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MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP WITHIN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CHRIST IN  
NIGERIA

by

INNOCENT WEBINUMEN ANTHONY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

THESIS ADVISER: PROFESSOR GARY SIMPSON

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2020



## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who redeemed me, called and commissioned me to partner with the triune God to herald God's mission in the world.

I also dedicate this thesis to my great supporter and beautiful wife, Edna, and my children: Suyeukari, Sujeukari, Suboksari and Sutongsari.

Finally, I am dedicating this thesis to all servants of God who have committed their lives to the worthy course of mission and discipleship worldwide.

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Thanks to my Bishop, Rt Rev Jediel M. Nyenbenso, pastors and staff of LCCN Bonotem and that of LCCN headquarters, whose support and encouragement will forever be exceptional. They have always been so supportive even when I was away from home. I do not take it for granted that I have a brother in the Lord and mentor Rev Emmanuel Sheka, and Professor Bradley Holt, you have always encouraged me and believed in my pursuit of higher theological education. I cannot forget to thank my friends; Rev. Karimu Tela Mshelia, Rev. Gibson E. Lesmore, Rev. Adama Raymond, Rev. Bitrust Bamai, Rev.

Philip Nache, Rev Akila Adamu, Rev. Dr Christopher and Ann Hagen, Kevin and Jody Nyenhius, Steve and Maria Hutera, John and Robbie Becker, Matthew and Court Bolling Gary Sanders, and Barb Geiger, for being a part of my academic journey, this page is too small to innumerate your names and supports.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LCCN      Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria

SPM        Sudan Pioneer Mission

SUM        Sudan United Mission

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Discipleship in the Great Commission (Matt. 28) has long been recognized as the central work the church is called to do. The purpose of Jesus' commission is to make men and women across culture and status to become his church. In this thesis the researcher proposes our understanding of discipleship be expanded "Missional discipleship." Missional discipleship is what the researcher has discovered by surveying the biblical, theological, and theoretical concepts of discipleship and examining the missional church movement. The researcher proposes missional discipleship as the hope of the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN). In addition, the researcher claims that pastors are in a strategic position to lead congregations in the calling and task of making and forming missional disciples.

In this chapter we will explore the historical context of the LCCN, highlighting pastoral ministry, leadership and discipleship in LCCN, as well as critically examine existing scholarship on discipleship as background for this thesis' research question. The second chapter critically examines the central biblical and theological perspective that informed the understanding of the missional church. Chapter three explores key biblical, theological and theoretical concepts of discipleship argues for discipleship as a way of life and primary calling of the church. The fourth chapter proposes that missional discipleship be taken into consideration as the process and strategy for missionally reframing the vision and process of discipleship in LCCN.

## **Historical Background of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria**

The passion for mission work in Nigeria was conceived on November 13th, 1902, at a conference convened by Dr. Karl Kumm and other mission-minded people in Sheffield, England, to establish the Sudan Pioneer Mission (SPM). Dr. Kumm contacted some churches in England to team-up to pioneer the mission adventure, but the churches he approached initially did not agree to participate. Their reasons were based on the lack of capital that mission work requires. Many churches failed to accept the fact that giving for a mission has much impact on the life of the generous church. According to Adam Copeland, it is a continued reality “that the more we give, the more we receive; the more we hold tightly to what we have, the more we have to lose.”<sup>1</sup> Karl Kumm did not give up, and he was hard-pressed on speaking to their hearing, by reminding them that they were what they were because of the biblical truth and the Christian faith. Consequently, they were influenced and they saw the need for a joint effort to take the good news to Black Africa. On June 15th, 1904, the name of the mission was changed to Sudan United Mission (SUM). The first group of missionaries under the SUM arrived in Nigeria in September 1904 and settled at Wase in the present-day Plateau State.<sup>2</sup>

On the 22nd of November, 1911, the Danish branch of the SUM was established by Pastor Pedersen, who had the privilege to attend a world missionary conference in Edinburg, Scotland in 1910. There he heard Dr. Kumm and Dr. Samuel S. Zwemer discuss the expansion effort of Islam in the “Bilal-al-Sudan” (the Land of the Blacks).

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<sup>1</sup> Adam J Copeland, *Beyond the Offering Plate: A Holistic Approach to Stewardship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Edward R. Ishaya, “A Search for Identity: A Historical Review and Critical Analysis of Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria” (MTh Thesis, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN, 1984), 50.

The outcome of the conference compelled Pastor Pedersen to start a conversation in 1911 with the British branch of SUM, that Yola in Sudan would be the terrain for mission work by the Danish missionaries. At the conference in Swanwick in 1912 Pastor Pedersen and his secretary, Hans, began their work by meeting with Dr. Karl Kumm and the leaders of the British branch of the SUM to discuss mission works in Sudan. Together they decided Yola Province would be the Danish mission field fully autonomous from the SUM British branch.<sup>3</sup>

### Advent in Nigeria

Dr. Niels Bronnum, his wife Margaret C. Young and their companion Miss Dogner Rose, arrived in Nigeria on the 18th of February, 1913. They were the first set of missionaries sent by the SUM Danish branch. They proceeded with a trip up the Niger River by steam-boat. In June of 1913, they rested and studied Hausa at the British Mission Station in Rumasha near Lafiya in Nasarawa province. Africa used to be called a “white man’s grave” because of malarial fever that killed many whites. Consequently, many missionaries in the nineteenth century left their home countries with no expectation of returning. During their missionary journey, “they carried their own caskets as a standard part of their shipment to the field. Most of the missionaries going to West Africa died of violence, malaria, or other disease within a few years of arrival, but they kept going.”<sup>4</sup>

Bronnum had a firsthand experience of “white man’s grave” when his wife Margaret died of malaria four days after giving birth to their first-born son, Holger. Miss

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<sup>3</sup>Asriel S. T Myatafadi et al., *A Century of God’s Faithfulness (1913-2013): Reflection on the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria* (Kaduna: Universal Press and Publishing Company, 2013), 16.

<sup>4</sup>Mike Barnett and Robin Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices for the 21 Century* (Downer Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 177.

Rose had to return the baby to Margaret's parents in Scotland while Dr. Bronnum proceeded on alone. He was a man of courage and determination. While writing a letter to his mother to tell about his experience, he said: "do not feel sorry for me, because I am truly happy. I have put my hand to the plow and I don't intend to look back."<sup>5</sup> The courageous story of Bronnum greatly inspired other missionaries that came after him.

Bronnum arrived in Numan on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, 1913, but was asked by the colonial District Officer to go to Yola and to obtain permission from the British Administrator residing in Yola before he would be allowed to disembark in Numan. Bronnum went to Yola and secured the said permission and went back to Numan. He got down to Numan on Sunday morning, the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, 1913. Upon reaching Numan he requested permission to camp at the Bachama section of the town. He then purchased a plot of land on which he founded his mission work. Bronnum was very instrumental for the British authorities both at Yola Provincial headquarters and the District headquarters at Numan in reconciling warring communities in the province. He became their chief advisor, and "one of his influences could be seen in the way the British officer sought his advice on how to handle problems that involve tribal clashes."<sup>6</sup> He did much in reconciling communities that were involved in tribal conflicts both within and outside the Numan communities.

### Mission Among The Indigenous People

Dr Bronnum continued his work as a pioneer missionary among the people of Numan, and after two months he was granted approval for permanent work. He

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<sup>5</sup> Ishaya, "A Search for Identity," 56.

<sup>6</sup> Ishaya, 59-60.

established friendship among the Bachama people, and “his close friends were Dogo Farato, Binauto, Lokodi, Igude and Manzam, who later helped him to translate the Gospel of Mark into [the] Bachama language in 1915.”<sup>7</sup> The aforementioned were his first group of indigenous disciples; they were baptized on the 30th of January, 1916. That same year the first church, known as St. John’s Church, was built in Numan. The building is still standing and is used for daily morning devotions for staff at the LCCN headquarters.

Even after the established mission work in Numan, most people showed little interest in the teachings of the Christian faith. Bronnum had prayed for an opportunity for God to draw the people to the new faith. It came to pass in 1916 when the rains were late to come, and the new believers, with their friends, appealed to Dr. Bronnum to pray to his God for rain. He did and God answered his prayers positively: rain came. The impact of the answer to his prayer was felt in Numan and beyond. Subsequently, doors of ministry were opened to him, and he could go and preach to areas where he was earlier restricted from. As a result, many people accepted the Gospel and were added to the church.<sup>8</sup>

In June of 1921, the famous Boys Boarding School was established in Numan (in 1937 it was renamed the Numan Training School). The purpose of the school was to train indigenous people to read and write. The mission eventually expanded, and in 1948 the first five indigenous pastors were ordained: Rev. Anuhu Jebbe (Banjiram), Rev. Ezra Jangare (Lamurde), Rev. Habila Aleyideno (Numan), Rev. Shall Holma (Pella), and Rev. Theodore Pwanahumo (Numan). By 1955, another group of pastors was also ordained: Rev. Akila Todi (Numan), Rev. Dishon Dansanda (Guyuk), Rev. Linus Ahmadu

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<sup>7</sup> Ishaya, 59.

<sup>8</sup> Ishaya, 60.

(Numan), Rev. Martin Malau (Rigangu), Rev. Musa Bonotem (Gurum), and Rev. Simon Chaha'a (Garaha). In February of 1994, Rev. (Mrs.) Naomi Malau was ordained as the first woman pastor. From 1948, over 996 pastors have been ordained by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria.<sup>9</sup> There are 9 dioceses, approximately 56 divisions, over 301 districts, and approximately 1335 local congregations.<sup>10</sup>

In the effort to continue the work of evangelization which is the uppermost priority of LCCN, over 157 local missionaries (aikaku) have been serving in several areas across Northern Nigeria. The primary objective of the church is:

To glorify God, to proclaim his word, to instruct believers, to administer the sacraments, and to exercise church discipline. The church emphasizes her missionary obligation and will zealously strive to bring the Gospel to Nigeria, Africa and the world.<sup>11</sup>

While the missional engagement of the church has been within the border of Nigeria,

LCCN has the vision of reaching out to nations across the borders of Nigeria.

