central to discipleship is the cultivation of a vibrant prayer life and engagement in spiritual disciplines such as fasting, meditation, and worship. These practices deepen one's relationship with God and foster spiritual intimacy.
- a. **Prayer as Communication with God:**

Prayer is the primary means through which disciples communicate with God. It involves not only speaking to God but also listening to Him. Through prayer, disciples express gratitude, seek guidance, intercede for others, and surrender their lives to God's will. Philippians 4:6-7 - "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
  - b. **Meditation and Reflection:**

Spiritual practices like meditation and reflection involve pondering the Scriptures, God's character, and His works. They help disciples to deepen their understanding of God's Word and His presence in their lives. Joshua 1:8 - "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

c. Fasting:

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that involves abstaining from food or certain activities for a period of time to focus on prayer and spiritual growth. It helps disciples to discipline their bodies and align their hearts with God's purposes. Matthew 6:16-18 - "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

d. Community and Fellowship:

Discipleship involves community and fellowship with other believers. Spiritual practices such as corporate worship, prayer meetings, and small group gatherings foster accountability, encouragement, and mutual edification among disciples. Hebrews 10:24-25 - "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Service and Acts of Compassion:

Engaging in acts of service and compassion towards others is a vital aspect of discipleship. It reflects the love of Christ and demonstrates the transformational power of the Gospel in the lives of disciples. Galatians 5:13 - "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."

**3. Community and Fellowship: Discipleship thrives within the context of Christian community.**

Believers gather together for worship, fellowship, and mutual encouragement, providing support and accountability on their spiritual journey.

a. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV):

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

b. Acts 2:42-47 (NIV):

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

c. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV):

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

Paul encourages believers to support and uplift one another, reinforcing the idea that fellowship involves mutual encouragement and edification.

d. Ephesians 4:15-16 (NIV):

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held



together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

4. Service and Mission: A crucial aspect of discipleship is learning to serve others selflessly and participate in the mission of the church to spread the Gospel and make disciples of all nations.
  - a. **Service:** Service, often referred to as "acts of service" or "serving others," is the embodiment of the teachings and values of a faith tradition. It involves selflessly helping others, meeting their needs, and contributing to the well-being of the community. In the context of discipleship, service is a practical expression of love, compassion, and humility. Disciples are called to emulate the example set by their spiritual leaders or founders who demonstrated a life of service.
  - b. **Mission:** Mission refers to the purpose or calling that disciples feel they have been given as part of their faith journey. It often involves spreading the teachings of their faith, sharing its message of love, peace, and salvation, and working towards the transformation of individuals and society according to the values of their faith. Mission can take various forms, including evangelism, social justice advocacy, humanitarian work, and community outreach.

Now, let's explore how service and mission intersect with discipleship:

Service as a form of discipleship: Engaging in acts of service is not just a moral obligation but also a fundamental aspect of discipleship. By serving others, disciples embody the teachings of their faith, cultivate virtues such as empathy and compassion, and deepen their relationship with the divine. Service also fosters a sense of unity and solidarity within the faith community, strengthening bonds and promoting collective

well-being.

Mission as a calling of discipleship: Mission is often seen as a natural extension of discipleship. Disciples feel compelled to share the transformative power of their faith with others, motivated by a desire to bring about positive change in the world. Missionary activities, whether through preaching, teaching, or humanitarian work, allow disciples to fulfill their calling and contribute to the expansion and enrichment of their faith community.

Integration of service and mission: Service and mission are closely intertwined in the practice of discipleship. Service-oriented activities provide disciples with opportunities to fulfill their mission by demonstrating the practical implications of their faith through acts of kindness, generosity, and service to others. Conversely, mission activities often involve serving those in need, thereby addressing both spiritual and material concerns in alignment with the teachings of their faith.

