

THE IMPACT OF DISCIPLESHIP ON  
CHURCH GROWTH IN THE CONTEXT  
OF MATTHEW 10:5-6

GODWIN EO, OTOBRISE  
REGISTRATION NUMBER:  
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**BY**

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**REGISTRATION NUMBER: DTS/PMD/2024/2025/01**

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## APPROVAL PAGE

This research work has been read and approved by Dynamic Theological Seminary, Kwale, Delta State, Nigeria, An affiliate of Harvest Bible University, Los Angeles, California, United States. In fulfilment of the requirements for a Post-Master's Diploma in Biblical and Theological Education.

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## CERTIFICATION

We certify that this Thesis was written by Godwin EO Otobrise, with registration number DTS/PMD/2024/2025/01, of the Department of Christian Theology for the award of a Post-Masters Diploma in Biblical and Theological Education at Dynamic Theological Seminary, Kwale, Delta State, Nigeria, affiliated with Harvest Bible University, Los Angeles, California, United States.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research work is dedicated to the Holy Spirit for His guidance and teaching me to grow in Him, and dwell in the presence of God always.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I sincerely acknowledge the help of God which I always enjoy in all my endeavour. The grace of God for easiness has been the anchor of my support system. I thank God for the strength He gave me to type every word in this research work. Each time I imagine how I did it, I am quick to remember that “*it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*” Romans 9:16. God, you are great, and I am grateful for upholding me, my family and your work you put in our hands.

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I greet all members of Deeper Faith Christian Assembly Global for the care and the various support you individually and collectively offered to ensuring the work of God is done right, accurately and timely.

It is my desire that this research work: The Impact of Discipleship on Church Growth in the Context of Matthew 10:5-6 should be improved upon by other researchers and theologians as it serves as a manual or guide to pastors and church leaders in raising disciples for the purpose of growing the Church of God invariably fulfilling the Great Commission as handed to us, His disciples.

## Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of discipleship on church growth, with a focused exegetical and theological analysis of Matthew 10:5–6 as a foundational text. The study examines how Jesus' commissioning of the twelve disciples to engage with "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" reflects a strategic model of intentional, localized discipleship that fosters spiritual and numerical growth in the church. By situating the biblical mandate within contemporary ecclesiological practices, the research evaluates the correlation between authentic discipleship and sustainable church expansion. Utilizing qualitative methods, including detailed literature review, and analysis of discipleship programs. This study reveals that churches prioritizing relational discipleship often experience higher and deeper members engagement, leadership multiplication, and missional outreach. The findings suggest that when churches embrace the principles embedded in Jesus' instructions; particularly focus, relational proximity, and obedience, their growth becomes more holistic and resilient. The study concludes that effective discipleship is not merely a program but a transformative process central to the life and mission of the church, affirming its critical role in church growth today.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Growth is acknowledged and desired in most churches, but most disheartening is that growth is rarely seen. One of the greatest problems of the church is the almost non-existence of considerable and consciousness of growth in our scheme of things. Much references are done regarding it, but no concrete effort to make it a reality.

Church growth has been a central topic in Christian theology and ministry for decades, sparking a wide range of approaches aimed at increasing attendance, engagement, and spiritual depth among believers. From mass evangelistic crusades to church planting strategies, various models have been employed to fulfill the Great Commission. However, amid these efforts, one critical and often underemphasized element remains foundational to authentic and sustainable church growth is discipleship. No church can record any substantial growth without training and raising the consciousness of believers on the need to understand how to increase and expand the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Discipleship refers to the intentional process of nurturing believers to grow in their relationship with Christ and to become active participants in His mission. It involves teaching, mentoring, modeling, and community-building, all grounded in biblical principles. In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus gives specific instructions to His twelve

disciples: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” This directive provides a glimpse into Jesus’ strategic and focused approach to ministry. He prioritizes depth over breadth, relationships over crowds, and transformation over transaction.

This passage underscores the importance of targeted, intentional ministry. Rather than pursuing immediate numerical growth, Jesus begins by cultivating a core group of committed followers who will eventually multiply His ministry exponentially. The significance of this approach remains relevant today, particularly in a church culture that often measures success through numbers rather than spiritual maturity.

Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of discipleship is to send them out to work in the field as Jesus did in Matthew 10. The task of the disciple maker is to get the willing believers learn the principles of discipleship and be acquainted scripturally, spiritually and otherwise to do the work for which he/she has been trained for multiple harvest.

This research work actively talks about the impact of discipleship on church growth. Growth is possible in any church that is ready to pay attention to the place and relevance of discipleship. Growth can only be sustained in any church that is willing and determined to pay the price of discipleship. We the disciples of Jesus Christ today, are increasing daily in our tasks as a result of the price paid by Jesus in training

His disciples and sent them out as labourers to harvest the plenteous souls lost out there. Matthew 9:37, “*Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few.*” The role of discipleship in any church is vital and crucial to the growth and expansion of that church. Absence of discipleship is what makes some churches experience non-growth, stagnation and even total extinction. Stunt growth in church could be discouraging and frustrating.

The word discipleship means a leader training people in his/her line of endeavour. And the one that makes disciples reveals the knowledge of their hidden potentials to those he is discipling. This is done for the purpose of sustenance and continuity of that ministry, assignment or business.

Jesus called people out of their places of activities, business endeavours, engagements, assignment, etc so that He could disciple them and align them with His ministry and assignment here on earth. The Lord Jesus still calls people from secular schedules and from their recreations and homes to follow and learn from Him. This He accomplishes through His faithful servants who perform the work of disciple makers.

The discipleship scheme of the church is of paramount importance to God in order to achieve a stupendous growth in the church until rapture takes place. This is established in Matthew 28:19-20; Mark16:15-16. “*Go ye therefore, and teach all*

*nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:19-20.*

*And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15-16.*

The Great Commission given to the church is discipleship.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Little effort on discipleship or total absence of it in some churches nowadays has led to many chaos both in the church and the society. While some church leaders are not willing to disciple their church members, the few that are willing complain of nonchalant attitude on the part of the members. In this case, non-availability of members to be discipled constitutes huge shortfall in discipleship. The question, however, is who is to be blamed? The leaders or the followers? Is it that the church fails to play her role, or people are not willing to be discipled? Resulting from improper discipleship many are falling and have lost the salvation of their souls. Souls are perishing out there. As early as 7.00am you might find people in drinking parlours and gardens wasting away in doing things that are ungodly. This is because there are no enough disciples to send out to preach to them. Some people are asking

questions: Is not there anything wrong with the church? Is the church sleeping? Has the church not failed in playing her role?

Nevertheless, some churches especially the small ones on the path of growth invest in discipleship through the avenues of establishing schools of discipleship in their ministries, setting up and teaching small groups, mentorship and active participation in various church activities: services, outreaches and other church programs. These efforts aim to deepen individuals' understanding of faith, foster community consciousness in Christianity, and encourage them to live out their faith through service and soul winning through evangelism and preaching the gospel to the uttermost of the earth as stipulated in the scripture. Act 1:8, “*...and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*”

However, despite some significant investments in church growth programs and initiatives, many congregations experience stagnation, burnout, or superficial engagement among members. This raises a crucial question: Are contemporary growth strategies neglecting the foundational role of discipleship as modeled by Jesus Christ? The problem this study addresses is the apparent disconnect between modern church growth efforts and the biblical mandate for intentional discipleship, particularly as illustrated in Matthew 10:5-6.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Based on the questions raised above and the impact of discipleship on church growth that this work is being undertaken for the purpose of changing the narratives and offer possible solutions to the questions, so as to help the church live meaningfully and achieve success and growth for the purpose to which the church was established.

The researcher is therefore concerned about the impact of discipleship on church growth in order to proffer useful suggestions that can aid the dynamic and effective discipleship in the church that will also lead to the growth and expansion of the Kingdom of God. Leaders have the responsibility to disciple their followers in fulfilment of God's word in Matthew 10:5-6, 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16. God will not be pleased if the leaders fail to effect a change in the discipleship gap, so their members can follow up with the need to grow the church effectively according to the laid down principles in the scripture. Therefore, this work is not necessarily an academic product only, but also, it is an honest and true appraisal of the situation as it is found in churches today. Also, the writer hopes that the church leaders and church members may know that they have a role to play. This work therefore, intends to be a positive contribution made by a genuinely concerned Christian leader to the quest for discipleship.

From the above assertion made with all sincerity confidently and positively the purpose of this study is to explore the impact of discipleship on church growth, using Matthew 10:5-6 as a foundational text. By analyzing Jesus' approach to commissioning His disciples and the resulting outcomes.

The research therefore aims to:

- Highlight the biblical principles of discipleship found in Matthew 10:5-6.
- Examine how these principles have historically influenced church growth.
- Evaluate the relevance and application of these principles in contemporary church settings.
- Propose practical strategies for integrating discipleship more effectively into church growth models.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

To achieve this purpose this work examines the impact of discipleship on church growth in the context of Matthew 10:5-6 as a means of achieving and attaining an effective discipleship that will have positive impact on church growth, the scripture in context is extended to verse 15. The primary sources are the Christian libraries, and interactions with the various works of other scholars, Christians and church leaders.

That is, the study employs a qualitative methodology combining biblical exegesis, literature review, and works of other leaders as stated above. The research begins with an exegetical study of Matthew 10:5-6 to extract core discipleship principles, and extend the scripture to verse 15 in order to achieve the growth that will emanate from effective discipleship.

This thesis is structured into seven chapters:

- **Chapter One** introduces the research topic, providing background, purpose, significance, and research questions.
- **Chapter Two** examines literature review by exploring the biblical and theological foundations of discipleship, with particular attention to Matthew 10:5-6.
- **Chapter Three** focuses on the formation of discipleship and the impact on church growth taking into consideration historical and contemporary perspectives on church growth and discipleship.
- **Chapter Four** pays attention to the Biblical perspective of discipleship illustrating the relationship between discipleship and church growth, in the context of Matthew 10:5-6.
- **Chapter Five** deals with suggested ways of recruiting and equipping disciples for Church growth.

- **Chapter Six** deals with discussion of findings, challenges encountered and proffers solutions that will ameliorate the challenges and improve church growth.
- **Chapter Seven** This chapter talks about conclusion, and practical recommendations for integrating discipleship into modern church growth strategies.

Each of the chapters is followed by the endnotes and Bibliography at the end of it all.

Through this study, it is anticipated that a clearer understanding of the integral role of discipleship will emerge, providing both theological insight and practical guidance for church leaders and communities seeking authentic growth grounded in the mission and model of Jesus Christ.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

In order to give this work focus, the scope will be limited to researching books, reports, internet, and other literature on discipleship, and an exegetical analysis of Matthew 10:5-6, by primarily examining the principles found in Matthew 10:5-6 and their implications for discipleship and church growth. While it draws on broader biblical and historical examples, the core analysis remains centered on this passage. The research does not aim to evaluate every possible model of church growth but concentrates on the interplay between discipleship and sustainable growth.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The result of this study will help the church leaders to gain the appropriate information necessary for them to be knowledgeable about the impact of discipleship on church growth as it is established in Matthew 10:5-6. The researcher believes also that the findings of this study will help people who are willing in their ministry to carry their cross and continue to follow Jesus Christ till the end, and also most especially win souls for Christ.

It is of assurance that this study is significant for pastors, church workers and volunteers, theologians, and lay Christians who seek a deeper understanding of how discipleship influences church growth.

It challenges contemporary assumptions and encourages a return to the roots of Christian mission. By grounding its analysis in Scripture, particularly Matthew 10:5-6, the research promotes a model of growth that is spiritually enriching, relationally grounded, and missionally effective.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

Discipleship is acknowledged and desired in most churches but most dis-hearting, is rarely seen. One of the greatest problems of the church is the almost non-existent consciousness of growth in our scheme of things regarding discipleship. Much references are made regarding it, but no concrete efforts to make it a reality. No

church can record a substantial growth without discipleship. No impact can be made on church growth without a conscious effort to train disciples.

Now, to this regard, there is a need for us to know what discipleship is all about and other terms used in the course of this project work.

What is church? The meaning of growth, church growth and the word “Impact” in order to give this work better understanding. Therefore, attempt is made to define the major terms. It describes a journey of spiritual growth.

### **1.7.1 What is Discipleship?**

Discipleship can be defined as the condition or situation of being a disciple, a follower, or a student of some philosophy, especially a follower of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

It is a process of spiritual formation where individuals are mentored and taught to live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is a process of spiritual formation where individuals are mentored and taught to live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Again, discipleship is of learning to love, and follow Jesus Christ and be more like Him in attitude and actions. It is also seeking to make other disciples who would want to do the same thing. Most often, discipleship occurs in a relationship with a mentor.

Discipleship is both what we heard Jesus commands and what we saw Jesus doing. Discipleship is essential to both the message and the method of following Christ.

Jesus' method of discipleship was not intended to be unique, it was prototypical. He invited people to follow and live alongside Him so they might lead others in like manner. He could have started a formal training school. But instead, He built His training around time in His presence as He exercised His trust in the Father, practiced relentless love for all people, and carried out His mission with His disciples.<sup>2</sup> The great commission is for us to similarly make disciples of those who do not follow Christ, including those born or brought into the church. Discipleship takes intentionality and consistency to achieve. It requires a plan from both discipler and disciples.