### The Leadership of The Church from Inception

Dr. Niels H. Bronnum, as the pioneer missionary of the church, was elected as the chairman at the first missionary conference that was held at Numan in 1916, October 13<sup>th</sup>. He served from 1916 to 1917, and returned to his home country due to his wife's sickness. Rev. Alfred Thompson became the next chairman, having served as a vice chairman, from 1917 to 1922. Axel Pedersen was chairman from 1922 to 1936, and was succeeded by Rev. Ernst I. Engskov, who served from 1937 to 1953. From 1953 to 1961

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<sup>9</sup> Myatafadi et al., *A Century of God's Faithfulness*, 26-27.

<sup>10</sup> Myatafadi et al., 82.

<sup>11</sup> David L. Windibiziri, *The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria: Constitution and Bye-Laws* (Numan: no publisher, 1989), 7.

Rev. Arne Pilgaard Pedersen served as chairman, and Rev. Ernst Hojvig succeeded him from 1961 to 1967.<sup>12</sup>

In 1954 LCCN became an independent and fully established church, and incorporated as a nonprofit organization by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1956. An election for new leadership of the church was held. Rev Pilgaard Pedersen became the first President and Rev Akila Todi became the first indigenous leader alongside Rev Pilgaard as Vice President from 1956 to 1960. Rev Akila later became President of the church from 1960 to 1973. The title of the church leader was changed to Bishop in 1973, “thereafter he (Akila) was elected the first Bishop in 1973 until (his) retirement in 1986,”<sup>13</sup> due to health issues.

Rt. Rev. (Dr.) David Windibiziri who was serving as secretary to Bishop Todi was elected in 1987 to succeed him. When dioceses were created within the LCCN in 1995, Bishop Windibiziri was elected as the presiding Bishop from 1996 to 1997; the title was changed to Archbishop in 1997. The Most Rev. (Dr.) David L. Windibiziri became the first archbishop until his retirement from service in 2002. From February 2002 to February 2017, the Most Rev (Dr.) Nemuel A. Babba was the archbishop of the LCCN. The Most Rev Musa Pantil Filibus, PhD, was elected the Archbishop of LCCN in November 2016 and took over on the 13th of March, 2017 to the present.<sup>14</sup> Archbishop Filibus is also serving as the current President of the Lutheran World Federation.

### Conflict and Split in The LCCN

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<sup>12</sup> Myatafadi et al., 24.

<sup>13</sup> Myatafadi et al., 25.

<sup>14</sup> Myatafadi et al., 27.

LCCN, as a multicultural and multi-tribal church, has experienced some conflicts that emerged as a result of clash of interests. The first major LCCN conflict broke out in Kilba land from 1962 to 1965, when the church and mission wanted to establish a coeducational secondary school in Numan. Reacting to the decision of locating the school in Numan, the church in Kilba land cut their link with the mission at Numan, but the issues were somewhat addressed. The second conflict occurred in Lunguda land over establishment of a farming school, coupled with other issues. As a result of the conflict from 1964 to 1969, some members of the church in Lunguda land broke away to join the Baptist church.<sup>15</sup>

In 1995, the church entered a third major conflict that split the church into LCCN Diocese and Non-Diocese. The conflict came not on the premise of theological differences but administrative differences coupled with other issues: tribal disputes, struggles for leadership and power, accountability, interpersonal issues, inability to deal with change, and shame.<sup>16</sup> This conflict has pushed the church to do things that have been consequently injurious to the spread of the Gospel. According to Frank Imhoff,

The magnitude of the conflict was extensive, threatening not only church unity but also political harmony in Adamawa State where the LCCN is headquartered, and the country. It had negatively affected the LCCN's mission and work and caused pain to families, individual church members and the public.<sup>17</sup>

In all of this conflict none of the factions won. Rather both parties have suffered loss and setbacks in many aspects.

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<sup>15</sup> Myatafadi et al., 200-03.

<sup>16</sup> Myatafadi et al., 206.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Imhoff, *Parties in Nigerian Lutheran Church Conflict Sign Memorandum*, <https://archive.wfn.org/2005/06/msg00063.html>, accessed 19/03/2019.

The Archbishop of LCCN and the President of the Lutheran World Federation, the Most Rev. Musa Panti Filibus, PhD, has been working extensively on reconciliation. He has reminded the leadership of the two factions on several occasions that the time has come for the church to seek reconciliation face-to-face with each other in order to bring the most recent conflict to an end. The church must join hands and pull down the walls of disagreement and embrace each other, and claim back the terrain that the enemy took away from the church. This is possible when the clergy have consented to taking the steps of reunion.

#### Pastoral Ministry, Leadership and Discipleship in LCCN

The call of the pastor is a calling for an individual to become a shepherd of God's people in humility, willingness, eagerness, and on behalf of Christ. To be a pastor in LCCN means to lead the church to demonstrate the light of God among the unbelievers. According to Myroslaw Tartaryn and Maria Truchan-Tataryn, "we are not Church just for ourselves, but for the world: God is with us through us."<sup>18</sup> The pastor therefore is not called only to be a leader for the church, but for the whole community composed of people of all faith groups.

#### **Pastor as Spiritual Leader and Exemplar**

Spiritual leadership is the calling to which the pastors have offered themselves to the service of the Lord. According to Louis W. Bloede, spiritual leadership "is the primary reason for the existence of the ordained, professional clergy. While leadership is essential in all aspects of the congregation, leadership in the spiritual realm surely must

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<sup>18</sup> Myroslaw Tataryn and Maria Truchan-Tataryn, *Discovering Trinity in Disability: A Theology for Embracing Difference* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 85.

rank as a top priority.”<sup>19</sup> The clergy must be the spiritual leaders for the society because there are actually no other people who are equipped to lead in that capacity. The pastor serves as a spiritual guide and counselor in the community.

The pastor must therefore maintain his or her personal spirituality through quiet times of reading, meditating, and praying. It is a well-known fact that the spirituality of a congregation cannot be greater than that of the pastor. The spirituality of the pastor will make a significant impact on congregants. Jesus’ word in Luke 6:40 states, “a disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” The pastor is therefore supposed to be a spiritual example for discipleship. He/she receives instruction from God and passes that same instruction along to the community. The whole community comes to the pastor for counsel because he or she represents God. Consequently, collective experiences as well as personal renewal retreats are a helpful way to strengthen the spiritual life of the pastor.

### **Pastor as Teacher and a Preacher**

The ministry of Jesus while on earth was that of teaching, as well as preaching and healing. Jesus “went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people” (Matthew 4:23). His technique of teaching was diverse. According to Bloede, “He took the ordinary, everyday experiences of the people of his day and used them in a story that held their attention, captured their imagination, and taught them an important truth.”<sup>20</sup> Jesus has commissioned us with the task of “teaching them to observe all that” he has

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<sup>19</sup> Louis W. Bloede, *Effective Pastor: A Guide to Successful Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 32.

<sup>20</sup> Bloede, *Effective Pastor*, 122-123.

commanded us (Matthew 28:20). Today as pastors, we are commissioned with the responsibility of teaching and preaching. If we are committed to our ministry as pastors, our impact will be greatly felt.

### **Pastor as Community Builder**

The ministry of the pastor as a community builder cannot be overemphasized. It is right to recollect that the very first act of Jesus' ministry was to create a community by calling the disciples. This idea suggests that the development of community should be a main activity of the pastor, especially in the rural Nigerian community. The building of community starts in worship. The emphasis of community in worship leads to the expansion of community-building both within and beyond the community.<sup>21</sup> According to Poling-Goldenne and Jung, worship is critically important, and great care is to be taken to do it well. It is a special time that the congregation gathers as "family" to honor God through praise and song, to seek God's guidance for daily life through God's word read and applied, to pray for the needs of others, and to carry out faith through action and service.<sup>22</sup>

The pastor has the potential to initiate and establish a practice of listening to the community in order to discern the needs the church may address and the assets that the community may possess. Then,

Perhaps the church can help bring together those in the community who seek . . . to provide an after-school program for children whose parents must now commute to work; or to spearhead the securing of a medical clinic; or to help establish a Habitat for Humanity program to provide decent housing as a way out of poverty.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Lawrence W. Farris, *Dynamics of Small-Town Ministry* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2000), 55.

<sup>22</sup> David Poling-Goldenne and L. Shannon Jung, *Discovering Hope: Building Vitality in Rural Congregation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 36.

<sup>23</sup> Farris, *Dynamics of Small-Town Ministry*, 55-56.

A pastor must always think ahead of the people he or she is leading. For effective community building and discipleship, the pastor must live in the community he or she is building.

### **Pastor as Administrator**

Administration of the church is quite different from business administration due to the purposes of the organization. Bloede explains administration as:

Expression of ministry rather than barrier to ministry. Administration involves people more than it involves paper clips. Administration is a way of getting things done, a way of making things happen, a way of moving from point A to point B.<sup>24</sup>

This suggests that pastors of congregations must see administration as ministry itself.

They must carry people along and they must see that things are done the way it should happen. A focused church administration is God-centered, and people-oriented. God becomes the source and life of the administration.<sup>25</sup>

The pastor as administrator needs to care about people, be a leader, and find ways to communicate, strategize, manage, and reflect. Bloede states that, “When thinking about the pastor as administrator, we may also want to add the word manage to this list.”<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note that the biblical role of the minister occasionally has been identified as prophet, priest, and pastor. The New Testament church organized to perform its ministry in meeting the needs that arose in the church and in the community. The “bishops” or “overseers” were the respected appointed leaders of the churches. Their functional role is, according to Luke, to feed and lead (Acts 20:28).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bloede, *Effective Pastor*, 67.