## **TYPES OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Below are various types of discipleship scripturally:

- a. **Personal Discipleship:** This involves an individual's personal relationship with Jesus Christ, where one learns from Him through prayer, reading the Bible, and personal reflection. This type of discipleship emphasizes the intimate connection between the disciple and Jesus. Mark 1:17 - "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."
- b. **Relational Discipleship:** This type emphasizes the importance of relationships within the Christian community for growth and accountability. It involves mentoring, supporting,

and encouraging one another in the faith. Hebrews 10:24-25 - "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

- c. Missional Discipleship: This type focuses on sharing the Gospel and serving others as part of the disciple's journey. It emphasizes the call to make disciples of all nations and to live out the teachings of Jesus in practical ways. Biblical Reference: Matthew 28:19-20 - "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
- d. Community Discipleship: This type emphasizes the importance of the Christian community in nurturing and supporting discipleship. It involves learning and growing together within the context of a local church or small group. Biblical Reference: Acts 2:42-47 - "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common."
- e. Lifelong Discipleship: Discipleship is not a one-time event but a lifelong journey of growth and transformation. It involves continually seeking to know Christ more deeply and becoming more like Him in every aspect of life. Biblical Reference: Philippians 3:12 - "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

## **THE BENEFIT OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CHURCH**

- a. Discipleship remains a cornerstone of the contemporary church for several reasons:

Spiritual Growth: Discipleship provides a structured framework for believers to grow spiritually. Through teaching, mentorship, and accountability, discipleship helps individuals deepen their understanding of the faith and mature in their relationship with God.

- b. Community and Fellowship: Discipleship fosters a sense of community and fellowship within the church. Small group settings often accompany discipleship programs, allowing believers to build relationships, support one another, and journey together in their faith.

Equipping for Ministry: Discipleship equips believers with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual gifts necessary for ministry. As disciples grow in their faith, they are better equipped to serve others and fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples themselves.

- c. Cultural Relevance: While the methods of discipleship may evolve to suit contemporary contexts, the core principles remain relevant. Discipleship addresses the challenges and questions that believers face in today's rapidly changing world, providing guidance and wisdom rooted in biblical truth.

- d. Counteracting Individualism: In a culture that often prioritizes individualism and self-reliance, discipleship emphasizes the importance of community, accountability, and interconnectedness within the body of Christ.

- e. Continuation of Jesus' Ministry: Jesus' own ministry was centered around making disciples. The contemporary church continues this mission by following Jesus' example, investing in the spiritual growth and development of believers.

- f. Transformational Impact: Discipleship has the potential to bring about transformational change in individuals, families, communities, and even societies at large. As disciples grow in their faith and live out their beliefs, they become agents of positive change in the world around them.

## **BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

In the Old Testament, the concept of discipleship may not be explicitly outlined in the same manner as in the New Testament, but there are certainly principles and examples that reflect the essence of discipleship.

- i. Moses and Joshua: One notable example is the relationship between Moses and Joshua. Moses served as a mentor and leader to Joshua, guiding him and preparing him to eventually lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. This mentor-disciple relationship reflects the passing down of knowledge, skills, and spiritual guidance from one generation to the next.
- ii. Elijah and Elisha: Another example is the relationship between Elijah and Elisha. Elisha served as a disciple to Elijah, learning from him and eventually inheriting his prophetic ministry. Elisha demonstrated his commitment to following in Elijah's footsteps by asking for a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9), indicating his desire to continue and expand upon his mentor's work.
- iii. David and Solomon: David, as a king, provided guidance and instruction to his son Solomon, who succeeded him as king of Israel. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon shares the wisdom he received from his father, highlighting the importance of passing down wisdom and knowledge from one generation to the next.

- iv. The Wisdom Literature: The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job offer wisdom and instruction for living a righteous and faithful life. These teachings can be seen as a form of discipleship, as they provide guidance and instruction for individuals seeking to live according to God's will.
- v. The Prophets and their Followers: Throughout the Old Testament, prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel called upon the people of Israel to repent and turn back to God. These prophets often had followers who supported and assisted them in their ministries, demonstrating a form of discipleship in their commitment to serving God and spreading his message.