Christian discipleship is a life-long process of growth and transformation, becoming more like Christ in every aspect of life.

### **1.7.2 Who is a Discipler?**

He/she is a disciple-maker, leader, teacher, master, coach, mentor and trained motivator and trainer.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.7.3 Matthew 10:5-6**

A scriptural passage where Jesus commissions His disciples, focusing their ministry on the lost sheep of Israel. *“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” Matthew 10:5-6.*

#### **1.7.4 Commissioning:**

The act of commanding, authorizing or sending forth individual or group of people for a specific mission or task within the context of ministry.

#### **1.7.5 Who is a Disciple?**

He/she is a follower, student, trainee, apprentice, mentee and protegee.<sup>4</sup> Also, a disciple in this context is someone who accepts and helps to spread the teachings of Jesus Christ. A disciple is a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, committed to learning from His teachings and reflects His true nature. More broadly, a disciple can be anyone who adheres to the teaching of another and strives to live according to those principles and assist in spreading the teachings.

#### **1.7.6 What is Church?**

The church is the assembly of believers who belong to God – A group of people called out from the walks of life, to follow Jesus Christ. The Greek word for church is ekklesia': ek – out, kle – to call.<sup>5</sup> It means assembly or gathering. The collective body of Christian believers.

Also, the church is the bride of Christ. The main reason Christ is coming back a second time and the only property He has left on earth.

Furthermore, church is a reconnection of God's family from all the tribes of the whole world, all connected by the Blood of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

To many people a church is a building. Others believe that a church is a

denomination like Baptist, ECWA, DFCA, CAC, Methodist, RCCG, TRA, Anglican, Roman Catholic, TAC etc, but the truth is that Church is the Body of Christ irrespective of denominational groupings and names.

At this point, there is a need to look at what the church is not:

- Church is not just an organization of people.
- Church is not a mere building or structure.
- Church is not a fashion or parade centre.
- Church is not a ritual centre or occult house.
- Church is not a court room where judgment takes place.
- Church is not a business centre or market place.
- Church is not a film or theater house.
- Church is not a secular classroom.
- Church is not a town-hall.
- Church is not a dead organism.
- Church is not a shrine.
- Church is not a political forum.
- Church is not a ethnic group.
- Church is not a canteen.

In addition, the congregation of Israel was referred to as “Ekklesia” which implies that the Jews had been “Called Out” from other nations to be God’s

special people (Romans 9:4). Simply put, church denotes the assembly of the recipients of His divine grace, called out to be witnesses for Christ in the world.<sup>7</sup>

**The followings are the other descriptions of what church is:**

- Church is the local community of believers.
- Church is the body of Christ. (*Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18; I Cor. 12:27*).
- Church is the temple of Holy Spirit. (*I Cor. 3:16*).
- Church is the extended family of God: a worldwide community of brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Church is the New Jerusalem. (*Rev. 3:12; 21:2, Heb. 12:22*).
- Church is the New Israel. (*Matt. 21:43, Gal. 3:29, I Peter 2:9*)
- Church is the group of people with a common goal i.e. Christians who meet regularly for fellowship.
- Church is the assembly of believers in Christ, who are called out, baptized by the Holy Spirit into His body, and joined to the Lord and to one another by the Holy Spirit.
- Church is the bride of Christ. (*Matt. 9:15; 21:1-2, Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29*)

There is no distinction made between the local and the universal church in the New Testament. In fact, most of the books that mentioned the “Church” were referring to local communities of Christians. The New Testament

speaks about local Churches in certain places such as Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Philadelphia, etc. The Church therefore refers to a group of people with common goal: in short, Christians who meet regularly for fellowship.<sup>8</sup>

### **1.7.7 The Meaning of Growth**

The Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary of 1987 defines the word Growth as evolution, development, increase, expansion, attitudinal traits or character formation.<sup>9</sup> It means progress, advancement and betterment. It may be noticeable, silent, rapid or gradual. It can happen to material, human, organic, organization or spiritual entities. Growth covers every facet of life. It can happen at all stages of life. Sometimes growth can be positive or negative. Whether it is acknowledged or not, growth happens to all.

### **1.7.8 The Concept of Church Growth**

Church growth is a noticeable or silent change, rapid or gradual resulting in numerical increase, quality growth, social growth, physical growth, financial growth, material growth, spiritual growth, health and well-being, extension growth, etc. The Growth of the church is of paramount importance to God. Every other growth should lead to growth of the church. Without growth in the church there would be decay and death. God is not happy when the church is not growing. Much like a child that refuses to walk after five years. The purpose of the existence of the church is to grow, grow and keep growing until rapture. Growth should never stop

in the Church. It is either growth or decay. The Church has no option. She must grow or die.

Church growth encompasses various aspects, including attendance at worship services, membership and spiritual growth of individual members. Ultimately, it is about fulfilling the Great Commission by preaching the Good News, making disciples and bringing people into fellowship with Jesus Christ.

#### **1.8.9. The Meaning of Impact**

Impact can be defined as creating a forceful shock; making a lasting impression; a positive effect and an aura of influence that cannot be avoided.<sup>10</sup> To have a strong effect on something or someone.

Impact also means to bring change and turnaround to a situation or person.

Everyone can make an impact. It can be positive or negative. Everyone possesses the capacity to create an impact through their words, actions, manners and natural endowments.

## **END-NOTES**

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The literature review is based on the topic of this research project: Impact of Discipleship on Church Growth in the Context of Matthew 10:5-6. Other sub-topics were taken into consideration during the review.

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing literature on the interrelationship between discipleship and church growth. By examining biblical, historical, and contemporary perspectives, this review establishes a scholarly framework for understanding how discipleship serves as a foundational component of sustainable church growth. Special attention is given to the exegetical and theological implications of Matthew 10:5–6, which forms the cornerstone of this study.

The relationship between discipleship and church growth is both biblically rooted and theologically rich. Matthew 10:5–6 serves as a foundational text, where Jesus commissions His disciples to focus specifically on the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," emphasizing a strategic and localized approach to ministry. This passage reflects the urgency and specificity of Christ's model of discipleship, which has significant implications for modern church growth efforts.

## **2.1 Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1.1 Concept of Discipleship**

Discipleship is deeply rooted in the biblical narrative, particularly within the ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is a fundamental concept in Christian theology, traditionally understood as the process of following Jesus Christ and adhering to His teachings. It has its base in the New Testament where the “disciple” (Greek – *mathetes*) refers to a follower, student, or learner (Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17). The concept of discipleship has evolved over time with scholars emphasizing different aspects of what it means to be a disciple in the contemporary society. While some focus on the historical and biblical roots of discipleship, others explore its practical application in modern contexts, such as churches; communities, and personal spiritual growth.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest Christian understanding of discipleship was one of the total commitment and submission as exemplified by the twelve apostles. These men followed Jesus Christ in a literal, physical sense, learning from Him directly. According to the New Testament accounts, discipleship involves a radical reorientation of one’s life, where personal ambition, cultural norms, and societal expectations were secondary to the call of Christ (Luke 14:25 – 33).

This biblical foundation for discipleship as evident in Christ's command to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20) actually started with the basic laid down principles as expressed by Jesus Himself in Matthew 10:5-6.

Theologians argue that discipleship demands an ongoing, costly commitment, even to the point of sacrifice and martyrdom. This concept of costly grace highlights that true discipleship is life-altering commitment,<sup>2</sup> and it further expatiates that discipleship must involve a radical surrender to Jesus Christ in totality.

In modern scholarship, discipleship is often viewed as a process of spiritual formation that encompasses both individual and communal aspects, which introduces a holistic understanding of discipleship, where individuals are not only learning from Jesus but are also being transformed into Christ's image. This view emphasizes the internal transformation that comes from engaging in spiritual practices such as prayer, scripture reading, meditating on the word of God, worship, fellowship and service.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, it is suggested that discipleship is deeply relational, stressing that the community of believers plays a crucial role in the spiritual growth of individuals. Discipleship, therefore, is not only about individual spiritual development but also about ongoing fellowship and accountability that exists within

the body of Christ.<sup>4</sup> One important aspect of modern discipleship is the integration of it into everyday life. The concept of discipleship extends beyond religious setting, encouraging Christians to live out their faith in every aspect of their lives, including work, relationships, and social engagements.

Further studies argue that discipleship involves learning to live as Jesus would have lived, not just through theological knowledge but by embodying the principles of the Kingdom of God in the world.<sup>5</sup> It is true that discipleship begins with internal transformation and continues through daily habits of spiritual reformation. This internal work lay the ground work for sustainable church growth, as transformed individuals become catalysts by ‘multiplier effect’ for community renewal. This transformative understanding of discipleship emphasizes the importance of aligning one’s personal values and actions with the teachings of Jesus in practical, everyday contexts. The role of the church in fostering discipleship cannot be over emphasized. Churches provide the setting for believers to engage in discipleship worship, teaching and ministry. The church is a critical institution for nurturing spiritual growth, yet many modern churches struggle to cultivate genuine discipleship. This view argue that the church must move beyond programs and activities and focus on creating environment that fosters authentic relationship, accountability, and mutual growth.<sup>6</sup> Effective discipleship involves mentorship and intentional discipleship relationships, where more matured believers help guide others in their spiritual journey as it is stated in

2Timothy 2:2. “*And the things that thou have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*”.

Contemporary discussions around discipleship also address the challenges and barriers that modern Christians face. Secularism, cultural shifts and the rise of individualism have posed significant obstacles to the practice of discipleship. Other studies opine, modern western society often prioritizes personal autonomy over communal identity making it difficult for individual to commit to the communal and sacrificial nature of discipleship<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the digital age has introduced new dynamics in how discipleship is practiced with on- line resources and vital communities playing an increasingly prominent roles in spiritual formation. Despite these challenges, scholars maintain that the call to discipleship remains as urgent and relevant today as it was in the early Christian church.

### **2.1.2 Concept of Discipleship as presented in Matthew 10:5-15.**

Matthew 10:5–6 exemplifies Jesus’ strategic emphasis on focused ministry, where He instructs His disciples to limit their initial mission to “the lost sheep of Israel.” Scholars argue that this passage underscores a deliberate and relational approach to mission.

It is clear that Jesus' instructions reflect a missiological paradigm grounded in covenantal faithfulness and strategic preparation for broader outreach.

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) further reinforces the centrality of discipleship, commanding believers to “make disciples of all nations. The Master Plan of Evangelism, argues that Jesus’ method of mentoring a select group of individuals served as the blueprint for reproducing spiritually matured leaders. This model emphasizes depth over breadth, personal transformation over programmatic activity, and multiplication through intentional investment in others.

From the aforementioned, this passage provides a clear and practical understanding of discipleship, highlighting key aspects of what it means to be a follower of Christ. In this scripture, Jesus not only sends the disciples to preach but also instructs them on how to depend fully on God for provision and how to engage with the world with humility and simplicity. The first element of discipleship seen in this passage is the authority given by Jesus. Matthew 10:1 state “And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease”. Discipleship according to this passage is rooted in the authority of Christ. The disciples are not acting in their own power but as endowed with the divine authority that comes from Jesus Himself. This reflects a central theme of Christian discipleship, which emphasizes

that followers of Christ do not embark on or undertake their mission by their ability or wisdom but under the leading authority and empowerment of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

Another significant aspect of discipleship in this passage is the call to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Jesus instructed the disciples to “proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Matthew 10:7-8). Discipleship involves spreading the message of the Gospel and embodying the value of God’s Kingdom. In the context of Matthew 10, this involves both verbal proclamation and tangible act of healing. The disciples’ mission is not merely one of words but also of deeds, as they are sent to demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom of God through miracles and healing. This dual emphasis on proclamation and demonstration is central to Christian understanding of discipleship, where both evangelism and compassion go hand in hand.

In summary, Matthew 10:5-15 offers a vivid portrait of discipleship as a life of obedience, dependence on God, humility, and perseverance. It is not merely a theoretical concept but a practical calling that involves both proclamation and action, with emphasis on trusting God and living in simplicity. Discipleship, as presented here, is about being sent out with the authority of Christ, depending on God’s provision, humility engaging with other, and continuing the mission even in the face of rejection and persecution.

### **2.1.3 Relationship Between Discipleship and Growth.**

Discipleship and church growth are deeply interconnected in Christian ministry, as discipleship plays a critical role in fostering both spiritual development within the church and the expansion of the Christian community. Discipleship understood as a process of learning to follow Jesus Christ and live according to His teachings, serves as the foundation for sustained church growth. A church that prioritized effective discipleship above mundane activities and programs not only nurtures her existing members but also creates an environment where new believers can be integrated and mature in their faith in Christ, leading to an outward growth of the church body.<sup>8</sup>

At its core, discipleship involves more than just increasing the number of believers; it emphasizes the transformation of individuals into committed followers of Christ in a committed church. Jesus' command to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, the Great Commission, illustrates this dynamic: "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." The act of making disciples involves not just evangelism, but also teaching and mentoring individuals to grow in their relationship with Christ. This is made possible by aggressive follow up on the part of the mentor, not necessarily waiting for the disciple to come seeking you. A church that invests in discipleship ensures that her members are grounded in the faith, equipped to disciple others, and actively living out the mission of the

church as ordained by God in scripture following the laid down principles by Jesus Christ Himself.