<sup>25</sup> Bloede, *Effective Pastor*, 68.

<sup>26</sup> Bloede, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Rex D. Edwards, “The Pastor as Church Administrator,”

<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1975/11/the-pastor-as-church-administrator>, accessed 04/19/2019.

There is, therefore, a need for the pastor to reflect on his or her own attitudes to the administrative function of ministry. *The pastor is charged with the task of equipping and modeling the congregation for participation in God's mission in the community.*

### **Pastor as Evangelist**

One of the ministry duties of a pastor is to do the work of an evangelist, as Paul the Apostle instructed Timothy (II Timothy 4:5). But evangelism is not just one thing among several things that a pastor does, it is the central ministry of a pastor. Richard Stoll Armstrong, as cited by Bloede, states,

Evangelism is proclaiming in word and the good news of the kingdom of God, and calling people to repentance, to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, to active membership in the Church, and to obedient service in the world.<sup>28</sup>

Evangelism has to be seen as a central emphasis of the church deserving of clear leadership, goals, and programs.

Poling-Goldenne and Jung state,

If evangelism is defined as everything people do to reach and engage those who are not part of a Christian community with the invitation to come and live a life of discipleship and commitment to Christ, then evangelism is very much at the heart of ministry (for congregation).<sup>29</sup>

Pastors must learn from what Jesus did, doing evangelism at all times, in all places, and to everyone who needs the good news.<sup>30</sup> Pastors who lead with a heart and mindset of the Great Commission are key to keeping members well-informed to invite, welcome, and receive new members.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the pastor as an evangelist is to be a

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<sup>28</sup> Bloede, *Effective Pastor*, 135.

<sup>29</sup> Poling-Goldenne and Jung, *Discovering Hope*, 60.

<sup>30</sup> Pwanangba D. Jedithon, *One Basic Need* (Abuja: Jimona Media Ltd, 2016), 95.

<sup>31</sup> Poling-Goldenne and Jung, *Discovering Hope*, 61.

bearer of good tidings of Jesus Christ. Pastors as evangelists must be committed to building lives, relationships, and meeting spiritual needs of people in the community.

### The Place of Discipleship in The LCCN

For disciple-making to be effective, it must be grounded in the appropriate context in which people live. The question this researcher wants to raise is: “What is the role of discipleship in the LCCN today?” For discipleship to be effective, it needs to relate to the local culture, rather than be imported from an alien culture. It needs to connect with the current realities people are facing. This means that it must seek to address the issues and context in which people live out their lives. For example, if people live in a context of fear of evil spirits, discipleship efforts need to address that issue.

Discipleship needs to be intentional; it does not just happen, rather, it needs to be worked through with strategic commitment. When we build discipleship efforts into the life of our Christian communities with strategic intent, we have the potential for transformation. As the LCCN plans for the future, what role and understanding of discipleship will best serve the future? Advance planning is essential for effective discipleship. And effective discipleship needs to be relational in nature, as modeled by Jesus and his band of followers, as well as provide accountability and focus on addressing the whole aspect of life.

This integrated view of discipleship must equip people for the workplace and the whole of life. To be effective, therefore, the church must determine how current discipleship approaches engage the needs present in church members’ lives and in the community in which they are located. Discipleship is the heart of the Great Commission. It was the only medium which Jesus used to employ people for his work.

### Existing Scholarship on Discipleship

Discipleship is an area of ministry many church leaders, scholars, and theologians have studied. Chapter three offers an in-depth survey of this literature. This section will simply highlight some key points. First, the crucial starting point for discipleship is to understand Jesus' primary goal was to make disciples of all nations. In a recent book, Nigerian Bible teacher Gbile Akanni shows that "discipleship is the tool that God uses to make His children to be conformed to the image of His dear Son."<sup>32</sup> The making of disciples of all nations establishes one of the utmost tasks that Jesus gave His early disciples before His ascension to heaven. The church cannot lose sight of this basic goal.

Many excellent books have been written about the church and discipleship. Perhaps one particularly interesting study is Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church*. He identified five activities of a healthy church which are built around the five New Testament purposes given to the church by Jesus.<sup>33</sup> He proposes worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and mission as the integral church activities derived from the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Disciple making is a mandate of the Master, "we cannot embrace the promise and ignore the process."<sup>34</sup> We need to embrace all these as an integral part of discipleship in order to fully follow Jesus Christ in making disciples. Dietrich Bonhoeffer a German theologian and pastor states, "following Christ means taking certain steps. The first step, which responds to the call, separates the followers from their previous existence."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Gbile Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus: God's Key to Abundant Life* (Gboko: The Peace House Press, 2011), 87.

<sup>33</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made, Not Born: Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1988), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 22.

Following Jesus means walking behind him. It is the call which causes a disciple to leave his “net” and follow Jesus.

Consequently, there are misconceptions on the practice of disciple making in the church today. This alteration in discipleship has motivated Jim Putman and others to write *DiscipleShift: Five Steps to Help Your Church Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. The book walks readers through five key “shifts” that churches must make to refocus on biblical discipleship: from reaching to making, from informing to equipping, from program to purpose, from activity to relationship, from accumulating to deploying. *DiscipleShift* goes beyond theory to equip and guide readers with practical counsel. The authors state that “when a church has a commonly understood definition of discipleship, they have begun to make the first shift toward a renewed emphasis on discipling people.”<sup>36</sup> Every church needs to come up with its definition of discipleship, this must be biblically based and clear, especially in the mind of every pastor and leader in the church.

Walter Henrichsen in his book *Disciples are Made, Not Born: Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ* states that “Jesus had world vision. He expected His men and women to have world vision. Jesus expected them to see the world through the disciples they would produce, just as He had seen the world through the twelve men He had raised up.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore the essential traits of a person who wants to qualify to be a disciple, according to Timothy, is to be “a faithful man” (2 Tim 2:2). Henrichsen states, “the faithful person is the one who has applied the Scriptures to every area of his life.”<sup>38</sup> The disciple is thus one who in every area of his or her life determines from the Bible what is

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<sup>36</sup> Jim Putman et al., *DiscipleShift: Five Steps that Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2013), 54.

<sup>37</sup> Putman et al., 8.

<sup>38</sup> Putman et al., 18.

right and lives it constantly in order to shape his or her relationship with God and humankind.

But being contextually appropriate is aided by a missional view of church. American theologian Craig Van Gelder examines several biblical-theological images of the church that expand our understanding of discipleship. In his book, *The Essence of the Church*, he indicates that the church “is a people of God who are created by the Spirit to live as a missionary community.”<sup>39</sup> Missionary communities take seriously their call to participate in God’s mission in the world. My discussion of the church as missionary draws heavily on the work of Van Gelder and Zscheile in their excellent work, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*. The book addresses what it means to be missional with theological and biblical justification and reminds the church of its calling to be in the world.

### **Statement of Thesis Purpose**

For many, Martin Luther included, discipleship was central to our Christian witness in the world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer notes, “Luther always included as a matter of course: discipleship.”<sup>40</sup> For the LCCN to faithfully live its call and minister in these challenging times, a robust understanding and practice of discipleship is vital. Gbile Akanni, “the basic purpose of God in discipleship is to get every child of God conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>41</sup> From Christ’s perspective, the need for discipleship is to produce those like Him through training, teaching, and character

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<sup>39</sup> Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 25.

<sup>40</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 49.

transformation using the Word and the biblical teaching to participate in God's plan to reconcile the world. God's passionate desire for every Christ-follower and the church is to be part of His disciple-making movement. Christ's way of disciple-making is expected to become our disciple-making way of life.

A missional church is a community of believers equipped and sent by God into the world to witness and fulfil God's mission on earth. The church in that regard sees itself as a missionary movement and not simply an organization, God's people in the world engaging others in their neighborhood to bear witness about Christ. The pastor's understanding of this will greatly shape his/her ministry strategy. Thus, if pastors develop their understanding of discipleship in the church, there is hope that the church and people's way of life, and relationship with God and their neighbors, would be transformed. When pastors and leaders see themselves as disciples and disciple makers, something spectacular will happen in their ministries.

### **Research Questions**

The function of discipleship is for the whole church to be equipped, for participating in God's plan for reconciling the world. Critically looking at the church today requires discovering how the church is fulfilling this calling. Accordingly, the purpose of this thesis project is to scrutinize the question: How would an understanding of the missional church and a Lutheran understanding of discipleship reframe the vision and process of disciple making in LCCN? Attention to discipleship has been the researcher's concern for several years. This thesis provides the opportunity to study it more deeply and provides the LCCN a proposal for moving forward.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant to LCCN and the church of God for several reasons. Logically, it is God's idea that as a church we worship and do ministry together with a common goal of fulfilling Christ's mandate in this world. LCCN was established on the premise of this biblical statement of Matthew 28:19, the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."<sup>42</sup> As a church we need to continue to learn how to go across tribes and nations to share the good news and make disciples for Christ.

This study is important to LCCN for the obvious reason of spiritual growth, survival, and fulfilling of the Great Commission. If the expectation of the church is to exist for the next fifty years or more, it needs then to transform the concept of its mission and focus more extensively and deeply on missional discipleship. What is learned in this study may be helpful to other denominations struggling for existence, and in need for spiritual renewal and transformation.

Engaging in this research project is important for pastors in these challenging times. As both an LCCN pastor and the researcher, for the past two years I have been engaged in discipleship and this research as an academic pursuit. In the process I have been discerning God's will and preferred future for LCCN and me. While the future is not clear, I hope this work will serve as a groundwork for future researchers who are interested in the field of discipleship and the missional church and the LCCN.

This will go broadly in sensitizing and raising the awareness of the church toward true discipleship. This study will also make recommendations to church leaders on how

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<sup>42</sup> *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1977), <https://biblehub.com/nasb77/matthew/28.htm>, accessed 07/29/2019.

to consolidate a continuing discipleship program that builds and sustains relationships with God and with one another. Also, it will authenticate the need for a well-defined discipleship program in our congregations to assist members to become Godly-minded and heavenly focused.