## **BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Discipleship in the New Testament is a central theme, particularly in the Gospels and the writings of the apostles. The concept of discipleship refers to the process of following Jesus Christ, learning from Him, and being transformed into His likeness. Here are some key aspects of discipleship from a biblical perspective:

- i. Call to Follow Jesus: In the Gospels, Jesus calls individuals to follow Him, leaving behind their former lives to become His disciples. This call often involves a radical reorientation of one's priorities and commitments (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, Luke 5:27-28).
- ii. Learning from Jesus: Discipleship involves not only following Jesus physically but also learning from His teachings, observing His actions, and imitating His character. Jesus' disciples spent time with Him, listened to His teachings, and witnessed His miracles (Matthew 11:29, Luke 10:39, John 13:15).

- iii. Transformation: Discipleship is a process of transformation where followers of Jesus become more like Him in character and conduct. This transformation is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit and the intentional efforts of the disciple to conform to the image of Christ (Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:22-23).
- iv. Community and Accountability: Discipleship often takes place within a community of believers where disciples encourage, support, and hold one another accountable in their walk with Christ (Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:24-25).
- v. Mission and Service: Jesus' disciples are called to participate in His mission of proclaiming the gospel, making more disciples, and serving others in love. This involves both sharing the message of salvation and demonstrating God's kingdom through acts of compassion and justice (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 10:45, Acts 1:8).
- vi. Sacrifice and Commitment: Following Jesus as a disciple requires sacrifice and total commitment. Disciples are called to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Jesus wholeheartedly, even in the face of opposition or persecution (Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:27, Philippians 3:7-8).
- vii. Abiding in Christ: Discipleship involves a continual abiding in Christ, remaining connected to Him through prayer, worship, and obedience to His word. It's not merely about outward actions but about cultivating a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus (John 15:4-5, Colossians 3:16, 1 John 2:6).

## **SIGNIFICANT OF DISCIPLESHIP IN CHURCH GROWTH**

- i. Spiritual Growth: Discipleship involves mentoring, teaching, and nurturing individuals in their faith journey. Through discipleship, believers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual practices necessary for their personal growth in Christ.

- ii. **Multiplication Effect:** Jesus' model of discipleship was not only about making disciples but also about teaching them to make disciples themselves (Matthew 28:19-20). When disciples reproduce themselves by investing in others, the church experiences exponential growth.
- iii. **Community and Fellowship:** Discipleship fosters a sense of belonging and community within the church. As believers walk together, supporting and encouraging one another, they strengthen their bonds and build a unified body of Christ.
- iv. **Strengthening Leadership:** Through discipleship, emerging leaders are identified, mentored, and developed. This process ensures the continuity of leadership within the church and empowers individuals to serve in various capacities.
- v. **Evangelism and Outreach:** Disciples who are grounded in their faith and equipped with the tools of discipleship are better prepared to share the gospel with others. As they live out their faith and testify to God's transforming power, they become effective witnesses in their communities, leading to the expansion of the church.
- vi. **Discernment and Accountability:** Discipleship relationships provide a platform for believers to grow in discernment and accountability. Trusted mentors can offer guidance, correction, and encouragement, helping disciples navigate challenges and stay true to their faith.
- vii. **Cultural Impact:** As disciples grow in their understanding of biblical principles and the teachings of Jesus, they become agents of positive change within their societies. Through acts of compassion, justice, and mercy, disciples contribute to the transformation of communities and cultures.



viii. **Spiritual Warfare:** Discipleship equips believers to stand firm in their faith amidst spiritual battles. By grounding themselves in the truth of God's Word and supporting one another in prayer, disciples are better equipped to overcome temptations and trials, thereby safeguarding the health and growth of the church.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, discipleship lies at the heart of the church's mission and is essential for its vitality and impact. By prioritizing discipleship, churches can cultivate mature believers, strong communities, effective leaders, and a transformative presence in the world. As believers commit themselves to the call of discipleship, they become true followers of Christ, embodying His love, truth, and grace to a broken world.

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