Discipleship and church growth are also linked in the way they cultivate a sense of community and belonging to the Body of Christ. According to the New Testament, the church is not just a place of worship but a family where believers support one another and grow together in faith (Acts 2:42-47). *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrines and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favour with all the people.*

*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Acts 2:42-47.*

Discipleship fosters that communal aspect of mutual love by encouraging individual spiritual development, the ongoing fellowship and accountability that exist within the body of Christ that help the believers to live in relationship with one another, sharing experiences, challenges and victories. A church that encourages discipleship creates a culture of mutual care, renewed life in Christ and share mission, which

strengthens the bond among members and attracts new believers who desire to be part of a supportive and transformative community for mutual eternal spiritual benefit. That sense of belonging is essential for church growth because it addresses the deep human need for connection, making the church an appealing place for both new and existing members.

Moreover, discipleship is directly tied to the church's ability to reach new people and harness the church resources to keep them together as one family in Christ. As disciples mature in their faith in Christ and become more like Christ, they are naturally motivated to share the Gospel and bring others into the fold. The process of discipleship when properly organized, produces a church where members actively and willingly engage in evangelism, outreaches, and mission work. Churches that prioritized discipleship cultivate a culture, where every believer is encouraged to take part in spreading the gospel and making disciples themselves. This multiplication effect is key to church growth as each disciple becomes a potential mentor and evangelist who can reach out to their own sphere or circle of influence, thereby expanding the church community.

Additionally, discipleship enhances spiritual maturity which is an essential ingredient for the sustainability of church growth. A growing church attracts new people and nurtures in faith and get deepen in the word of God and by commitment assists in the work of God. Discipleship programs that promote spiritual formation

such as regular Bible study, prayer and service which will in turn help new believers to grow in their understanding of spirituality and be able to cope in the world. As individual matures spiritually, they become effective leaders, teachers and servants within the church, allowing the congregation to become much healthier and more equipped to handle the challenges that come with spiritual growth.

Without a strong foundation of discipleship, church growth can become superficial and unsustainable, as new members may not be adequately integrated or spiritually grounded.

Also, discipleship impact church growth by shaping the church identity and mission. A church that is centered on making disciples will naturally align her vision, goals, and activities around this mission. Discipleship, when prioritized, guide the church in her outreach efforts, service to the community, and her emphasis on social justice, mercy and love.<sup>9</sup> A church that focus on discipleship will not only grow in membership but also in depth, as her members become more engaged in the life of the church and her broader mission. This mission-driven focus attracts those who are seeking of a deeper, more authentic spiritual experience, contributing to both the inward growth (spiritual growth) and outward growth (increased membership and outreach).

In conclusion, discipleship and growth are intricately interwoven. Discipleship builds a strong foundation for growth by cultivating spiritually matured believers who are equipped to serve, evangelize, and disciple others. A church that fosters discipleship will not only experience increase in the number of people who come to faith but also a deeper ministry and more vibrant community life. Through discipleship, believers grow in understanding of the gospel, their relationship with Christ, and their commitment to the mission of the church as well as their brothers and sisters in the faith, thereby creating a dynamic spiritual environment in which both individual and the church as a whole can grow and thrive amicably in Christ.

#### **2.1.4 Ways Discipleship Can Impact Church Growth**

Discipleship plays a crucial role in the growth of the church, both in term of spiritual depth and numerical expansion. When Church emphasizes discipleship, it helps her members grow in their faith and also create an environment conducive to reaching new believers. Below are several key ways in which discipleship can impact church growth.

##### **1. Spiritual maturity of believers.**

One of the most significant impacts of discipleship on church growth is the spiritual maturity it fosters in believers. As individuals grow in their understanding of scripture, deepen their understanding and relationship with God, and learn to live

out their faith, they become more effective witnesses of the gospel.<sup>10</sup> Mature Christians are better equipped to handle life challenges, engage in meaningful relationship and save others selflessly. Spiritually matured congregation is not only more attractive to potential new members but also better able to support the growth of the church through leadership, service and evangelism effort.

As believers grow in their faith through discipleship, they become more Christlike, which strengthens the overall health of the church. This foundation of spiritual maturity helps to maintain stability and direction as the church expands, ensuring that growth is sustainable.<sup>11</sup>

## **2. Empower Believers for Evangelism.**

Discipleship empowers believers to become active participants in the mission of the church. As disciples learn to live out their faith in everyday life, they become natural evangelist. When believers understand the gospel deeply and experience its transformative power they are motivated to share it with others.<sup>12</sup> Discipleship encourages believers to see evangelism not as an obligation, but as organic result of their relationship with Christ.

In turn, when a church prioritizes discipleship, its members are equipped with the tools and confidence they need to reach out to their friends, families and communities. This ripple effect of personal evangelism leads to the church growth,

as individuals bring others into the fold. The church becomes a place where both existing and new members are engaged in sharing the gospel and making disciple

### **3. Strong and supportive community.**

Another key component of discipleship is building deep relationship within the church. Discipleship encourages believers to engage in small groups, studying together, hold each other accountable, and serve alongside one another. This sense of community is attractive to both new and existing members. People are likely to stay in a church where they feel accepted, supported, cared for and spiritually challenged.

Where discipleship is a central part of the church culture, members are more likely to invest in each other's spiritual growth and well-being. The relational aspect of discipleship creates an environment where people can find belonging, experience fellowship, and be encouraged in their faith.<sup>13</sup>

A church with strong relational bonds tends to grow, as people invite others into a supportive and nurturing community where they can belong, grow spiritually and express their new acquired spiritual knowledge.

#### **4. Multiplication of Leaders**

Effective discipleship produces leaders who can take on responsibilities within the church, multiplying the church capacity. As individuals grow in their faith, they may feel fulfilling when given assignments, such as being called to lead groups, teach classes, or take on other roles that help them to disciple others. These new leaders, contribute to church growth by making more disciples and ensuring that new members are integrated into the mainstream of the church programs and nurtured within the community.

By focusing on discipleship, the church creates a culture of leadership development, where individuals are constantly being raised up to serve in new and impactful capacities. The leadership multiplication is vital for sustaining growth as the church expands in both its influence and its ability to disciple others.

#### **5. Holistic Mission and Outreach.**

Discipleship does not only involve personal growth but also includes service and outreach to the leader community. As disciples grow in their understanding of God's love, they become more committed to social justice, mercy and caring for those in need. A church that emphasizes discipleship is likely to engage in acts of service that impact the local community and attract new individuals who are drawn to the church's commitment to meeting both spiritual and practical needs.<sup>14</sup>

This holistic approach to mission where believers are equipped to serve the community creates an environment that is welcoming and impactful. Outreach through acts of service, along with the proclamation of the gospel, can actively lead to the growth of the church as people are attracted to the message of Christ and to the church tangible love for others.<sup>15</sup>

## **6. Retention and Integration of New Believers**

Discipleship plays a critical role in the retention and integration of new believers as members of the community. When individuals first came to faith, they often face challenges and need guidance as they navigate their new relationship with Christ. Discipleship helps new believers to find their feet in their new faith, understand scripture, and connect with the community of the church. By providing a pathway for new believers to grow spiritually, church ensures that they are not just gaining numbers but are nurturing lasting transformed lives.<sup>16</sup> Without discipleship, new believers may struggle to find their place within the new environment - the church, and may eventually drift away back to the world. However, when churches prioritize discipleship, they provide ongoing support, encouragement, and teachings that help the new believers to thrive, stabilize and become active participants in the life of the church.

## **7. Healthy and Sustainable Growth.**

Lastly, discipleship fosters healthy growth within the church. Church growth is not just about numerical emphasis but more about deepening the spiritual lives of individuals and families.<sup>17</sup>

A church focus on discipleship will grow in a balanced and sustainable way, where spiritual depth accompanies numerical increase. This prevents the church from experiencing ‘shallow’ growth, where many people join but a few are retained and truly transformed or committed. Through discipleship, the church can create a culture where new believers are integrated into a vibrant, healthy community of believers that nurtures them in their faith in Christ. As the church grows, her members continue to be spiritually nourished and are equipped to reach others, thus creating a cycle of growth that is both deep and lasting.

Discipleship is integral to church growth because it produces spiritually mature believers who trained to evangelize, lead, serve and disciple others. By re-engineering discipleship, a church builds a foundation of strong relationship, empower leaders and a mission-driven church community. This leads to both the spiritual growth of individual and the numerical growth of the congregation. Through discipleship, a church creates an environment where both existing members

and new believers are nurtured, challenged and equipped to fulfil the Great Commission, ensuring the ongoing expansion of God's Kingdom.

### **2.1.5 Practical Implications of Implementing Discipleship Strategies.**

In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus commissions His twelve disciples to go out to proclaim the Kingdom of God, heal the sick, rely on God for their provision. This passage offers valuable insight into discipleship which can have practical implications for church and Christian missionaries when developing discipleship strategies.

Truly, Matthew 10:5–6 remains a theologically rich and often debated passage. Jesus' directive to avoid Gentile and Samaritan territories has been interpreted as both a temporary strategic limitation and a model for targeted mission. This therefore suggests that this instruction reflects Jesus' covenantal mission to Israel, serving as a necessary foundation before the gospel's universal expansion post- resurrection.

Theologically, this passage illustrates three key discipleship principles: obedience to Christ's commands, intentionality in ministry focus, and sensitivity to context. These principles not only characterized Jesus' own ministry but also provide a framework for contemporary churches seeking missionally effective strategies. Jesus' method demonstrates that impactful ministry often begins with depth before breadth, and transformation before transmissions. Discipleship based

on this model emphasizes obedience to Christ reliance and a focus on mission and service.<sup>18</sup>

The implementation of those principles in modern church context can yield significant results for both spiritual formation and church growth. One very important practical implication of Matthew 10:5-6 for discipleship strategy is the emphasis on empowered and equipped leadership. Jesus gives His disciples authority and power to heal the sick and cast out demons, which is foundational for equipping believers in the church today. Modern discipleship strategies should aim at empowering church members, both spiritually and practically, to be active participants in ministry. As seen in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus not only called people to follow Him but also to teach and make disciples of others. Discipleship strategies that focus on building believers for ministry can help them to embrace their roles as leaders and servant-leaders within the church and the community.<sup>19</sup>

The second implication from the scripture in context with extension to verse 15 is trust in God's provision. Jesus instructs His disciples to travel light taking nothing for the journey except the essentials. This directive underscores the importance of faith and reliance on God rather than on personal resources or strategies. In practical terms churches can implement discipleship strategies that encourage believers to cultivate a dependence on God, recognizing that their success in ministry is not

dependent on material things or wealth or personal expertise but on divine provision. Such approach can reduce dependency on church programs and increase faith in God's ability to meet the need of His people.<sup>20</sup>

This reliance also encourages a communal mindset, where members are open to providing for each other and for the work of the Kingdom.

Jesus instructs His disciples to shake the dust of their if they are not welcomed, teaching them that rejection is part of the mission work. Churches should incorporate this aspect into discipleship strategies by preparing believers' mind for the reality of rejection and opposition in their own ministry and outreach efforts. This resilience is essential in an era where many are disillusion with organized religion, and it provides a framework for believers to continue in their mission despite setbacks. By training disciples to handle rejection gracefully. Churches can cultivate a culture of perseverance and commitment to the Great Commission. This mindset enables believers to keep moving forward in faith, trusting that God will open doors for ministry even when they face resistance.<sup>21</sup>

Another practical aspect of discipleship highlighted in Matthew 10:5-15 is the relational and hospitable nature of the ministry of Jesus Christ's command to His disciples to accept hospitality and stay in the home of those who accept and received them speaks volumes on the importance of building relationship as part of the

discipleship process. Discipleship should not be isolated or individualistic; instead, it must involve relationships within the community. Churches should emphasize relational discipleship that fosters accountability, mentorship, and spiritual friendship. By creating an environment where believers support one another in their faith journeys, churches can effectively implement discipleship strategies that are grounded in mutual care and hospitality.<sup>22</sup> This relational approach ensures that discipleship is not just a series of programs but a way of life that is rooted in genuine community relationships.

Another practical implication is the mission focus embedded in discipleship when Jesus called His disciples “proclaim the Kingdom of God”, and the Great Commission further reinforces this mission mandate (Matthew 28:19-20). Discipleship strategies based on Matthew 10 should prioritize outreach and evangelism, encouraging believers not only to grow in their faith but also to share the gospel and serve the community. Effective discipleship in the modern church should include intentional missional components that challenge believers to engage with their neighborhoods, workplace, and beyond. True discipleship requires followers to live out the principles of the Kingdom in practical ways. Whether through service projects, evangelism efforts or social justice initiatives, churches must actively equip disciples to fulfill the mission of God in their daily lives.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, obedience to Christ's instruction is a central tenet in Matthew 10:5-15. Jesus' disciples are sent on mission work, with clear instructions and immediate action (Matthew 10:5-7). This call to immediate and wholehearted obedience can be applied to discipleship strategies by encouraging believers to take active steps in their faith journey. Churches can promote discipleship that fosters obedience through intentional teachings, regular accountability and opportunities for practical application. As seen in the early church, the disciples immediately responded to Jesus' call, and their commitment to obedience led to the growth of the Christian movement (Acts 2:42-47). Therefore, implementing strategies that inspire obedience, whether in ministry, relationship or personal growth, will help churches create a community of disciples who are ready and willing to respond to God's calling without resistance.