### **Scope of the Study**

There are two limitations to the thesis that are worth mentioning. First, the thesis does not claim to provide a new finding or insight for discipleship formation in a missional church. Rather, it is just a study of the historical background, biblical and theological reflections, and a practical conversation on discipleship and missional church from the *missio Dei* perspective in the context of LCCN. Secondly, the depth and vastness of the subject of discipleship and missional church, and the scarcity of primary sources at my disposal, also contribute to the limitation of the research.

Consequently, the researcher creates an argument by putting the history of the LCCN with his personal experiences and insights into conversation with secondary sources that are related to discipleship and missional church. It is the hope of the researcher that this thesis can be a roadmap for both the researcher's future research and engagement in the church's mission and for LCCN, and beyond.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR MISSIONAL CHURCH

The word missional was first presented in 1998 due to so many misleading and wrong definitions of *mission* and *church*. The team of scholarship that wrote *Missional Church* over twenty years ago introduced the word *missional* as an invitation for people to consider a new way of being a church. According to Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, “missional church has become a label used to describe practically everything a church does.”<sup>1</sup> In *Missional Church*, the Triune God is the primary acting agent in the world and within the church. Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile in the *Missional Church in Perspective* state that, “the understanding of Church as missionary by nature stems from realizing that God is missionary in God’s very being. If the church is missionary by nature, then participating in God’s mission is the responsibility of the whole church, involving all of God’s people.”<sup>2</sup> This mindset collapses the contradiction between church and mission.

In this chapter the researcher critically examined the central theological and biblical perspectives that informed the understanding of the missional church. Craig Van

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<sup>1</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 32-33.

Gelder's understanding of *The Missional Church* is helping the conversation here. This chapter seeks to examine the mission of God in which the church is formed by the Spirit to be missional in nature, instead of being attractional in nature. The theological framework of following God in his mission of redeeming the creation through what Jesus Christ has accomplished is a significant point to reflect on in this research. And biblical discipleship that "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ" will be examined.

### **The Missional Church**

The missional church defines itself in terms of God's mission—being *sent ones* who take the gospel to and incarnate the gospel within a specific cultural context.

Accordingly, Allan Hirsch states,

Missional church is a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world. In other words, the church's true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible.<sup>1</sup>

Mission means "sending" and, Darrell Guder states, "it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history."<sup>2</sup> The mission of God started with the call of Abraham to receive the blessings of God and to become a blessing to the nations of the world. God's mission was revealed in history right after the fall of man as recorded in Scripture, and it reached toward the incarnation of God's work of salvation in

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Hirsch. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 82.

<sup>2</sup> Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 4.

the ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Guder adds, “God’s mission continued then in the sending of the Spirit to call forth and empower the church as the witness to God’s good news in Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup> The mission continues in today’s global church witnessing across cultures, and is moving toward the final salvation of God’s people.

The “mission of God” (*Missio Dei* in Latin) emerges from John 20:21, where Christ, in his own missional capacity, commands the sending of the Christian community. The church is sent because Christ has been sent. “Mission” is therefore, God’s work in the world; the church serves as a sign and instrument for that mission. In other words, there is a church because there is a mission, not vice versa. Rowan William, as quoted by Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, states, “it is not the church of God that has a mission. It’s the God of mission that has a church.”<sup>4</sup> God is busy at work in this world to rescue the whole creation, and God is inviting the church to partner with him in this mission. This is a clear indication that “God is up to something in the world that is bigger than the church even though the church is called to be a sign, witness, and foretaste of God’s purpose in the world.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus’ declarations in John’s Gospel suggests that every Christian has been sent by Jesus with the gospel to those in the surrounding culture for the sake of the King and His kingdom. Lesslie Newbigin states, “the Church is sent into the world to continue that which he came to do, in the power of the same Spirit,

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<sup>3</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Roxburgh and Boren, 20.

reconciling people to God.”<sup>6</sup> Jesus said, “As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

Missional theology views “being sent” as the act and being of God. The idea is grounded deep in Trinitarian theology and is foundational to spiritual formation. According to Craig Van Gelder, “mission theology links the missionary nature of the church to an understanding of the mission of the Triune God.”<sup>7</sup> By nature, the triune God is a sending God. As the Father has sent the Son and the Son along with the Father sent the Holy Spirit, so, too, the church is sent into the world by participating with the triune God. According to Victor Raj, “God’s mission is our mission. Conversation about God is already theology, and the ultimate purpose of theology is missional.”<sup>8</sup> The New Testament places the mission of the church within the larger context of God’s purpose to restore the whole creation (Rom. 8:18–25; Col. 1:20), and it also gives the church a mission in the life of the Kingdom. Accordingly, Darrell Guder states, “God’s character and purpose as a sending or missionary God redefines our understanding of the Trinity.”<sup>9</sup> The end result for the *missio Dei* is a redeemed people dwelling with their God in a redeemed creation

### Portrayal of the Missional Church

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<sup>6</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 230.

<sup>7</sup> Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 33.

<sup>8</sup> Victor Raj et al., “Theology for Mission,” *Lutheran Mission Matters: Journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology* Vol. 27, Issue 55 (November 2019): 215.

<sup>9</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

The missional church is a collection of missional believers (more appropriately called disciples) acting together in fulfillment of the *missio Dei* (the mission of God). The missional church is one where people are exploring and rediscovering what it means to be Jesus' sent people as their identity and vocation, no matter what it is you do to make your living. According to Guder, "God's mission is calling us, the church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary church in our own societies, in the culture in which we find ourselves."<sup>10</sup> Thus, the missional church is a faith community willing and ready to be Christ's people in their own situation and place. Barnett and Martin state, "this community is to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6) in order that these nations will turn from their rebellion and begin to worship the triune God of heaven and earth."<sup>11</sup> The missional church knows that they must be a cross-cultural missionary people and adopt a missionary attitude in relation to their community. The missional church will be engaged with the culture (in the world) without being absorbed by the culture. They will become intentionally indigenous, because they understand that God is already present in the culture where it finds itself. Therefore, the missional church doesn't view its purpose as bringing God into the culture or taking individuals out of the culture to a sacred space.

The missional church is Spirit-led, and spiritually fruitful. The missional church is "created by the Spirit, and their existence is for the purpose of engaging the world in bringing God's redemptive work in Christ to bear on every dimension of life."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit awakens, inspires, and guides followers of Christ to bear witness to the Son and to the unconditional love of God the Father. The Spirit revives and renews the church

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<sup>10</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 145.

<sup>12</sup> Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 93.

continually for God's mission. The spiritual renewal is in itself a gift of the visitation of the Holy Spirit among God's people. It is for the church to "participate fully in the Son's redemptive work as the Spirit creates, leads, and teaches the church to live as the distinctive people of God."<sup>13</sup> The Spirit of God does not only create and renew the church, but also leads the church to fully participate in God's mission in the world. This shift reshapes our understanding of the nature, ministry and organization of the church.

The missional church led by the Spirit and endowed with diverse gifts, demonstrates compassion, love and justice filled with hopeful advantage that gives credence to its witness. The missional church practices hospitality by welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community. Missional church is "created out of grace to be part of the divine communion, the church does not live for itself, but for God and for the world."<sup>14</sup> The church sees itself as representatives of Jesus and will do nothing to dishonor his name. "The church was born as God's kingdom community and vehicle."<sup>15</sup> The missional church will be totally reliant on God in all it does, and will align all its activities around the *missio Dei*. The gathering of the missional church will be for the purpose of worship, encouragement, supplemental teaching, training, and to seek God's presence and to be realigned with God's missionary purpose. But, as a sent people, it does not end there.

The missional church is reliant on the gospel and Scripture, but is also culturally relevant in its methods and practices so that it can engage the world view of the hearers. The church feeds deeply on the Scriptures throughout the week. All its members are

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<sup>13</sup> Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Jack Messenger, *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment; An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission* (Geneva: LWF, 2004), 20.

<sup>15</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 147.

involved in learning "the way of Jesus," thus spiritual development is an expectation. This, however, according to Craig Van Gelder, "suggest the missionary nature of the church, and this nature requires the church to develop a number of aptitudes as they engage in ministry of the church."<sup>16</sup> The missional church will help people discover and develop their spiritual gifts and will rely on gifted people for ministry instead of talented people. The church itself is a healing community, where people carry each other's burdens and help restore each other gently in love. It is required that the leaders of the missional church be mission minded, if not missiologists. The missional church is the result of a church culture that passionately works at disciple-making. Making disciples "involve a total transformation of the heart and life that involves a righteousness that impacts not only individuals but families, communities and nations."<sup>17</sup>

The missional church is not a distributor of religious goods and services or a place where people come for their weekly spiritual fix. The missional church "is God-originated, Christ-centered and Spirit-empowered."<sup>18</sup> The missional church is not a place where "professionals" are hired to do the work of the church. The missional church is not a place where the "professionals" teach the children and youth about God to the exclusion of parental responsibility.

The missional church is not a church with a "good mission program." Darrell Guder states, "mission is not just a program of the church. It defines the church as God's sent people. Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus, our challenge today is to move from church with a

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<sup>16</sup> Van Gelder, *The Missional Church in Context*, 38.

<sup>17</sup> James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Engel and Dyrness, 37.

mission to missional church."<sup>19</sup> The people are the mission program that includes going to "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) The missional church is not about a new strategy for evangelism, big programs and organizations to accomplish God's missionary purpose. The missional church is not concerned simply with how many people come to our church services, but how many people our church serves, especially beyond the church walls. Equipping people for ministry outside the church is one of the core values of a missional church. The purpose of the missional church is to help people bring more wholeness to their world.