## **2.2 Theological Framework.**

The theological framework for understanding the impact of discipleship on church growth is deeply rooted in the scripture, particularly in the teaching and actions of Jesus Christ.

Central to this framework is the Great Commission found in the book of Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus instructs His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. This command emphasizes the mission nature of discipleship, wherein believers are

not only called to follow Jesus but are also required and entrusted with the responsibility to spreading the gospel and bringing others into the faith. Church growth, therefore, is directly related or linked to the process of discipleship, as it is through the intentional training of disciples that the Kingdom of God expands.

### **1. Discipleship as Obedience to Jesus Christ's Call.**

The foundation of discipleship is obedience to the call of Jesus Christ, which is central to the Christian faith. In Matthew 10:5-6; extended to verse 15, Jesus commissions His twelve disciples to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal the sick. This divine calling is not optional but requires obedient response.

Theologically, discipleship begins with the recognition that Jesus is the authoritative Lord and His command must be followed.<sup>24</sup> As Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” The task of discipleship involves active obedience to the teachings and command of Christ. Obedience is the essence of discipleship because it is demonstrated in Christ and His mission.

### **2. Empowerment for Ministry.**

Jesus' commission in Matthew 10 emphasizes the empowerment of the disciples for the ministry Jesus granted them authority to heal the sick and proclaim the Kingdom of God to the whole world. This empowerment is not based on human ability but on

divine authority given by Christ. In Acts 1:8, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit shall empower His followers to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth. This empowerment reflects theologically that discipleship involves not only personal transformation but also an active role in extending God's Kingdom. Believers are equipped through the Holy Spirit to serve in the mission work of God, and this divine enablement is what makes discipleship fruitful and effective in expanding the church. The church grows when believers are empowered to carry out the work of God.<sup>25</sup>

### **3. Dependence on God's Provision.**

In Matthew 10:9-10, Jesus instructs His disciples to take nothing with them for their mission journey. This demonstrates the theological principles of total dependence on God's provision. This, also calls to travel light and trust in God for provision teaches that discipleship involves reliance on God rather than depending on human's resources.<sup>26</sup> In Matthew 6:31-33, Jesus assures His followers that God knows their needs and will provide for them, emphasizing that they should seek first the Kingdom of God. Discipleship call believers to a life of faith, where the trust in the Lord God for provision for their spiritual and physical needs. This principle of dependence is vital for the growth of the church, as it shifts the focus from self-sufficiency to a community that thrives on God's faithfulness and provision, resulting in spiritual vitality and church expansion.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4. Community and Accountability in Discipleship.**

Discipleship, as seen in the early church in Acts 2:42-47, is not an individual pursuit but communal endeavor. The disciples are called not only individually but to engage in relationship with other believers.

Theologically, this reflects the nature of the church as the body of Christ where every believer plays a role in supporting and holding one another accountable in their spiritual journey (1Corinthians 12:12-27). In Matthew 10:13, Jesus instructs His disciples to accept the hospitality of those who accept and welcome them, implying the importance of relationship and mutual support in ministry. Discipleship, then, flourishes with a community that nurtures each other in faith through fellowship, prayer, and mutual care. As believers grow together, they are more equipped to serve the world, leading to both spiritual and numerical growth in the church.<sup>28</sup>

#### **2.3 Empirical Review.**

The impact of discipleship on the church growth is a significant area of exploration within Christian ministry and theology. Matthew 10 presents a key passage where Jesus commissions His disciples, providing essential principles for discipleship that can lead to both spiritual growth and church expansion. Empirical studies have examined the relationship between discipleship practices and church growth,

suggesting that a focused and intentional approach to discipleship leads to more engaged believers, better church health, and increased outreach effectiveness.<sup>29</sup>

This review explores several empirical studies that provide insight into impacts of discipleship on church growth, with specific reference to the teaching in Matthew 10:5-6.

Some studies explored the relation between discipleship program and church growth in Korea churches, highlighting that churches with strong discipleship strategies saw significant increase in membership and depth. The study emphasized that a discipleship model based on empowering individuals for ministry, similar to the commissioning in Matthew 10, produced believers who were more confident in sharing the gospel and contributing to church activities.<sup>30</sup> The study also found that discipleship model that focused on both spiritual formation and practical service were most effective in attracting new members and retaining them.<sup>31</sup>

These findings underscore the critical role of equipping disciples for service, as seen in the empowerment of lay leadership through discipleship in Matthew 10:1.

Similarly, other researches focused on empowerment of lay leadership through discipleship and its effect on church growth in North American congregations. The study demonstrated that churches that emphasized discipleship not only experienced growth in numbers but also in exhibited stronger leadership

Structures.<sup>32</sup> This is particularly relevant to Matthew 10 and Luke 9, where Jesus gives His disciples the authority to heal and proclaim the Kingdom of God. Further studies support the idea that empowering believers for ministry work through intentional discipleship leads to the multiplication of leaders with the church, which in turn facilitates both spiritual and numerical growth. Churches that equipped their members to lead, teach, and serve were more effective in engaging their communities and growing both spiritually and numerically.

Moreover, further studies looked at the long-term effects of discipleship programs in America churches and their relationship to church sustainability. Their research found out that churches with a strong discipleship foundation more likely to see continues growth over time, particularly among young people.<sup>33</sup> This aligns with the concept of mission and outreach emphasized in Matthew 10:5 where disciples are sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal the sick. Churches that involved the congregations in active discipleship, such as community service and mission trips, saw a higher retention rate and were more successful in fostering a culture of evangelism. This empirical evidence suggests that discipleship that is outward-focused and oriented toward service and evangelism helps churches to grow and maintain a vibrant, engaged congregation.<sup>34</sup>

A critical aspect of discipleship highlighted in Matthew 10:9-10 is the call to trust in God's provision. This concept which explored how dependence on God in

ministry leads to spiritual growth and effective outreach. Churches that encouraged their members to rely on God rather than their material resources experienced a deeper spiritual connection among their members which in turn fostered growth both personal and corporate context.<sup>35</sup> It is a fact that discipleship practices that focused on God's provision and a simple lifestyle, similar to Jesus' instruction to travel without extra provision (Matthew 10:9-10), led to a greater sense of community and mutual care among church members. This sense of dependence on God was found to be an essential component in both personal and spiritual formation and church growth, as it cultivated a deeper trust in God's ability to provide for the needs of the congregation.<sup>36</sup> The emphasis on community and hospitality in Matthew 10:11-13, where Jesus instructs His disciples to accept hospitality and stay in the homes of those who welcome them. This investigated the role of relational discipleship in church growth, emphasizing that churches with strong community ties experienced greater growth in membership and engagement. This study found that when churches fostered a relational culture, where discipleship was deeply embedded in everyday Christian life and interactions, it led to more sustainable growth. Discipleship that focuses on hospitality as seen in Matthew 10:11-13, creates an environment where both existing members and newcomers feel

welcomed and valued. This relational approach was found to be a key factor in attracting new believers and retaining them with the church community.<sup>37</sup>

Lastly, the impact of resilience in discipleship as seen in Matthew 10:14, where Jesus instructs the disciples to shake off the dust from their feet if they are rejected was examined by researchers, which affirmed the role of perseverance in discipleship that churches that taught believers to handle rejection and failure with grace experienced more sustainable growth. This was more essentially important for churches that are involved in outreach and evangelism. This indicates that when church members were trained in perseverance and resilience - key aspect of discipleship model in Matthew 10, they were more likely to stay committed to the mission assignment of the church, even in the face of difficulties. This resilience led to a deeper and more committed congregation, which ultimately contributed to the church's overall growth.<sup>38</sup>

The early church provides a compelling model of discipleship-driven growth. The Acts narrative, particularly Acts 2:42–47, depicts a community shaped by teaching, fellowship, prayer, and mutual accountability.

The Protestant Reformation introduced new emphases on individual access to Scripture and the priesthood of all believers. This for instance, emphasized personal engagement with the Word and the transformative

role of community in shaping Christian life. Their theologies fostered discipleship models rooted in doctrinal instruction and communal responsibility.

Contemporary church growth models range from program-oriented mega-church frameworks to organic, small-group-based discipleship systems. Research demonstrates that relational investment fosters deeper commitment and spiritual maturity, key indicators of sustainable growth.

Despite this understanding, many churches still continue to adopt attractional models that prioritize entertainment, consumer satisfaction, and rapid expansion.

While the literature on discipleship and church growth is extensive, relatively few studies explore how specific biblical texts, such as Matthew 10:5–6, inform both theological understanding and practical ministry strategies. Existing research tends to address discipleship and growth as separate domains rather than as interdependent elements. This study aims to bridge that gap by offering an integrative analysis that combines scriptural exegesis with real-world application.

The literature reviewed affirms that discipleship is not only a biblical imperative but also a proven foundation for sustainable church growth. Historical and contemporary sources consistently highlight the effectiveness of relational, intentional, and transformative approaches to discipleship. However, prevailing church growth paradigms often prioritize numerical success over spiritual depth.

## **END-NOTES**

1. Bonhoeffer D, The cost of Discipleship, (New York; Macmillan, 1959), 10.
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## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0. THE FORMATION OF DISCIPLESHIP AND THE IMPACT ON CHURCH GROWTH

Discipleship, as exemplified by Jesus Christ and modeled in Scripture, is not merely a method of spiritual education but a transformative journey that reshapes identity, relationship, growth, and eternal purpose. In Matthew 10, Jesus begins the formation of His disciples not just by instruction but by commissioning them into a mission rooted in identity and intimacy with Himself. This chapter explores the theological and practical dimensions of discipleship formation under five key themes.

#### 3.1. Our True Identity.

A person's identity is a critical commodity, especially in today's information-driven society. Our identity has great commercial and moral value, not only to us, but to someone else who might be trying to access us for one reason or the other.

Some people change their own identity in an attempt to make themselves acceptable to a certain group of people. These people may buy designer dresses or a very high luxury car to appear affluent. Confusing what we do with our real identity is an easy mistake to make, but the confusion can be deadly if we want to grow and thrive as Kingdom disciple.

Discipleship begins with a redefinition of self in light of Christ. Jesus called the disciples by name and gave them authority (Matthew. 10:1), signifying that their identity was no longer rooted in occupation or background, but in their relationship with Him and participation in His mission. Paul affirms this in Galatians 2:20, stating, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

### **3.1.1. Our Identity Begins at the Cross, and Ends at the Cross.**

Disciples of Jesus are expected to place their faith in Christ alone for satisfaction. This is the basis by which God implants a new nature deep within your being. This new nature also called the new birth is the reference point for your true identity.<sup>1</sup> The truth of this is expressed clearly in Galatians 2:20, “*I am crucified in Christ: Nevertheless, I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, gave Himself for me.*” This verse contains all that the disciples really need to know about their identity as believers. To be crucified is to die. We know that Jesus died on the cross; we through His resurrection and our coming to trust in His sacrifice as our Savior, He gives us life everlasting. And on earth the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives and helps us overcome the old way of life we inherited from Adam. Anyone that will follow Christ must identify his real identity as new creature and put aside the “old self” (Colossians 8:9); Romans 6: 5-6).

If one can absorb and apply what the Bible teaches in Galatians 2:20, such is well on his way to growing as a disciple, because your identity is the key to your spiritual development.

### **3.1.2 Our Death is Spiritual**

As Jesus' death on the cross is spiritual, the death we died in union with Him is spiritual. But that does not make our death any less real. Kingdom disciples are truly "dead men" walking in faith in Christ Jesus. So, how do one make this real in his life? Romans 6:11 says, "*Likewise reckon ye also to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*". When we add up this figurative biblical expression and we arrive at the answer where the Bible says we are died with Christ; and just as Jesus arose to a new life, as followers of the Saviour we have been resurrected with Him to begin a new way of life. God gave us a means of demonstrating this death and resurrection through the ordinance of baptism.<sup>2</sup> As apostle Paul writes, Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? ***Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life***" Roman 6:3-4.

Baptism is not just a situation, but it is a picture of what Jesus did for us. Similar to the relationship of a wedding ring to marriage.<sup>3</sup>

When we go under the water of baptism, we are picturing our identification with Christ in His death, and when we come up out of the water, we declare our identification with Christ in His resurrection.

### **3.1.3. The Power of Christ Within You Makes the Impact.**

Consider Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "*But of Him are ye in Christ, who of God is made us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:*"  
Corinthians 1:30. In other words, when one received Christ, he got the whole package. He is your reference point and identity. Through Jesus there is nothing that is in His will one cannot do (Matthew 19:26). One can declare with Paul; "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*", Philippians 4:13.

Give me the fingers of Mozart, and there is no musical piece I cannot play. Give me the mind of Einstein, and there is no mathematical formula I cannot unravel. Give me the arms of Hank Aaron, and there is no home run I cannot hit. Give me the life of Jesus Christ, and there is no victory I cannot achieve.<sup>4</sup>

Living as an impactful disciple is not just "let go and let God". This is not a passive relationship in which we sit back and cruise along while Jesus Christ does all the work. There is a role you must play. His presence in you will empower you for the work that will make the impact. He is our life, for sure, but He does not live it apart

from us. The new life we received from God operates through our bodies and our personalities.

A Kingdom disciple must discover the art of operating from his or her spiritually transformed soul rather than merely responding to his or her body feelings. This involves the Holy Spirit's work of stripping us of our self-sufficiency (that is, brokenness) so that our transformed human spirit dominates the soul, and vice versa.<sup>5</sup>

You are not your body. Your body is simply a container for your soul. Your soul is what lasts forever. The key to experiencing a true identity with Christ takes place within our soul because our soul is what has been created for eternity.

While modern models often emphasize rapid growth, biblical discipleship is marked by steady, Spirit-led development. In Matthew 10, Jesus limits the initial scope of the disciples' mission to the "lost sheep of Israel" (v. 6), modeling a deliberate and progressive strategy. Growth in discipleship is gradual involving stages of learning, failing and bouncing back and maturing. That is why as Christians we continue growing in faith in Christ Jesus.

Discipleship is a lifelong process of becoming like Christ in character and mission. True growth of the church is measured not by numbers alone, but by the depth of transformation and replication as we are renewed in Christ. A maturing disciple

becomes a disciple-maker (2 Timothy. 2:2), which results in steady, organic church growth.

Furthermore, consistent discipleship creates spiritual resilience. As Jesus warns of persecution and division in Matthew 10:16–23, He also prepares His followers to endure and grow through hardship. This growth is both internal (character) and external (influence and impact).

### **3.1.4. Our Position with Jesus Christ Attracts Heavenly Incentive.**

Colossians 3:1, “*If YE then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*” This scripture is crucial to the process of replacing our viewpoint with God’s viewpoint. The solution to the problem of living as a kingdom and impactful disciple is not down here on earth. The beginning point of our identity is our spiritual position with Christ. The question is: how do you set your heart or our hearts on the things above? You seek the things above with all that is in you. The Greek word for “set your heart” is a term used frequently in scripture to refer to seeking, looking, or searching earnestly. We find it in the work of Jesus.

“But seek first His Kingdom...” (Matthew 6:33)

“Ask, and it will be given to you, seek, and you will find...” Matthew 7:7

“Why is that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father’s house...” (Luke 2:49)

“And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying” (Luke 12:29)

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost...” (Luke 9:10)

Setting our “heart on things above” we are to earnestly and consistently seek out His perspective on every issue in our lives, even when that perspective contradicts our own thoughts.

Jesus repeatedly pointed His disciples toward eternal realities as motivation for their present sacrifices. In Matthew 10:39, He declares, *“Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”* Discipleship involves suffering and surrender, but it also offers a “heavenly incentive” which is eternal rewards and fellowship with Christ (Matt. 19:29).

The early church thrived under persecution because of their eschatological vision (Hebrew 11:10).

Christian formation must be tied to the hope of resurrection and eternal significance. The heavenly incentive is not escapism; rather, it reorients the disciple's values and priorities. Churches that cultivate this vision produce believers who are not

consumers, but contributors who are committed to sacrificial living and service. When believers recognize their identity as beloved children and ambassadors of Christ (2Corintians 5:20), they become empowered to live boldly and missionally

### **3.2. A Deep Intimacy**

Intimacy is one of the greatest delights and blessings that two or more people in a close relationship can have and enjoy. The capacity to draw close to one another and share your lives in such a way that you know each other through and through is part of the image of God that we bear as emotional and relational human being, as a people who have faith in Jesus Christ. God designed us with deep need and deep desire for intimacy in our human relationship, and if intimacy reflects God's image within us, what do we suppose God is seeking in His relationship with us? He wants a close, committed relationship.<sup>6</sup>

No one can be Jesus' disciple without a deep intimacy with Him. This deep intimacy that God looks for in human is part of formation of discipleship that enables believers to carry out the Great Commission.

The issue of deep intimacy is so key in intensifying resources for discipleship. Discipleship is not transactional; it is relational. Jesus called the twelve "to be with Him" before sending them out to preach and heal (Mark 3:14). This "witness" underscores the necessity of intimacy with Christ as the foundation of all mission.

In John 15:5, Jesus says, “*Apart from me you can do nothing,*” emphasizing that spiritual fruitfulness stems from abiding in Him.

Getting abided with Christ makes discipleship not to be a program but a person. A deep intimacy with Christ nurtures obedience, fosters holiness, and sustains spiritual growth. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation on Scripture, and solitude are not optional for disciples, they are lifelines to the heart of God. Without intimacy, ministry becomes mechanical and unsustainable.

In this regard therefore, to be a disciple of Christ we must be crucified with Him. This death is spiritual with Him who gave all to ensure our salvation. So how do one make this real in his life. Romans 6:11, “*Likewise reckon ye also yourself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*”. As His disciples we are accountable to Christ, we died with Him and you just as Christ arose to a new life, as a follower of the Savior, we have been resurrected with Him to live a new way of life. God gave us a means of demonstrating this death and resurrection through the ordinances of baptism.<sup>7</sup> As Apostle Paul writes, Romans 6:3-4 “*Know ye not, that so many as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” Baptism is not salvation, but it is a picture of what Jesus did for us. Similar to the relationship of a wedding ring to a marriage. When we go under the

water for baptism, we are picturing our identification with Christ in His death, and when we come up out of the water, we declare our identification with Christ in His resurrection.

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### **3.2.1. The Passion of Intimacy**

Intimacy definitely involves passion, of which physical passion is just one component. That is usually the aspect we think of first, but it is not as important as spiritual intimacy. Here is my definition of passion: an all-consuming drive to get closer, and to know more fully, the person with whom we wish to be intimate. So, our relationship with Christ as His Disciples should be marked by a never-ending passion to know Him better and draw others to Him. Apostle Paul had that passion to know Christ intimately. We know because the apostle Paul told us so in His classic statement of relationship versus performance in Philippians 3:4-14. The context here is important, because the chapter begin with a warning about “dog” and “the false circumcision” (Philippians 3:2), *“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware*

*of the concision".* These were the "Judaizers", those who were trying to make Philippians focus on rule keeping rather than on their relationship with Christ. Their passion was upholding rules. In contrast Paul wrote that the power of the Christian life is in knowing Christ (Verse 10). "*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death;*" Philippian 3:3 offers a concise description of life as an impactful discipleship. "*We are the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*". What a declaration of the value of the person of Christ over religious performance. The only answer for the flesh is to nail it to the cross of Christ. Anyone who is confident of being able to live for Christ in the energy of the flesh is doomed to spirit of defeat.

Apostle Paul was a man of passion as a disciple of Jesus Christ, which is expected of anyone who offers and wants to be His disciple.

Impactful disciples pursue knowing Christ passionately with unwavering intimacy.

### **3.2.2. Abiding In the Vine.**

Jesus spoke the words in John 15 in the upper room, just before His crucifixion, probably the most intimate setting we are told about in scripture. With His disciples close around Him, and John leaning on Him. (John 13:23), "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved."

John 15:1-2, “*I am the true Vine, any my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that breareth not fruit, He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*”. Jesus used a familiar illustration to make His point. The disciples knew all about vines and fruit. The question was, then, how were they to produce the fruit that God desires?

Jesus continued in verses 4 and 5, “*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except ye abide in me. Verse 5, I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*”

Fruit has three key characteristics:

1. It always bears the character of the tree of which it is a part (orange tree don't produce avocado fruit or apple).
2. Fruit is always visible (it is not hidden).
3. Fruit exists for the benefit of others

Therefore, impactful disciples make disciples, producing fruit in the lives of others.

### **3.2.3. The Process of Abiding.**

This doesn't just happen spontaneously, without any real and deliberate direction.

There is a process to abiding in the Vine (Christ). Jesus made this next statement

when He was talking to His disciples about abiding. He included a very important element when He said, *“These things I command you, that ye love one another.”* John 15:17.

He says that if we abide in Him, or remain in Him and keep His words in us, then we can ask whatever we want and it will be done. We can ask to be empowered, to be blessed in accordance with His will. And we will have it done for us as we ask in His name.

But, again, here is the question. How do I get His words to remain in me? How do I get His words to reach deep down into that level we talked one on one?

The epistle of James answers these questions. After we have received God’s words, James tells us to be “doer of the word” instead of those who are just “hearers”. He explains why this is necessary:

*“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. Verse 23, For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass (mirror): Verse 24, For he beholdeh himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. Verse 25, But whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”* James 1:22-25. The word “man” used in that passage is the Greek word for “male”.

Typically, a man looks at himself in a mirror briefly and then goes away, forgetting what he just saw. In contrast, women spend more time before the mirror, paying close attention to their appearance.<sup>8</sup>

James says we should approach the scripture as a woman looks at a mirror, taking cognizance of every detail of her appearance. We are to take our time to meditate on the word of God, until the Holy Spirit affect our soul with the Bible's transforming truth. James says to "look intently" at the perfect law. He says to let the Word of God liberate you by not being a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer of it. In order to become an effectual doer of the scripture, they need to flow naturally out of you.

For that to happen, a relationship with the living Word, Jesus, must be central in the totality of you, and be established to be an impactful disciple. When you abide in God's Word and depend on the Holy Spirit, becoming an impactful disciple, and obeying the Great Commission is inevitable. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18) *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."*

James writes that we must look intently, holding onto what Jesus said "*if you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of mine*" (John 8:31).

### **3.3 Types of Discipleship.**

The following are various types of discipleship, spiritually.

**1. Personal Discipleship** – This involves an individual personal relationship with Jesus Christ, whereby one learns from Him through prayers, reading the Bible and meditating on the Word as well as 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 out to fish for people.”

**2. Relational Discipleship** – This type emphasizes the importance of relationship 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 one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

**3. 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 teaching of Jesus practical ways, Matthew 28:19-20 says *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things*

*whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

**4. Community Discipleship** – This type emphasizes the importance of Christian community in nurturing and supporting discipleship. It involves learning and growing together within the context of a local church or small group. Act 2:42-47

*“And continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and I breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

**5. Life-long Discipleship** – Discipleship is not a one-time event, but a life-long journey of growth and transformation. It involves continually seeking to know Christ more deeply and becoming more like Him in every sphere of life. Philippians 3:12 says, “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*”

### **3.4 The Impact of Discipleship on Church Growth (Benefits).**

Discipleship remains a cornerstone of the contemporary church growth for several reasons. It is the engine room of sustainable church growth. Programs and events may attract crowds, but only intentional disciple-making can produce lasting fruit. Jesus' method in Matthew 10 involves selecting, training, and sending. This method provides a replicable model. Theologians argue that the success of Jesus' ministry was not in its popularity but in its power to reproduce itself through others.

Churches that prioritize discipleship develop mature leaders, deepen spiritual formation, and expand their missional footprint. As believers grow in identity, intimacy, and resilience, they naturally invite others into that same journey. It is obvious that churches with strong discipleship cultures are more likely to see conversions, community engagement, and leadership multiplication.

Moreover, when discipleship is formative; shaping not only belief but behavior; the Church becomes a transformative force in society. This moves the church from maintenance to mission, from attendance to action.

Discipleship in its entire sense impact the church to achieve:

**1. 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.

**2. Community and fellowship:** Discipleship fosters a sense of community and fellowship within the church. Small group setting often accompanies discipleship programs, allowing believers to build relationships, support one another, and journey together in their faith.

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

**4. Cultural Relevance:** While the method 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.

**5. 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.

**6. 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.

**7. Transformational Impact:** Discipleship has the potential to bring about transformational change in individual, families, communities, and even society at large. As disciples grow in their faith and live out their belief, they become agents of positive change in the world.

**8. 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 themselves reproduce themselves by investing in others, the church experiences exponential growth.

**9. Strengthening Leadership:** Through discipleship, potential leaders are identified, mentored, and developed for the gospel. This process ensures the continuity of leadership within the church and individuals are empowered to serve in various capacities.

**10. Evangelism and Outreach:** Disciples are grounded in the faith, trained and equipped with the tools of discipleship and 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.

The formation of discipleship is a comprehensive process that reshapes identity, deepens intimacy with God, promotes steady growth, and anchors motivation in eternal hope. Matthew 10 offers a blueprint where Jesus forms His disciples by calling them close, commissioning them for mission, and preparing them for challenges with a kingdom perspective. When churches return to this formation model, they rediscover the true path to impactful and enduring growth.

## **ENDNOTES**

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8. Ibid; 110.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **4.0 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DISCIPLESHIP ON CHURCH GROWTH IN THE CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 10:5-6**

This chapter delves into the biblical instruction on discipleship as it relates to church growth, with a special focus on Matthew 10:5-6. Discipleship is not a concept that begins in the New Testament; it is deeply rooted in both the Old and New Testaments. By understanding how Scripture develops the idea of discipleship and connects it to community and mission, we can better appreciate its critical role in fostering sustainable church growth. The chapter will explore the biblical narrative, authorship, theological themes, and the contextual background of Matthew's Gospel, particularly chapter 10.