### **Missional Church is about the Missionary Nature of God and His Church.**

Those in the missional movement recognize that both God and the church are fundamentally and mainly “missionary” in nature. God is a missionary God who sends a missionary church. In fact, a survey of the term “sending” in its various forms in Scripture reveals the missionary nature of the Triune God, as well as the very essence of the church. The redemptive activity of God, his relationship to the world, and his dealing with mankind is described in Scripture by the word “sending.” The word “sending” “is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history”<sup>20</sup> Scripture is full with sending language that speaks to the missionary nature of a Triune God. Sending is “the act of the Triune God to enter the world in Christ to suffer and die and be raised again.”<sup>21</sup> God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and the Son sends the Spirit, and God the Father and the Son and the Spirit sends the church. In the

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<sup>19</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Guder, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 94.

Gospel of John alone, nearly forty times we read about Jesus being sent—either from the evangelist or from Jesus’ own lips.

In the final climactic sending passage in John’s Gospel, Jesus sees himself not only as one sent but also as one who is sending: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). A church is really more Church in its going/sending than in its coming/receiving. A church is being the church more faithfully when it is NOT gathered in the church building, but as a dynamic kingdom realizer scattered throughout the community. The purpose of the church is derived from the very nature of a sending, missionary God, which in turn compels it to be sent from the building as a missionary people, both individually and collectively.

**Missional Church is about Incarnational Ministry in a Post-Christendom Context.**

Those with a missional perspective no longer see the church service as the primary connecting point for those outside the church. While there is nothing wrong with attracting people to participate in various gatherings of the church, the missional church is more concerned about sending the people in the church out among the people of the world, rather than getting the people of the world in among the people of the church. Sending and getting people in is now a lost cause as Christianity is increasingly pushed to the margins of society! Some have described this missional-attractional distinction as a challenge to “go and be” as opposed to “come and see.” “Effective missionary communication begins by remembering that the primary task of any missionary is to communicate Jesus Christ.”<sup>22</sup> The attractional model, which has dominated the church in Nigeria for the past several decades, seeks to reach out to the culture and draw people

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<sup>22</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publication, 2010), 326.

into the church. However, this approach only works when there are no significant cultural barriers to overcome when making the required move from outside to inside the church.

### **Missional Church is about Actively Participating in the *missio Dei*, or Mission of God**

Many times, we wrongly assume that the primary activity of God is in the church, rather than recognizing that God's primary activity is in the world. The Church is God's instrument sent into the world to participate in His redemptive mission. God's primary activity in the world is through the Church. According to Barnett and Martin, "the church, God's kingdom community, must understand itself as God's obedient people, sent to the world to express God's story through their life and word."<sup>23</sup> This key distinction clarifies the difference between a church with a mission program and a missional church. A church with a mission program usually sees missions as one activity alongside many other equally important programs of the church. A missional church, on the other hand, focuses all its activities around its participation in God's agenda for the world. God's mission must form and inform everything we do in the church.

All activities of the church must be catalyzed by and organized around the *missio Dei*. As the sent, missionary people of God, the missional church understands its fundamental purpose as being rooted in God's mission to restore and heal creation and to call people into a reconciled relationship with Himself. It is God's mission that calls the church into existence. In other words, we can no longer see the church as the starting point when thinking about mission. Instead, the church must be the result of God's mission. In the words of Christopher Wright:

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<sup>23</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 152.

The mission of God is the prior reality out of which follows any mission that we get involved in. Or, as has been nicely put, it is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God’s mission.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, mission is rooted in the uniqueness of God Himself. God is on a mission; Jesus is the incarnation of that mission and empowers the people of God for God’s mission. Jesus identifies himself as being sent more than forty times in the Gospel of John. The church is sent on mission by Jesus. Being missional, therefore, is the church’s realization that it is called to join Jesus in God’s mission in the power of the Spirit. *A missional church is one that seeks to engage all the churches in the activity God has for them—His mission.* Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile state, “God is a missionary God, and God’s mission involves a church sent into the world to represent the reign (kingdom) of God.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Biblical Foundation for Missional Church**

The biblical foundation for mission “starts with the belief that the Triune God is a missionary God.”<sup>26</sup> The missionary character of God is expressed in the work of creation and continues to the work of redemption. God the Father sent His Word through the prophets with miraculous signs and wonders to disclose His glory. Ultimately God sent His Son into the world as the greatest revelation of God. Van Gelder states, “God sent Jesus into the world to restore the right relationship with all that was lost in the fall” of

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<sup>24</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 62.

<sup>25</sup> Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 30.

man.<sup>27</sup> Timothy C. Tennent says, “from the perspective of the Triune God, Jesus is the one who Himself was sent into the world by the Father.”<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, in the history of humanity, Jesus sent the church from the perspective of the character of the Triune God.

Jack Messenger states, “Father and the Spirit sent the Son, the Father and the Son breathe in the Spirit, and the Son and the Spirit reveal the glory of the Father to the far reaches of the universe.”<sup>29</sup> When the church sends out missionaries, it is not only obeying Christ’s command but is also reflecting the Father’s glory, who is the final, originator and sender. Thus, mission is the very reason for the existence of the church. Engaging in mission is not an option for the church. According to Wright, “mission is God’s address to the problem of fractured humanity. And God’s mission is universal in its ultimate goal and scope.”<sup>30</sup> To fail to participate in God’s mission is the denial of the very essence and existence of the church.

### The Missional Church Begins with God-Empowered Love

The driving force for God’s mission in the world is love. God’s love for the world compelled His Son who left his place of honor and glory to come for the rescue of humankind. If all the church is to be engaged in God’s mission, moving out of our comfort zones is required. Through the power of the Spirit, “God calls the church to be the demonstration of what all creation is to be.”<sup>31</sup> Hence, only by the work of the Spirit the church can demonstrate love that brings people to repentance. The Holy Spirit enables

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<sup>27</sup> Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to the World Mission*, 76.

<sup>29</sup> Messenger, *Mission in Context*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 328.

<sup>31</sup> Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 45.

people to understand God's offer of salvation. The empowering presence of the Spirit brings amazing hope to people everywhere. Our role therefore is to glorify God by offering this hope through the message of the gospel (John 16:8-11). The Spirit is there to empower us to share the gospel that is saturated by the love of God. Our missional role is simply to go. Love is the place where our going and his convicting converge. Paul writes,

Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. Each one of us must please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even the Messiah did not please Himself. On the contrary, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me" (Romans 15:1-3, HCSB).

The Holy Spirit could do his work without us, but God decided to choose us to participate in his redeeming work. God enables us to see the world through God's eyes, so that the church can realize that it exists to join Jesus in God's mission in the power of the Spirit. According to Roxburgh and Boren, "the church is to be God's hands and feet in accomplishing God's mission" in the world.<sup>32</sup> By the Spirit's presence, we can then be compelled by love to move out of our comfort zone and into the world where a hearing and demonstration of the gospel is needed. Paul gives us his perspective for ministry and mission in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21: If all the church is to be engaged in God's mission, moving out of our comfort zones is required.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians as a letter to a church that was struggling to live its faith in a corrupt society. He was a man compelled by love because he understood what God had done for him. Paul desired that same reconciliation for the church in Corinth. The love that motivated Paul into action is the same love that is to motivate the church into action. Irrespective of the challenges, the church must engage the world with the gospel.

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<sup>32</sup> Roxburgh and Boren, 20.

God has called and sent the church “to be a missionary church in our societies, in the cultures in which we find ourselves.”<sup>33</sup> Being compelled by love means seeing people through the eyes of God, because of what God has done for the church in Christ (vs. 16). God does not see his image-bearers from merely a worldly point of view. He sees them from the perspectives of their created value and his purpose for creation, and he sees them as the objects of redemption. Paul taught the Corinthians how they should view others differently, he called all to serve as Christ’s ambassadors (vv. 18-20).

God’s demonstration of love toward His children is powerful. The people of God are called to follow his example by the demonstration of God’s love to the people of the world. When we relate to others, they should experience God’s love. The apostle Paul is not the only biblical author to write about this relationship between God’s love and our love for others. John tells us the world witnesses God’s love and our love for him through our love for one another. To be missional, we must love the children of God. “*By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35). Guder states,

God’s mission embraces all of creation. “God so loved the world” is the emphasis of the beloved gospel summary in John 3:16. This does not mean that the church is not essential to God’s work of salvation—it is. But it is essential as God’s chosen people “who are blessed to be a blessing to the nation.”<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, the church in mission, should be constantly proving the reality of God’s love by the way we care, comfort, and enjoy one another. As we love the church as Christ

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<sup>33</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Guder, 4.

loves the church, obedience to His commands will purify our passions and lead us to a greater ministry of disciple-making.

### The Missional Church is Shaped by God and His Mission

Our zeal for participating in God's mission has been undermined by our small view of God. Our understanding of God shapes how we respond to God's mission. Mission, according to Timothy C. Tennent, "arises not simply as a response of obedience to a command given to a church . . . but as a joyful invitation to participate with God in His redemptive work in the world."<sup>35</sup> The participation of the church in God's mission, therefore, is a gift of God's grace, grounded in love for the redemption of all creation. In view of this, the identity and calling of the church becomes clearer. Unfortunately, the church has simply replaced God's purpose for the world with its own purpose for the world. When the church serves and helps and gives and shares, it too often does it from a sense of obligation or a desire to impress the world. It has become a church that is motivated by a host of things rather than by a singular desire to glorify God. Tennent states, "the God who reveals Himself in the Bible is the God of mission."<sup>36</sup> As a church in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must reclaim our lost sense of the glorious God. We will not recover the missional vision of the church until we recover the splendor of this great God.

The message that emanates from the life and work of the apostle Paul (the most productive missionary in the history of the church) is that we cannot hope to be either faithful or effective in Kingdom service while being too concerned about our own needs.

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<sup>35</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission*, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Tennent, 106.