#### **4.1 The Old Testament and Discipleship**

Although the word "disciple" is not frequently used and not explicitly mentioned or outlined in the Old Testament in the same manner as in the New Testament, there are certainly principles and examples that reflect the essence of discipleship and the concept is present through God's covenantal relationship with His people. Patriarchs, prophets, and kings were called to follow God, learn His ways, and lead others in obedience to His commandments.

**1. Moses and Joshua:** One notable example in the Old Testament is Moses, who discipled and mentored Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:7-8), preparing him to lead Israel. Moses guided and prepared Joshua to eventually lead the Israelites into the promised land. This mentor-disciple relationship reflects the passing down of knowledge, skills and spiritual leadership and guidance from one generation to another.

**2. Elijah and Elisha:** The prophetic schools led by Elijah (2 Kings 2:3-15) also demonstrate a form of discipleship based on mentoring and spiritual formation. Elisha served as a disciple to Elijah, learning from him and eventually inherited his prophetic ministry. Elisha demonstrated his commitment to following Elijah's footsteps by asking for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. 2Kings 2:9 says, "*And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me*" This indicates his desire to continue and expand upon his master's discipleship work.

**3. David and Solomon:** Another typical example of discipleship in the Old Testament is the relationship between 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, king David, highlighting the importance of passing down wisdom and knowledge from one person or generation to another.

The Old Testament emphasizes learning through obedience, repetition of God's laws (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), and community transmission of faith.

## **4.2 The New Testament and Discipleship**

Discipleship in the New Testament is a central theme, particularly in the gospels and 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.<sup>1</sup> His true nature.

The teachings of Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament crystallize the discipleship model through Jesus Christ, Himself. The Gospels portray Jesus calling disciples to follow Him, live in close relationship with them, and eventually reproduce His mission.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John collectively show how Jesus nurtured His followers through teaching, healing, prayer, correction, and commissioning. The Book of Acts continues this narrative as the early church multiplied disciples through the apostles' teaching, communal living, and mission work (Acts 2:42-47). Paul's letters reinforce this with instructions on spiritual maturity, leadership development, and relational mentoring; as stated in the book of 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Here are some key aspects of discipleship in the New Testament:

- 1. Call to follow Jesus:** In the Gospel, Jesus calls individuals to follow Him, leaving behind their former lives to become His disciples. The call often involves a radical reorientation of priorities and commitment (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:27-28)
- 2. Learning from Jesus:** Discipleship involves not only following Jesus Christ physically but also learning from His teachings, observing His actions, and imitating His character and the totality of His way of life. Jesus' disciples spent time with Him learning, listening to His teachings, and witnessed His miracles. (Matthew 11:29; Luke 10:39; John 13:15).
- 3. Transformation:** Discipleship is a process of transformation where followers of Jesus become more like Him in character and conduct. The transformation is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit and the intentional efforts of the disciples to conform to the image of Christ (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-23)
- 4. 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 Good News of salvation and demonstrating God's

Kingdom through acts of compassion and justice (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 10:45; Acts 1:8)

**5. Sacrifice and Commitment:** Following Jesus as a disciple requires sacrifice, self-denial and total commitment. Disciples are called to deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Jesus wholehearted even in the face of opposition or persecution (Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:27; Philippians 3:7-8)

#### **4.3 The Book of Matthew**

The Gospel of Matthew is known for its adaptability to liturgical use. It has exerted powerful influence, especially, through its presentation of the popular sermon on the Mount, which concerns the character, duties, privileges, and destiny of the citizens of the Kingdom of heaven. Very concise, it has messianic interest. The book's particularism and universalism cannot be neglected. Jesus says, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel*" Matthew 15:24. The book of Matthew presents a structured account of Jesus' ministry, emphasizing His identity as the Messiah and the responsibilities of His followers. The Gospel according to Matthew tells the Good News that Jesus is the promised Saviour, the One through whom God fulfilled the promises He made to His people in the Old Testament.

This Good News is not only for the Jewish people, among whom Jesus was born and lived, but for the whole world. It provides a strong theological and practical framework for discipleship.

The book of Matthew is carefully arranged. It begins with the birth of Jesus, describes His baptism and temptation, and then takes up His ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing in Galilee. After this, the gospel records Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem and the event of Jesus' last week, culminating in His crucifixion and resurrection.

This Gospel according to Matthew presents Jesus as the great Teacher, who has the authority to interpret the Law of God, and who teaches about God's Kingdom.

Universalism is displayed when Gentiles pay homage to Jesus when He was born as in Matthew 2:1 "*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem,*" The Gentiles provided asylum and protection when Jesus' life was in jeopardy. "*And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him*" Matthew 2:13. Great Commission to all nations as affirmed in Matthew 28:18-20 "*...Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the*

*Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...*" The Pharisees were seriously attacked by Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Ecclesiastical elements only occur in Matthew. The word "EKKLESIA" occurs attributed to Jesus (Matthew 16:18, 18:17). Gathering of two or more is the simplest form of a local church. He has eschatological interest. "A Jew writer for Jew. Fulfilment of the prophesy.<sup>3</sup> Frequent reference to and quotations from the Old Testament. Some of the references are in exact. For example (Matthew 2:115; Hosea 11:1; Matthew 27:3-10, Zechariah 11:12-13)

Christianity is regarded as fulfillment of Judaism. Thus, He repeats the old law six times in the sermon on the Mount – 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38 and 43.

The Christian life is being described with the word, "righteousness", a word that is well at home in Judaism. Also, the phrase "Kingdom of heaven" instead of "Kingdom of God" in accordance with the Jewish reluctance to mention God.<sup>4</sup>

Anti-Jewish tone is spread across the pages of the book. For example, The Jewish leaders are denounced by John the Baptist and Jesus (For example John calls them "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7), they came to test Jesus – 16:16, 21:31-32 and 23 where the disciples are to follow their preaching but not their deeds.

Special interest in eschatology and apocalyptic elements in Jesus' teaching five times, Matthew reproduces the conventional apocalyptic phrase "men will weep and

gnash their teeth – Matthew 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51 and 25:30. In the same way, the term, consummation of the age occurs five times – Matthew 13:39; 13:40, 49; 24:3 and 28:20)<sup>5</sup>

#### **4.4. The Authorship**

In real true sense of it, even though the book is silent about its own writer, the tradition in the early Christian circle attributed the authorship to Matthew the tax collector, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, this Gospel was written with a Jewish audience in mind. The emphasis on Old Testament prophecy fulfillment supports this.

The contentions about the authorship of the book as deduced by modern scholars are attributed to the following:

1. The tone of the writing is not in line with the work of an eye-witness like Matthew. That is, the account seems to be in the reported speech and not the work of an eye witness. For example, Matthew 5:1; 8:23; 10:1; 11:1; 18:1.
2. Matthew depended largely on Marcan's work who was not one of the disciples. An eye witness like Matthew should not have done that if he is the author.

3. He did not follow the historical and religious situation of Christ's time. For example, He calls a Greek woman, Canaanite and makes her call Jesus Son of David – a Jewish Messianic title (Matthew 15:21-22). He also puts Pharisees and Sadduces together in spite of their enmity to each other (Matthew 3:7; 16:1; and 6).
4. Additions and alteration will indicate that it is the hand of a later writer than an eye witness' account. For example, it is more likely that James and John themselves came to Jesus to ask Him of chief place in His life rather than their mother asking on their behalf (Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45). Also, it is more likely that Jesus rode to Jerusalem sitting on one animal rather than on two (Matthew 21:18; mark 11:1-0 and Luke 19:29-3)8.

Thus, it can be concluded that a Jewish Christian wrote it probably in the name of Matthew.<sup>6</sup>

#### **4.4.1 The Date and Place of Writing**

Since Matthew depended so much on Mark composition, scholars estimate that the Gospel according to Matthew could have been written after A.D. 65 - 70, probably between 80 -100.<sup>7</sup> It is largely suggested that the destination and place of writing could possibly be Palestinian Jewish environment. Therefore, the book could be said

to have originated from Phoenicia or in a Transjordanian situation or in Alexandria, Antioch or Syria in Antioch of Syria.<sup>8</sup> This urban, multicultural context may have influenced its emphasis on discipleship as a counter-cultural lifestyle.

#### **4.4.2 Occasion and Purpose of the Book**

The Gospel of Matthew was written to strengthen the faith of the Jewish Christians and to provide instruction on living as disciples in a post-resurrection world. A major purpose was to affirm that Jesus is the promised Messiah as prophesized in the Old Testament and to clarify what it means to follow Him. This could be seen in the various events in the life of Jesus as they indicate the fulfilment of the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup>

The book of Matthew also demonstrated the relationship between Jesus' ministry and the Jewish religion. This is proved in the Old Testament passages which he considered fulfilled in the events he narrated and the instances in which Jesus completed the law. This is to encourage the Jewish Christians to believe that in accepting Jesus as Messiah, they were not disloyal to their old faith.<sup>10</sup>

Another purpose was to satisfy the needs of the Church at worship in matters of discipline and ethics in the missionary work.<sup>11</sup>

The purpose of Matthew is evident in the structure of his book, which groups the teachings and deeds of Jesus into five divisions. The fivefold structure, common in

Judaism, may reveal Matthew's purpose of showing Jesus as the fulfilment of the law. Each division concludes with the formula, "And when Jesus has ended these saying" Matthew 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

In the prologue (Matthew 1:1-2; 23), Matthew shows that Jesus is the Messiah by linking Him with promises made to Abraham and David. The birth of Jesus highlights the fulfilment theme, portrays Jesus' royalty, and underscores the significance of Jesus for the Gentiles.

The first division (Chapters 3 - 7) contains the sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus describes how people should live under God's reign.

The second division (Chapters 8 - 11) features the instruction of Jesus to His disciples when He sent them out on their missionary journey.

The third division (11:2 - 18:35) records several controversies in which Jesus was involved and seven parables describing some aspects of the Kingdom of heaven, coupled with the necessary human response.

The major discourse in the fourth division (Matthew 13:53 - 18:35 concerns the conduct of believers within the Christian fellowship (Chapter 18).

The fifth division (Matthew 19:1-2; 46) narrates the final journey of Jesus to Jerusalem and reveals His climatic conflict with Judaism. Chapters 24 and 25

contain the teachings of Jesus relating to the last things. The remainder of the book (26:1-28) contains the detailed events and teachings pertaining to the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the Lord's commission to the church.<sup>12</sup>

The book also gives the church a clarion call to mission, the proclamation of the Good News to all the people.

#### **4.4.3 The Theology of the Book**

Matthew emphasizes themes of the Kingdom living, righteousness, judgment, and mission. Jesus is portrayed as a Teacher, King, and Savior who calls His disciples to embody the values of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Discipleship in Matthew is not optional but essential to Christian identity. The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7), the missionary discourse (chapter 10), and the Great Commission (28:18-20) are particularly vital in shaping discipleship theology.

**4.4 In the Context of Matthew 10:5 – 6.** However, to express full understanding of the essence of this study a thorough analogy of the book of Matthew with special attention to verses 1 – 15 is done. Without which the study of the impact of discipleship on church growth will be distorted.

## **1. The Calling of the Twelve (Matthew 10:1)**

In Matthew 10:1, we read. *“And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”*

These passages mark pivotal moment in the formation and commissioning of Jesus' disciples for His ministry. He calls the twelve disciples and delegates to them the authority and power to continue His work of healing and delivering those oppressed by evil forces. Discipleship is not only about following Jesus, but also about being sent to act on His behalf. The empowerment that Jesus gives the twelve, through His authority, sets the foundation for church growth. Effective discipleship involves not just receiving teaching but being entrusted with the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. The spiritual power and authority given to the disciples symbolizes the empowerment that all believers receive to actually engage in the work of Kingdom expansion, which is integral to the growth of the church.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. The Purpose of Discipleship: Proclaiming the Kingdom (Matthew 10:5-6)**

In this second part of Matthew 10, (v.5 – 6) which is the core of this study, Jesus sends His disciples to “proclaim the Kingdom of God”. The purpose of discipleship, therefore, is clear; to advance God’s Kingdom here on earth. This Kingdom is not just a spiritual reality but also a call to bring about transformation in the world,

through teaching, healing, and reconciliation. The proclamation of God's Kingdom is not a passive activity; it is a dynamic and active participation in God's redemptive plan. This aspect of discipleship underlines church growth because, through the disciples' obedience and willingness to preach, the gospel message spreads. The work of discipleship, through evangelism, leads to the expansion of God's Kingdom, and this expansion is the growth of the church.<sup>14</sup> The central message, Christ's Kingdom, is essential for church growth, as the church grows when more people are brought into the understanding and experience God's rule.

### **3. Going with Simplicity and Faith (Matthew 10:9-10)**

In Matthew 10:9-10, Jesus instructs His disciples; "*Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.*" This command speaks to the simplicity and dependence on God that is integral to discipleship. Church growth doesn't come through self-sufficiency or worldly means, but through trust in God's provision. By travelling light, the disciples were to trust that God would provide for their needs, signaling that effective ministry and church growth come from reliance on God rather than personal resources or strategies. Discipleship involves trusting God for result of faith in His power to transform lives.<sup>15</sup> When disciples live by faith, the church's growth is not constrained by human limitations but is open to God's miraculous provision and empowerment.