Paul was devoted to the churches and the people who embraced them. He possessed an uncommon zeal to see others convinced of gospel truth and redeemed through God's eternal mercy and grace. But it was not concern for his neighbors that eventually motivated Paul to such extremes of spiritual action and sacrifice. It was Jesus's love that "compelled" him (2 Cor. 5:14).

### The Missional Church is Both Missional and Engages in Missions

Being missional conveys the idea of living a purposeful, biblical mission. Christ's love compels God's people to be missional for God's glory. The church is called to join Jesus on his mission of reconciling the world. This mission is from everywhere to everywhere. Mission is the reason the church exists, and God is actively involved in God's mission in the world. Thus, Jack Messenger states, "for the missional church, mission is not only what the church does (missionary activities), but also the church at work."<sup>37</sup> The church being empowered by the Word and led by the Spirit, knows that mission flows from its very nature as being a witnessing community. God's people serve others and witness to the faith as a response to God's love for them. "This means that God has been, is, and will be active in the world. We, as God's church, simply must seek to participate in God's mission in the world."<sup>38</sup> As the church lives on mission, it lives out its identity as missionary people of God.

Jesus defines the pattern of church engagement in mission. He sends his followers from the center (Jerusalem) to go make disciples wherever they go (all nations), and he

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<sup>37</sup> Messenger, *Mission in Context*, 45.

<sup>38</sup> Van Gelder, *The Missional Church in Context*, 147.

promises that he will go with them. The Pauline approach to mission is derived from following Jesus' command in Acts 1:8. Jesus commands his followers to be witnesses in "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." But it is also closely related to Matthew 28—Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples of all nations." These statements in Matthew and Acts point out that something has changed. Rather than merely attracting the nations to Jerusalem, the people of God were called to go out from Jerusalem. The purpose of the apostles' mission is "to found missional communities to continue the witness that had brought them into being."<sup>39</sup> The Great Commission is about reaching your neighbor, but in the flow of redemptive history, it lays out a new plan for mission.

The Jesus commission in John's gospel helps us to see that we are called to be missionaries to our neighbors and the wider world. In John 20:21, Jesus speaks to his disciples explaining that he is sending them as his Father has sent him. This text teaches that everyone is sent on mission (John 20:21) and everyone is called to this ministry (1 Peter 4:10).

### **Theological Framework for the Missional Church**

The theology of the *missio Dei* defines the church within the context of the principle of the Triune God. David Bosch as quoted by Darrell L. Guder described this theological harmony concisely, explaining "the classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was

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<sup>39</sup> Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 66.

expanded to include yet another movement: Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”<sup>40</sup> The crucial point with this statement has to do with the revealed nature and purpose of God. Hence, “mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God.”<sup>41</sup>

The term “missional” is effective in describing the relationship between the calling of God’s people and God’s mission. While it’s common for people to say, “The church has a mission,” a better way to talk about mission is “God’s mission has a church”<sup>42</sup> God’s mission is the starting place for understanding the church and its mission. God has placed mission in the gene of the church. “Missional” is useful as a theological term that orients the church to live faithfully as missionaries in their world in consideration of God’s mission. Theology is central in helping us to know more about God and God’s mission. Christopher Wright in *Discovering the Mission of God* states, “theology was all about God- what God was like, what God had said and done.”<sup>43</sup> Accordingly Tennent added, “theology is fundamentally missional because biblical theology reveals God as a missionary God.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is not out of place to state that, “God is a sending God, a missionary God, who has called His people, the church, to be missionary agents of His love and glory”<sup>45</sup> in the world. Darrel Guder in *Missional Church* believes that, “The basic function of all theology is to equip the church for its calling. If that calling is fundamentally missional, then what we understand and teach

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<sup>40</sup> Guder, *Called to Witness*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> Guder, 74.

<sup>42</sup> Ed Stetzer et al., *Missional Manifesto*, <http://www.missionalmanifesto.net/>, accessed 1/31/2020.

<sup>43</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission*, 60.

<sup>45</sup> Stetzer et al., *Missional Manifesto*.

about the church will shape God’s people for their faithful witness in particular places.”<sup>46</sup>  
 The theological understanding and conviction that the mission of the church is the consequential result of its involvement in God’s mission, is a complete mission.

A group of leading missiologists, pastors, theologians and authors such as Ed Stetzer, Alan Hirsch, Tim Keller, Dan Kimball, Eric Mason, J.D. Greear, Craig Ott, Linda Bergquist, Philip Nation, and Brad Andrews drafted a document, “Missional Manifesto” in order to provide some theological limitations for how we use the word “missional.” The preamble of the “Missional Manifesto” explains their focus in restoring the integrity of the word missional as particularly critical. A biblically faithful, missional understanding of God and the church is essential to the development of our role in God’s mission. In describing the characteristics of a missional church, the researcher adopts the Manifesto to provide a theological framework for understanding what the term “missional” means and how the adjective changes our understanding of church. In this Missional Manifesto nine theological commitments emerged to provide a framework for the term “missional”:

**Authority.** The Bible reveals God’s nature, his works, and his will in the world. These truths are foundational for mission. Christopher Wright says, “the whole canon of Scripture is a missional phenomenon in the sense that it witnesses to the self-giving movement of this God toward his creation and us, human beings in God’s own image, but wayward and wanton.”<sup>47</sup> The church must not avoid God’s gracious revelation of himself in the Scriptures. His thoughts on his mission shape and direct our understanding

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<sup>46</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 12.

<sup>47</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 48.

of the church and its mission. Just as God's words and thoughts must be ours, his mission must be ours as well.

**Gospel.** The Apostle Paul gave the “gospel in a nutshell” when he wrote “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, HCSB). Paul’s statement that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is in “accordance with the Scriptures” reminds us that every book, passage, and verse of the Bible points to the world’s need for redemption and God’s gracious work to accomplish it for us. Mike Barnett and Robin Martin state, “the gospel is God-empowered, creative, saving force, working in and through the speaker and hearers to transform people from all nations who reflect the glorious image of Christ.”<sup>48</sup> The gospel is the good news that God’s kingdom has come in the person and work of Jesus Christ. From Eden to the restoration of all things, the Scriptures are filled with the message of God’s great rescue of his people. When we repent of our sins, confess Christ as Lord, and trust in him, the gracious work of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection (the gospel) restores our relationship with God. A gospel-centered mission always includes calling individuals (evangelism) to place their faith and trust in Jesus. Personal response to God’s work of redemption in Christ is central to a biblically informed view of being missional and the church’s calling in the world.

The gospel can also be captured with the narrative of the Bible in *Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration*. The biblical story teaches God’s mission is to redeem

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<sup>48</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 161.

individuals and gather them as one people who dwell forever with him in a restored creation. Emphasizing restoration highlights an important biblical theme: When God redeems people, God is bringing physical, emotional, psychological, relational, and societal healing to the brokenness of our world. According to Jack Messenger, “God’s mission as redeemer is revealed in the way of the Son” Jesus Christ.<sup>49</sup> Because of this, it is right for God’s people to embrace acts of mercy and justice as a part of their participation in God’s mission. Essentially, the gospel is the saving and gracious work of God to redeem people. The gospel is God’s work. Because of God’s work, the church proclaims what God has done and will do in Christ. The gospel comes in power and influences people and the world. Individuals are resurrected from death to life through God’s redeeming work, which has installed the Kingdom of God. These are the implications of the gospel. Hence, the church cannot forget that it is in the power of the gospel that we live, and this gospel sets the direction for our lives.

**Kingdom.** The Kingdom of God serves as a central theme in the New Testament. The Kingdom is both our current experience and future hope of God’s redemptive reign. “The kingdom of God is where God rules in glory.”<sup>50</sup> As discussed earlier, the gospel is the good news that God’s kingdom has come. Missiologists have therefore recognized that the gospel, the Kingdom, mission, and the church are all related, and that the Kingdom is seen as central to God’s mission. The goal of the Kingdom is to make things as they should be—a work in process until God brings all things to its completion. We partner with God in the advancement of his Kingdom through proclaiming and living.

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<sup>49</sup> Messenger, *Mission in Context*, 25.

<sup>50</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 147.

The Kingdom shaped lives in this present age, praying for it to be “on earth as it is in heaven.”

**Mission.** The mission of the loving God is a mission of mercy and grace. “Mission is the heart of God, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>51</sup> God’s grace, overcomes the consequences of sin, and extends the grace beyond the individual to all communities, and to all creation. Guder states, “mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purpose to restore and heal creation.”<sup>52</sup> All creation of God has been touched by this grace and is consequently waiting for transformation. Mission must be rooted in the nature, purpose and action of God. Roxburgh and Boren say, “mission is not an action or program but the essence that pervades all the church is.”<sup>53</sup> The church exists because of mission.

**Church.** “The church is a covenant community of imperfect but redeemed believers living in our world.”<sup>54</sup> The church exists to be the eyes, mouthpiece, hands and feet of Christ in the world, and to be the means of his action in and for the world. According to Van Gelder and Zscheile, “the church is chosen and called, not as a privilege, but as a responsibility to witness to God’s purposes for all humanity.”<sup>55</sup> The church exists to be a blessing for the whole world, and to serve as an instrument to bring the redemptive reign of God under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The church is the Spirit-empowered body of Christ that is gathered because of God’s mission and is *sent to*

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<sup>51</sup> Raj et al., “Theology for Mission,” 213.

<sup>52</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 45.

<sup>54</sup> Stetzer, *Missional Manifesto*.

<sup>55</sup> Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 38.

join his mission. The church finds its significance as a body sent on a Kingdom mission. The life and activities of the church should therefore reflect its missionary nature. The Spirit empowers and the Word informs the church for the task. The King gives them the keys of the kingdom and a promise to be present with them in the “mission.” As the church lives in the world together and lives for the good of our communities, it reflects our message and advances the mission.

**Christo-centric.** Jesus is the center of God’s mission. According to Barnett and Martin, “God’s mission determined his mission. In the obedience of Jesus, even to death, the mission of God reached its climax.”<sup>56</sup> The *missio Dei* has become in Jesus the *missio Christi*. All that the triune God intends and plans to do in salvation history during this age is defined by and categorized by the mission of Christ. Jesus has come to inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth by bringing men and women into a saving relationship with Himself. Ross Hastings states, “the church that rediscovers Christ at the centre of its existence and mission as participation in the triune God’s mission” is joining God in the redemptive project for the creation.<sup>57</sup> The essence of Christ’s mission is making disciples from all peoples, resulting in disciple-making churches among all peoples. The church is therefore added to the world for the purpose of pointing to and celebrating both Christ’s presence and God’s redemption of the whole world

**Disciple-Making.** Disciple-making is a missional task. Making disciples of all nations establishes one of the greatest tasks that Jesus conferred upon His disciples before

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<sup>56</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 45.

<sup>57</sup> Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 77.

ascending to heaven. The church is called to make disciples and to equip the disciples for the mission. “Being productive in the mission means making disciples.”<sup>58</sup> The church is not missional if it ignores its calling to make disciples. Discipleship implies engagement and action. To be a disciple of Jesus means inviting people to partner with God in the mission of healing to the world. Disciples understand and live out the gospel under the Kingdom reign and rule of Jesus, and they do so with the assurance that he is with them. “Disciples set aside a life of self-interest and make commitment to follow the pattern of Jesus’ life and teaching.”<sup>59</sup> Discipleship has significant values for how the gospel is proclaimed. The church is mandated to make disciples of people who would become like Jesus in character and way of life.

**Duality.** There’s a strong argument within the current missional conversation on the duality of gospel proclamation and gospel demonstration. Some people view works of mercy and justice as an implication of the Gospel while others see them as a core of the gospel’s beauty. Still others view them as a co-equal of the Gospel. The gospel is good news about the gracious work of Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection. The gospel is also God’s work of redemption in Jesus Christ. Because of the gospel, there’s no enmity between God and those who have repented and believed in Jesus. I uphold that God’s gracious work restores our relationship with him when we repent of our sin, confess the Messiah as Lord, and trust in him. This restoration includes a reordering of one’s life, one’s loves, one’s ambitions, one’s purpose (Col. 1:6). The followers of Jesus demonstrate the hope of the gospel in *both* word and deed because the gospel transforms

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<sup>58</sup> Victor Raj et al., “Forgotten, That is, Neglected Treasures,” *Lutheran Mission Matters: Journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology* Vol. 27, Issue 54 (May 2019): 40.

<sup>59</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 54.

them. God's purpose is to redeem individuals who then join him in the restoration of all things (Eph. 1:21-22).

**Universality.** One unfortunate reality in a fallen world is that divisions will always be present. The barriers that normally separate people in the world: gender, race, education, social standing, etc., are dissolved because the church's identity is first in Christ. I see two clear connections between this truth and God's heart for mission in the world. First, because our identity in Christ is through faith and not of our own works, Christians should be humble people. Second, because God's love extends to all people, our love should too. Humility and love are missional qualities. Because of them, the church should orient itself towards the good of all through mission.

God's mission is truly a global mission involving every tribe, tongue, people and nation (Rev. 5:9). God's mission extends to all people, our mission should also extend to all people irrespective of tribe, religion and race. "All our planning and practice then must be responsive to what God has already begun."<sup>60</sup> Christians have a global obligation to advance God's kingdom among all the nations (Matt. 28:18-20). Thus, to be faithfully missional, we must both cross the street and distance the globe.

### **Ecclesial Participation in the Mission of God**

The church understands mission as a faithful expression of its calling to point and participate in God's reign in Christ. The mission of the church is aimed at transforming, reconciling, and empowering the world for God's mission. Mission is the gift of God to

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<sup>60</sup> Engel and Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions*, 90.

every baptized child of God, as well as the whole church community. The whole church participates in mission, for mission is not the privilege of a few professionals or few wealthy churches. “For a missional church, participating in God’s mission is at the core of its nature as a church.”<sup>61</sup> Thus mission is the calling of the whole church, not only individuals or mission agencies, and is the responsibility of the whole household of God, “the communion of the sent.” Messenger states, “engaging in mission from the perspective of the communion of the sent (and also of the saint) leads the church to faithful martyrria as it stands together in all places at all times in common witness.”<sup>62</sup> Mission remains God’s mission. Therefore, God as a missional God is calling his missional church to take part in his missional work around the globe.

The global outreach of God’s mission, through his Word and his Spirit is the framework in which we have to position the mission of the Church. The Church, and all who belong to it, are called to participate in a project that comes from God and belongs to God. Roxburgh and Martin clearly state, “there is no participation in Christ without participation in God’s mission in the world.”<sup>63</sup> Our mission, then, does not take over from this divine mission. We are called and sent rather to further it and contribute to its fulfilment. Moreover, in participating in God’s mission, we encounter human beings and a world in which God’s Spirit is already working. This “understanding of God’s mission will impact his (people’s) understanding of the church’s mission.”<sup>64</sup> God is present

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<sup>61</sup> Messenger, *Missional Church in Context*, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Messenger, 44.

<sup>63</sup> Roxburgh and Martin, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 45.

<sup>64</sup> Van Gelder, *The Missional Church in Context*, 147.

everywhere before us and actively involved in ways unknown to us. Our task, then, is to discover and strengthen that presence and action.

The first task as missional church is to seek out and discern where and how God's Spirit is present and active among those to whom we are sent, and this is essentially a meditative exercise. If it is God's mission, we need to discern it. We ask: What is breaking the heart of God? We see the exploitation of nature and people, broken relationships, materialism, people without work skills and people without access to food and healthcare. God's missionary agenda can only be gathered from deep listening to the Spirit who has understood the depth of God and knows God's ways. Van Gelder and Zscheile say, "the way to discern what God is leading the church to join comes from the practices of listening attentively to the Word, to one another, and to the world," this they consider as central for participation in God's mission.<sup>65</sup> This practice of discernment is called "dwelling in the Word", it is fruitful practice for shaping the imagination of a missional church. We join God in discerning what God is up to in our neighborhood and the world. We use our individual places of influence and we use the church's authority and resources to participate in the mission. By joining God in building a just and whole society; we are introducing God's reign, a different order for human life and community.

The church is a community that shows the world how it can live in communion and to join God's work in reclaiming creation and community. Jesus invites us to follow him in discipleship through our participation in God's Trinity of self-giving love. We join with God in making love known to those who don't know it. We seek to join God in

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<sup>65</sup> Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 151.

recreating community through the power of the Spirit. God created the world, continues to reconcile broken relationships and desires all to live with love and justice. Jesus entered the world as God in the flesh, “to share the place of humanity and embody God’s reign, reconciling us to God.”<sup>66</sup> In the communal life of the Trinity we see God’s vision for communal life in the church and world. God’s Spirit forms a people and leads them from bondage to freedom, representing a God who desires a community that reflects the reign of God.

The church participates with God in a holistic mission by “being, doing and saying.” How the church responds, acts and treats people outside the church walls will show the world God’s love. We engage the community and join God in binding up and healing the wounded. The role of the church essentially is to interpret God’s work so people identify the reign of God and give their hearts to God and join God’s work. According to Messenger, “Mission encompasses proclamation, service and advocacy for justice. Mission as a proclamation is an attempt by every Christian to tell and interpret the gospel in his/her context as a way to discover God’s saving action and meaningful presence in the world.”<sup>67</sup> The context in which Christians live should shape and influence their understanding of the world, the gospel and themselves. The church cannot assume that its view of the world, of others, of the earth, and of God, is universal. It needs to identify and discern things and people, especially, the marginalized and excluded voices in its setting that God seeks to transform, reconcile and empower. Most churches fail to

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<sup>66</sup> Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Participating in God’s Mission*, 271.

<sup>67</sup> Messenger, *Missional Church in Context*, 7.

envision this, and automatically localize God's mission and lose the vitality of sharing and interpreting the gospel in its community.

### **Equipping Pastor for Missional Leadership**

The key to the formation of missional churches is their leadership. The Spirit empowers the church for mission through the gifts of people. Leadership is a critical gift, provided by the Spirit because, as the Scripture demonstrates, fundamental change in any body of people requires leaders capable of transforming its life and being transformed themselves. Barnett and Martin state, "the biblical record demonstrates that God's intention has always been to multiply leaders among people. God's plan has never been one of appointing a single person to bear the burden of leading his people alone."<sup>68</sup> The fundamental pattern is provided in the story of the conversion of Peter in his encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10-11). As the LCCN is called to fundamental change, leadership formed by God's mission needs to be rediscovered. Such leadership will be biblically and theologically sharp, skilled in understanding the changes shaping Nigerian society, and gifted with the courage and endurance to lead God's people as missional communities.

#### The Premise for Missional Leadership

Missional leadership is to lead and speak extensively on the mission of God as first revealed in the Scriptures and in the life of Jesus Christ in order to guide God's people to surrender and participate in the mission of God both as individuals and community. The purpose of leadership is to form and equip people who demonstrate and

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<sup>68</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 501.

announce the purpose and direction of God through Jesus Christ in the world. Such leadership, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, works to create a people whose life is a witness to Jesus Christ. Roxburgh and Romanuk state, “missional leadership is first about the leader’s character and formation. Leaders either form or deform the emergence of the Spirit’s work among God’s people.”<sup>69</sup> This point is clearer in the description of the leadership role for the missional leader in Titus 2:7; “And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.” Missional “leaders take on the role of spiritual parents who parent believers with leadership potential to lead their own spiritual families, and the process is passed on from generation to generation.”<sup>70</sup> The church, as the body of Christ, is called to live this new reality for leadership in the missional church.

### Characteristics of Missional Leader

Here six basic theological characteristics of leadership born out of missional engagement are briefly discussed.