#### **4. A call to Hospitality and Open Heart (Matthew 10:11-13)**

Jesus instructs the disciples to stay in any house they are accepted. He tells them “*And into whatever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.*” Matthew 10:11-13. This scripture underlines the importance of hospitality and the open reception of the message. Church growth often requires the church to be a welcoming and hospitable place for people to hear the gospel. When the message is rejected, the disciples are to move on, showing that the growth of the Kingdom does not depend on human approval but on God’s plan. Hospitality and openness to new believers are essential for church growth, as a receptive environment nurtures spiritual growth and fosters the expansion of the body of Christ. Discipleship involves both sharing the gospel and cultivating a culture where new believers feel welcomed and integrated into the church community.<sup>16</sup>

#### **5. The Challenge of Rejection and Perseverance (Matthew 10:14)**

Jesus teaches His disciples that if they are not welcomed, they should “*shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against them.*” This statement emphasizes the reality of rejection and resistance that the disciples will face. Church growth is not always smooth process; there will be times when the message of the gospel is rejected.

However, discipleship is about perseverance in the face of opposition, not to force a response. In the same way, church growth often requires perseverance through rejection and hardship.<sup>17</sup> The growth of the church is tied to the faithful, consistence proclamation of the gospel, even when faced with strong opposition. This perseverance is part of what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

## **6. The Result of Discipleship: Kingdom Impact and Growth.**

The same account in Matthew 10 of how Jesus called His disciples is also in Luke 9. However, Luke gives us the impact of discipleship on church growth. In Luke 9:6 concludes with *“And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and heaven everywhere.”* This verse demonstrates the fruit of faithfulness. When the disciples followed Jesus’ instructions and went in obedience, they saw tangible results: the proclamation of the gospel and the healing of the sick. The result of discipleship is not just the spreading of the gospel or teaching of Jesus Christ but a visible transformation in the lives of individuals and communities. Church growth occurs when disciples faithfully follow Jesus’ instructions and example of sharing the gospel and engaging in the acts of healing and restoration. The growth of the church is the result of disciples living out their calling, bringing both spiritual and physical healing to those they encounter. As they proclaim the Kingdom, they see the Kingdom expand through the lives of those they touch, demonstrating that true

discipleship leads to growth of both individual believers and the larger community of faith.<sup>18</sup>

Each of these points reflects the biblical truth in Matthew 10, showing how discipleship is intricately connected to the growth of the church. Discipleship involves being sent with authority, living with simplicity, and faith, fostering hospitality, enduring rejection, and ultimately bringing the message of God's Kingdom to all people. As the disciples faithfully fulfill their mission, the church grows through their obedience and commitment to God's work

In addition, some key insights into “Biblical Perspectives of Discipleship on Church Growth in the Context of Matthew 10:5-6” are highlighted as follows:

- **Selective Focus:** Jesus emphasizes a strategic, focused approach by first reaching out to the lost sheep of Israel. This underlines the principle of beginning ministry within a particular context before expanding outward (as seen later in Matthew 28).
- **Instruction and Obedience:** Jesus' commands are specific, and discipleship here involves listening and acting upon His words. Obedience is a defining feature of true discipleship.

- **Training for Expansion:** This mission to the Jews prepares the disciples for broader mission work. Their experience with cultural familiarity equips them for later cross-cultural evangelism.
- **Missional Identity:** Jesus shapes their identity as sent ones, apostles, highlighting the intrinsic connection between being a disciple and being on mission.

Thus, Matthew 10:5-6 reveals how discipleship is both personal and missional. It is rooted in obedience to Jesus' command and grows outward through faithful proclamation and community impact.

## **ENDNOTES.**

1.Ibid; 118.

2.Ibid; 127.

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4.Ibid.

5.Ibid.

6.Adekunle, M R., Synoptic Gospels (Course Handout at UMCATC, Ilorin, First Semester, 2003).

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9.Ibid.

10.Ibid.

11.Ibid.

12.Ibid.

13.Foster, R., Celebration of Discipleship: The Part to Spiritual Growth, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1988), 104.

14.Ibid; 106.

15.Ibid; 109.

16.Ibid; 113.

17.Ibid; 117.

18. Ibid; 124.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 SUGGESTED WAYS OF RECRUITING AND EQUIPPING DISCIPLES FOR CHURCH GROWTH

Discipleship is most effective when integrated into all aspects of Christian life and the church. The following subsections explore how individuals, families, churches, and Christian educational institutions contribute to recruiting and equipping disciples for church growth.

#### 5.1 The Role of the Individual

Fundamentally, an individual must accept an invitation to salvation, thereafter be ready to learn from Him (Jesus). Jesus says, “learn from me...” The Greek word that translates into “learn” is the concept of discipleship. Jesus disciplines you when you learn from Him. It is done through an ongoing renewal of an individual mind to learn to think like His.<sup>1</sup> What are we supposed to be learning? Learn how Jesus relates to His Father. Learn how Jesus views sin. Learn how Jesus values others. Learn what Christ’s viewpoint is on a matter. Learn how Jesus wins souls etc. But don’t only learn it; accept it, submit to it and let it come forth in your actions. It is when one does this that he/she can be a disciple of Jesus and also disciple others.

Each believer bears a personal responsibility in the process of discipleship. The call to follow Jesus begins with individual transformation and a willingness to be taught and to teach others (Matthew 4:19; 2 Timothy 2:2).

Effective individual discipleship includes:

- Personal spiritual discipline. Establish a daily personal routine of praying, reading and studying God's Word.
- Evangelism and witness. Share your personal faith with unbelievers as often as you can which will help to enhance discipleship.
- Be a good steward of your time by avoiding activities and people who have a negative impact on your spiritual growth and development.
- Mentoring and accountability relationships
- Servant leadership and modeling Christ-like behavior.
- Build a relationship with someone who has walked with God longer than you, so you can learn and be discipled.
- Build a relationship with someone who you can disciple that will help your own spiritual growth.
- Invest in areas that will contribute to your knowledge of scripture and growth as a disciple of Jesus.

- Regularly assess your own spiritual progress and make adjustment as the Holy Spirit brings opportunities for growth to your attention and when He reveals sin that needs to be addressed.
- Share your personal faith with unbelievers as often as you can.
- Be an active part of Spirit-filled Bible-centered church that prioritizes discipleship.

## 5.2 The Role of the Family

Even before there was sin, there was the concept of family. God had a great plan for man and woman as family to carry on His work and to show forth His glory.<sup>2</sup>

The truth therefore is that the family is the first and most foundational discipleship context. Parents are called to disciple their children by teaching them God's Word, modeling faith, and cultivating a home environment that reflects Christ (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Ephesians 6:4). The following are the strategies family has to take:

- **Daily devotionals and prayer times.** Family should make out time for the entire members of the household to pray regularly to nurture a strong Christian relationship within the family which would take away minds from television, social media habits and other habits that may be detrimental to discipleship.

- **Challenge each member of your family to make an impact and be a witness in their sphere of influence when they leave the home.**
- **Encouraging church involvement.** Be an active member of a local church as a family and rehearse together what was taught in church service or program.
- **Practicing forgiveness and grace.** Take advantage of natural opportunities to instill spiritual principles in the family members.
- **Teaching biblical values through life experiences.** Reach out as a family to serve other families that are less fortunate than you.
- **Develop relationship with other families** with whom you share spiritual values.
- **Expose your family to spiritual leaders**, ministries, and activities that will reinforce the principles of discipleship.
- **Listen to and view quality Christian programs** together as a family that can serve as a way of learning and growing spiritually.

### 5.3 The Role of the Church

When the Holy Spirit came on the Pentecost to the church in Act 2, a number of things happened. One thing was that the church, led by Peter, stood up in a dynamic, bold witness for Christ. When something dynamic occurs internally, you want to express it externally. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit from within and they expressed this externally with boldness. One of the key ingredients that the church is lacking today is Holy Spirit. If the church is going to grow as a Kingdom disciple we need and must ask the Holy Spirit to help us.

Many churches have left their fire (the Holy Spirit). The church is to be God fireplace igniting its members toward Kingdom discipleship.<sup>3</sup> The key question each church must answer is not “How many members do we have?” It is “How many disciples are we producing?” Membership should serve as the introduction to fervent discipleship.

The local church serves as the central hub for organized discipleship and spiritual growth. It provides the community, structure, and resources necessary for nurturing disciples. The church contributes by taking the following action steps:

- **Preaching and teaching sound doctrine.** People can only be true believers by hearing the right message of salvation. Not heresies.

- **Help members discover their talents and spiritual gifts**, and use same for the benefit of the church growth that will expand the Kingdom of God.
- **Offering discipleship classes** and small groups so that people can share and receive love and support.
- **Providing pastoral care and counseling**
- **Go beyond the wall of your local church.** Outreaches help to bring people from different areas to listen to the gospel with the possibility of conversion to be following of Jesus Christ.
- **Equipping members for service and mission.** This can only be possible through sound teaching and absolute sincerity on the part of the leaders.
- **Focus on corporate prayers** as a vital weapon for spiritual warfare in the church and the community.
- **Make discipleship a major church priority** with clearly defined plans, measurement, evaluation, objectives and accountable process for spiritual development.
- **Develop an ongoing leadership development** program for the purpose of developing disciplers.

- **Orient new members quickly to the importance** and priority of discipleship, which will enable them adjust and position themselves in relation to discipleship as one of the basic ingredients to growing the church and the body of Christ.
- **Have an annual church-wide scheme assembly** that includes discipleship program together with fasting and prayer. This will enhance the urgency and relevance of discipleship in members' consciousness continually.

#### **5.4 The Role of the Christian School**

Christian schools play a pivotal role in reinforcing discipleship through education.<sup>4</sup> “This emphasized further that school is one very vital agent regarding Christian education” that enhances training disciples for the work of God. By integrating faith and learning, these institutions nurture spiritual development alongside academic excellence.

The engagement of school in discipleship strengthens communities, and the local church for the purpose of advancing the Kingdom of God. Through seeking to correct improper responses to God’s Word, which is the root of the dilemmas we are facing in the society today.

The school has roles to play by training Kingdom disciples in class and fellowship meetings.<sup>5</sup> And they will in turn train others in the nearest future.

These are the action steps the school needs to take in discipling the students at the different levels of education, (creche/day care, pre-nursery, nursery, primary and higher school levels including college):

- Strong biblical worldview formation, challenging the students to be biblically informed and engaged in the teaching of Christ which will impact the student for a life time.
- Train the students to understand and do acts of kindness to the less privileged in the society in the name of Jesus Christ and the church.
- Mentorship by Christian educators that is typically within the context of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit's direction as a young believer pursuing spiritual maturity. This will enable the students absorb the experience of the older believer seeking to impact their wisdom and experience.
- Worship and chapel services. This is one vital way through which the school can actually breed the students in Christ likeness. It involves acts of reverence, adoration, humility, obedience to God's command and instructions, school authorities and respect to each other and the community.

- Challenge the students to have social outreaches that are capable of improving the lives of the poor and oppressed among them and in the community. Outreaches of this kind will metamorphose to opportunities for mission and service. Without doubt this will create avenues for individual students to engage in activities that aim to making positive impact on discipleship. These opportunities can range from school fellowship meetings, camps, local, national or international missionary service initiatives, all focus on helping others, promoting positive change and overall discipleship which will impact the growth of the church. The core purpose of this is to spread the gospel, build relationships and offer support to those in need while promoting spiritual growth among students and those they are meeting.
- The school should encourage students to be active member of a local church and be more committed to the things of the Kingdom.

The unifying central theme throughout the Bible is the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom. The cojoining thread from the book of Genesis to Revelation, from beginning to end, is focused on one thing: God's glory through advancing God's Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

The absence of the Kingdom's influence in our personal and family lives, churches and community has led to a deterioration in our world:

- People live segmented, compartmentalized lives because they lack God's Kingdom worldview. People deliberately organize their lives into separate, distinct life devoid of the touch the Spirit of God.
- Families disintegrate because they exist for their own satisfaction rather than for the Kingdom. They are not accountable to Jesus Christ's teachings.
- Churches are limited in the scope of their impact because they fail to comprehend that the goal of the church is not the church itself, but the Kingdom of God.
- Schools and Communities have nowhere to turn to find solution for real people who have real problems because the church has become divided, ingrown and unable to transform the cultural landscape in any relevant way.<sup>7</sup>

Individuals, families and institutions have a vital role to play to disciple people. Our world needs the King's agenda. Our churches need the King's agenda. Our families need the King's agenda.

## **ENDNOTES**

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# CHAPTER SIX

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

### 6.0 Introduction

The discussion of findings is based on the exploration of the impact of discipleship on the church growth: In the context of Matthew 10:5 - 6.

Discipleship and church growth often face various challenges that can hinder progress and effectiveness of the church. These challenges may arise internally within the church or externally from societal, cultural, or structural factors.

### 6.1 Discussion of Findings

#### 1. Empowerment and Authority for Mission.

This passage highlighted a critical aspect of discipleship: the empowerment of believers to carry out the mission of God. In this verse, Jesus grants the twelve disciples power and authority to heal diseases, cast out demons, and proclaim the Kingdom of God. This empowerment is not for personal gain but for Kingdom purposes. The implication for church growth is significant. Disciples, through this empowerment, are equipped to make a tangible difference in the world around them, leading to both spiritual and physical transformation. The ability to bring healing and deliverance, as demonstrated by the disciples, can lead to visible

change in individuals' lives, sparking curiosity and faith in those around them. This dynamic action of discipleship, sharing the gospel through Word and deeds, contributes to the organic growth of the church as individuals respond to the transformative power of the gospel.

## **2. Proclamation of the Kingdom: A central Element of Discipleship.**

Jesus specifically sends the disciples to "proclaim the Kingdom of God." This highlights the foundational role of evangelism and Kingdom proclamation in discipleship. Discipleship is inherently missional, as it requires not only following Christ but also sharing the good news of His Kingdom. Church growth is directly linked to the proclamation of the gospel. As the disciples spread the message of the kingdom the church grows, both spiritually and numerically. The Kingdom of God, as it is described, throughout the Gospels, represents God's reign breaking into the world, bringing justice, peace, and hope. Disciples are called to communicate this reality, and when they do so faithfully, it results in the expansion of the church. A lack of Kingdom proclamation can severely hinder church growth, as people cannot respond to a message they do not hear.

### **3. Simplicity and Dependence on God for Growth.**

The instructions that Jesus give in the scripture, where He commands the disciples to take nothing for the journey, emphasizes the importance of simplicity and reliance on God. By traveling without material provisions, the disciples are called to trust that God will provide for their needs. This principle of dependence on God speaks directly to the concept of church growth. Church growth is not necessarily about the accumulation of resources, strategies or even members; rather, it is about trusting in God's provision and sovereignty. Discipleship that is rooted in simplicity and dependence on God is powerful because it emphasizes that the work of the church is not human-driven but spirit-led. When disciples embrace this attitude, the focus shifts from self-sufficiency to a reliance on divine guidance and provision, which in turn fosters sustainable growth, Churches that operate with this principle, prioritizing God's will and provision over worldly measures, are likely to experience lasting growth.

### **4. Hospitality and the Receptiveness of the Community.**

Jesus' command to the disciples to stay in a house they find in each town speaks about the importance of hospitality and the receptiveness of the community in church growth. When the disciples enter a town, they are to

stay with those who welcome them, which creates a sense of fellowship and trust. Church growth is not only about the message being proclaimed but also about the environment in which it is received. A hospitable and welcoming environment encourages people to engage with the gospel. The church must be a place where people feel welcome, valued, and supported, as this makes the community receptive to the message of Christ. Conversely, when the message is rejected, the disciples are instructed to move on. This symbolizes that while the church's mission is to reach all, the growth of the church depends not just on outreach but on the willingness of individual to receive the message. Therefore, a church that fosters hospitality and openness is likely to see and experience more significant growth.

## **5. Rejection and Perseverance in Discipleship.**

Jesus teaches the disciples to “shake the dust off their feet” when they encounter rejection. This instruction has significant implication for discipleship and church growth. Not every effort in discipleship will yield fruit; rejection and resistance are inevitable parts of the evangelical journey. However, this scenario emphasizes the importance of perseverance. Disciples should not be discouraged by rejection, but to continue their mission, knowing that their responsibility is to faithfully proclaim the gospel even in the face of persecution. Church growth often requires perseverance, as it may take time

for individual to come to faith, and some may never respond positively to the gospel. The church must be resilient in its mission, remaining faithful to the message of Christ even in the face of rejection. The Churches that maintain their commitment to the gospel despite opposition are more likely to experience long-term growth, as their persistence in mission reflects their trust in God's ultimate plan.

## **6. The fruit of discipleship: Visible Transformation and Growth**

Finally, in Luke 9:6, we see the result of faithful discipleship. “*So, they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere*”. The disciples' obedience to Jesus' instructions led to visible and tangible result in the form of healing and the spread of the good news. This highlights that the fruit of discipleship is not spiritual but also practical, with real-world impact on individuals and communities. Church growth is the result of such faithful discipleship; as individual experience transformation, whether through healing, spiritual restoration, or the newness of life found in the gospel, they become part of the growing body of believers. This underlines the importance of both word and action in discipleship, as the proclamation of the gospel and acts of compassion (healing) go hand-in-hand in contributing to the expression of God's Kingdom. A church that embodies

both the preaching of the gospel and acts of service will naturally see growth, as its impact on individuals' lives is both spiritual and practical.]

The biblical instruction on discipleship, especially in the context of Matthew 10:5-6, highlights the transformative nature of following Christ. From Old Testament models of mentorship to Jesus' personal investment in His disciples, the call to discipleship is a call to holistic growth and multiplication. The Gospel of Matthew, with its theological depth and narrative structure, presents discipleship as the vehicle through which the church is built and expanded. Understanding this context not only enriches our grasp of Scripture but also empowers the church to embrace discipleship as the heart of church growth. Strategic involvement from individuals, families, churches, and Christian schools ensures that discipleship remains an enduring catalyst for spiritual and numerical church growth. Overcoming the challenges through intentional action and divine guidance positions the church for sustained impact and flourishing discipleship.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### 7.1 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the vital connection between discipleship and church growth through the lens of Matthew 10:5–6, where Jesus commissions His disciples with a specific and purposeful mandate. Discipleship is more than a program or ministry; it is the foundational process through which the church fulfills its mission and sustains its growth.

From the early chapters, we saw that discipleship is grounded in biblical truth, modeled by Christ, and centered on relational transformation. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) and the targeted instructions in Matthew 10:5–6 both highlight that effective discipleship starts with a clear focus, spiritual authority, and intentional engagement with the "lost sheep."

The literature reviewed affirmed that numerical growth without spiritual formation is fragile. Sustainable church growth must involve equipping believers in their identity, cultivating deep intimacy with Christ, nurturing steady spiritual maturity, and anchoring their efforts in an eternal, heavenly incentive. Churches that

embrace these principles foster environments where disciples are made, nurtured, matured, and mobilized.

Discipleship impacts every dimension of church life: leadership development, evangelism, community formation, and missional outreach. The failure to prioritize discipleship results in shallow Christianity, while a return to Jesus' model promises depth, resilience, and multiplication.

Ultimately, the thesis demonstrates that discipleship is not an optional add-on to church activity; it is the very essence of church growth and the fulfillment of Christ's calling to His followers.

In summary, this study showcased the impacts of discipleship on church growth, focusing specifically on Matthew 10:5-6 (with extension to verse 15). The passage provides profound insight into the role of discipleship in the expression of God's Kingdom and the growth of the church. From the empowerment of the disciples with authority to proclaim the Kingdom and heal the sick (Matthew 10:1-15), to the simple instructions of travel and reliance on God's provision (Matthew 10:9-10), it is clear that effective discipleship is not about worldly resources but about obedience, trust, and faith in God's plan. Discipleship involves both proclaiming the gospel and modeling the life of Jesus through acts of service, such as healing and

providing hospitality. The church grows with disciples faithfully carrying out their mission, not seeking world recognition but trusting in God's guidance.

The study also emphasizes that the church growth is intrinsically linked to the receptiveness of the community and the perseverance of the disciples. As seen in Matthew 10:1-14, when the message is welcomed, the gospel can take root and flourish. However, when faced with rejection, the disciples are reminded to continue their work without discouragement (Matthew 10:13-14). Rejection is part of the process but it should not hinder the mission.

Ultimately, the result of faithful discipleship is visible transformation and in the expansion of the church, as demonstrated in Luke 9:6.

The findings of this study highlight the central role that discipleship plays in church growth. Effective discipleship leads to the spreading of the gospel, the nurturing of believers, and the establishment of a faith community that is both resilient and hospitable. However, the growth of the church is not only dependent on the action of disciples but also on the willingness of individuals to respond to the message of the Kingdom.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are made to foster improved and effective discipleship and thereby promote the growth of the church.

The followings should be carefully studied, assimilated and applied in our efforts to adopt discipleship techniques in a deliberate attempt to grow the church:

### **1. Churches should focus their Strategy for growth around discipleship**

Church leaders should make discipleship the central purpose of their ministry strategies rather than peripheral or optional. Every department, youth, music, outreach, or pastoral care, should contribute to the formation and multiplication of disciples.

### **2. Invest in relational and reproducible models**

Churches should adopt models of discipleship that are relational, intentional, and reproducible. One-on-one and small group discipleship should be prioritized over event-based programming.

### **3. Train and empower disciples to become disciple-makers.**

Church members should not be viewed as consumers but as ministers. Discipleship should include leadership training and spiritual mentoring to enable believers to disciple others effectively.

### **5. Integrate discipleship with evangelism**

Discipleship and evangelism are not separate. Churches should train members to share the gospel as part of their growth journey and establish new believers immediately in discipleship relationships.

### **6. Reclaim a Kingdom vision and eternal motivation**

Discipleship should include teaching on the Kingdom of God, eternal purpose, and the cost of following Christ. When believers live with eternal perspective, the church becomes mission-driven rather than comfort-driven.

### **7. Evaluate church growth beyond numbers**

Churches should measure growth by spiritual maturity, character development, and the replication of disciples, rather than just attendance or revenue. This requires developing new metrics for evaluation.

## **8. Empower and Equip Disciples**

Churches should prioritize intentional discipleship training at all levels, empowering and equipping disciples with both spiritual authority and practical tools needed for mission work.

Just as Jesus gave His disciples power, and authority, church leaders should ensure that believers are adequately trained and equipped to serve in various capacities, ranging from evangelism to pastoral care and healing.

## **9. Pastors and leaders must model discipleship in their own lives**

This can be achieved by consistently living out their faith, actively investing in the spiritual growth of others, and prioritizing relationship over programs. Pastors and church leaders can model discipleship by demonstrating a commitment to personal growth, actively mentoring and teaching, and fostering a culture of discipleship among members within the church. They must live by the same standards they teach, ensuring their actions align with their words.

## **10. Focus on Kingdom Proclamation**

Church growth is closely tied to the faithful proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Churches should make evangelism and discipleship central to their mission. This involves not only preaching the gospel but also demonstrating the Kingdom through

acts of service and compassion. Church leaders should encourage members to actively share their faith in their communities, workplaces, marketplace, and through outreach programs.

## **11. Families should be Equipped to Disciple at Home**

To effectively build discipleship that will help church growth, families too, must be adequately equipped by focusing on home practical resources, home training which includes up-bringing, and support such as family devotions, guidance incorporating faith into daily life, and opportunities for families to connect with and encourage one another in Christian family living.

## **12. Cultivate an environment of hospitality**

As seen in Matthew 10:11-12, a welcoming environment is essential for church growth. Churches should create opportunity for enabling environment where people feel valued and accepted, ensuring that newcomers are integrated into the community. This includes offering support for both spiritual and practical needs, fostering a sense of belonging for all members.

### **13. Churches should partner with Christian schools to reinforce spiritual development**

A partnership between churches and Christian schools can significantly reinforce spiritual development, leading to church growth by creating a more engaged and unified congregation. This collaboration fosters a holistic approach to faith formation, integrates faith and learning, and provides a strong support system for families and thereby make disciples that will help to grow the church and hence expand the Kingdom of God.

### **14. Embrace Simplicity and Dependence on God.**

Discipleship requires a reliance on God's provision rather than worldly resources. Churches should teach and model simplicity in ministry, focusing on trusting God for provision and growth. This can help the church avoid relying solely on financial resources or strategies instead of depending on God to provide for the needs of the mission.

### **15. Persevere in the Face of Rejection**

Rejection is inevitable in the work of discipleship. Churches and individual disciples should be prepared to face opposition without losing heart. Training and encouraging believers to stay committed to the mission, even when faced with rejection, is essential.

This resilience ensures that the church remains focused on its mission, regardless of external challenges.

**16. Discipleship strategies must be adaptable to cultural and contextual realities**

To adapt discipleship strategies for cultural and contextual relevance, churches should focus on understanding the specific needs and worldview of their community, then tailor teaching and evangelical activities to resonate with those realities.

**17. Promote a Holistic Approach to Discipleship**

Discipleship should involve both teaching and living out the values of the Kingdom of God. Churches should not only focus on the intellectual aspects of discipleship but also on how members live out their faith in practical ways, such as through acts of service, healing, and reconciliation. A holistic approach to discipleship will attract new believers and help the church grow both numerically and in spiritual maturity.

**18. Greater emphasis should be placed on mission-oriented discipleship**

**that leads to church planting and outreach**

To emphasize mission-oriented discipleship leading to church planting and outreach, churches should focus on equipping members to be disciple-makers, fostering a culture of evangelism, and strategically supporting church planting efforts. This can be achieved through mentoring, teaching, and practical experience which will

naturally lead to building a formidable church, raise disciples that will share the gospel with others and invariably expand God's Kingdom.

Conclusively, discipleship is foundation to church growth, and the study of Matthew 10:5 - 6 provides essential principles that can guide church in fostering a thriving, growing community of believers. By empowering disciples, prioritizing the proclamation of the gospel, creating a welcome environment, and embracing.

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