#### **The Primary Identity of a Missional Leader Is One Who Is Spirit-Led**

A missional leader is called and equipped by the Spirit to lead the community of God’s people into missional engagement with the context in which he/she lives. Leaders are expected to lead, while the Spirit provides input. Leading others in the course of following Jesus is an essential expression of missional leadership. Spirit-led leadership

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<sup>69</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2006), 126.

<sup>70</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 501.

plays an essential role “in developing, forming, and guiding congregational life” for God’s mission.<sup>71</sup> Leadership formation must involve teaching people how to hear in order to enter into God’s vision. As a consequence, one of the key disciplines of leadership is meditative prayer. Kingdom leaders regularly put themselves in places where they are able to hear God and to work with people who can help them recognize the voice. Missional leaders are reliant upon the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit and help others to become the same way. They are not afraid to step out of bounds and live on the edge. They go where the Spirit leads and flow like wind sent from the heart of God.

### **The Attitude of a Missional Leader Is That of a Servant**

Leadership is fundamentally an issue of character, a posture of humility. The character of the missional leader “is at the core of the overall skills and capacities required to cultivate missional change in a local church.”<sup>72</sup> Only if we identify ourselves as people who hear is this possible. We are talking about humility of character that is able to take all of one’s gifts and powers and put them in the service of another’s cause. Since it is God who is acting, outcomes may surprise. Missional leaders don’t lead over others. They see themselves as ordinary people rather than professional clergy. They consider themselves as servants saved to serve the Lord, repared to reclaim the lost, and called to co-create something beautiful in the midst of miseries. They lead and live alongside a community that is discerning the work of God in them.

### **The Task of a Missional Leader Is Obedience**

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<sup>71</sup> Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 148.

<sup>72</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 141.

Missional leaders lead with obedience to God. To live in obedience to God can only be worked out by choosing to enter into relationships where we become accountable to others for character growth. Only in this way are we able to keep from confusing our voice for that of God. Regular practice of the discipline of “prayer and dwelling in the Word” makes this type of life possible. “Practices cultivate an environment for learning discernment and developing an alternative imagination as God’s people.”<sup>73</sup> In recognizing and discerning what God is doing will help to shape communities that are open and growing in accountability. Whoever listens to God and obeys God’s calling can be trained to become a missional leader. With the help and support of the community, they can do something meaningful and significant. Missional leaders must therefore take the Scriptures as their primary source of authority and information in leading people into God’s mission.

### **The Goal of a Missional Leader Is to Live as a Servant of the Missio Dei**

A commitment to personal and corporate transformation marks the missional leader. The "good news" is of the Kingdom of God, something much bigger than the Church. Recognizing that God is at work in every corner of the world, including institutions and structures, these leaders understand that no place stands outside of the work of grace. “Missional leaders are to form a people shaped by this vision.”<sup>74</sup> They endeavor to discern where God is at work and, with the community of faith, to enter into it. This means working for reconciliation, seeing possibilities that are not yet visible to

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<sup>73</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, 153.

<sup>74</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 188.

others. Missional leaders operate out of a Trinitarian framework. The nature of God shapes the nature and mission of their context. They see the church differently. The true nature of the church is the coming together of those called by God to share, celebrate, and participate in extending God's reign.

### **The Location of a Missional Leader Is Identified by Incarnation**

Rooted in the words of Jesus "as the Father has sent me, so send I you," incarnation is a simple, powerful call identifying us as sent out ones. Leave those places of safety and comfort, places of belonging that we call home. Following the example of Christ, leaders willing engage risk, leading the community out into the world. If Jesus' life and ministry provide the shape of our own, there is an engagement at the deepest levels of both power and brokenness. As suffering, death and resurrection form a part of this engagement, the community of faith will need a leader who shares their location. Missional leaders are incarnational rather than promotional. "Their leadership will be especially evident as they equip and inform the community to discern God's will for its missionary action."<sup>75</sup> They think missionally and live incarnationally on a daily basis. They are more concerned about being than doing.

### **The Style of a Missional Leader Is Brilliant**

Each missional leader is a part of a unique leadership team. No one person has all of the gifts needed to exercise effective kingdom leadership. Recognizing that God gives gifts to all people, they understand leadership as a team endeavor. Missional leaders

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<sup>75</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 186.

“Cultivate the missional imagination- in the sense of fostering, nurturing, promoting—by listening to and engaging their congregation’s collective stories, fears, concerns, and dreams about who they are and where God is leading them.”<sup>76</sup> They strive to nurture the unique and creative gifts in others through the practice of the skills of mentoring and spiritual direction. For missional leaders, people are more important than programs. They invest in other people’s lives and help develop them to be God’s instruments of grace. Nothing is more exciting than transforming lives. To be missional is more than to engage in an evangelistic or missionary program. It is a way of life around God’s mission in this world. Missional leaders dare to go wherever God leads in order to be the change that changes the world. They are concerned about the Kingdom of God and the formation of people over programs and facilities.

### Conclusion

From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures reveal the mission of the triune God to actively engage and redeem mankind for His glory. This redemptive record has been referred to the mission of God. The redemptive work of Christ and His post-resurrection authority form the core of His great commission. God’s mission in the world is now defined completely by Christ’s mission to make disciples and establish his church among all peoples (2 Cor. 5:18-20). God is “presently active in the world, with the church being responsible for discovering what God is doing and then seeking to participate in that.”<sup>77</sup> The different persons of the Godhead are involved in particular ways to fulfill the *mission of God* in this age. All that the triune God intends and plans to do in salvation history

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<sup>76</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 149-150.

<sup>77</sup> Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 31.

during this age is defined and characterized by the mission of Christ. To carry on with this mission therefore, there is need for nurturing emerging missional leaders whose life are modeling after Christ, and have sacrificed everything for the course of God's mission.

The next chapter explores the biblical and theological concepts of discipleship, bearing in mind Luther's ideologies of discipleship, and what following Jesus theologically means. The chapter analyzes the role of the Holy Spirit and that of the pastor in discipleship formation.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL BASIS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a word that gets thrown around a lot at church. People describe classes, courses, programs, Bible studies, accountability groups, mission trips and even fellowship as discipleship. Often, people think making disciples is a specific call or spiritual gift, something only meant for the pastors, missionaries and “super-Christians.” This thinking is wrong. Discipleship is not an optional course. It is not a twelve-step program. It is not intended for only a select few to carry out. And discipleship is more than a program. Christ’s mandate to make disciples is meant for every one of His followers.

This chapter explores key biblical, theological and theoretical concepts of discipleship that contribute to an overall understanding of discipleship as a way of life and the primary calling of Christian communities. Within these dimensions of exploration this chapter highlights: Christ’s calling to the original disciples, the power of the Holy Spirit in forming disciples today, and the leadership role of disciple-making pastors in the life of Christian communities.

## **Toward a Concept of Discipleship**

By definition, a disciple is a follower, one who accepts and assists in spreading the teachings and way of life of another. A Christian disciple is a person who follows the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Traditionally, Christian discipleship is understood as the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in their hearts, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike. Dietrich Bonhoeffer states, “discipleship is a commitment solely to the person of Jesus Christ, a breaking through of all legalisms by the grace of him who calls.”<sup>1</sup> Gbile Akanni added, “discipleship is a process whereby a believer who voluntarily surrendered himself to the Lord Jesus Christ is being made to become like Jesus by various exposures, activities and discipline, administered by the leadership and determination of the Lord Himself.”<sup>2</sup> This process is more than responding to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to examine their thoughts, words and actions it also “is a day-to-day process and course of life that culminates in becoming like Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

Discipleship involves teaching biblical precepts, while modeling and guiding others toward living righteously as followers of Jesus Christ. “Jesus invited people into relationship with himself; he loved them and, in the process, showed them how to follow God. His primary method was life-on-life.”<sup>4</sup> Discipleship takes place within

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<sup>1</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Gbile Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 49.

<sup>3</sup> Akanni, 54.

<sup>4</sup> Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 33.

relationships; relationships developed through devotions, care, and by encouraging each other toward living with Christ-like characteristics in their everyday lives. The focus of these relationships is making disciples which entails following Jesus Christ and learning to live by the wisdom of His Word. When Jesus called His first disciples, the plan was to spend time together with Him (Mark 3:14) and learn from Him. Christ called people to obey, follow, and learn from Him. At the end of His earthly ministry Jesus met with those disciples and told them to spend the rest of their days going into all the world and teaching those who want to follow and obey Christ, how to be learners or disciples all their days (Matthew 28:19-20). We call that the Great Commission.

The fundamental idea of discipleship is not to increase the number of churches, but to get every child of God conformed to the image of God. Discipleship is a walking together in the way of Christ, learning to die, learning how to leave who you were, and learning who you now are. Bonhoeffer states, “Christianity without the living Jesus Christ remains necessarily a Christianity without discipleship; and a Christianity without discipleship is always a Christianity without Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Christianity is the mark of discipleship, and discipleship a mark of Christianity. As far as God is concerned, learning to follow Jesus, becoming his disciple is the point of Christianity. And “being a disciple of Jesus does not signify that one has, as it were arrived.”<sup>6</sup> Discipleship is a process, and “the making of disciples to become like Jesus is the Lord’s work.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 2012), 77.

<sup>7</sup> Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 54.

Disciples make other disciples. Jesus' final instruction to His followers was "go and make disciples."

Jesus commanded his disciples to make others disciples who would also be learner-followers, who would walk intimately with Jesus (now through his Spirit), who would imbibe not only the teaching of Jesus but also his character and way of life, and who would become so much like Jesus that they would remind people of him.<sup>8</sup>

In this way, discipleship is oriented to the world. Bosch says, "discipleship involves a commitment to God's reign, to justice and love. And to obedience to the entire will of God."<sup>9</sup> Being a disciple means a decisive and irreversible show of love to God and neighbor. Jesus gave us a new command to love one another as He loved us and "by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

Discipleship is a crucial aspect of living for Christ. It's important as followers of Christ to understand what discipleship is and what discipleship is not "The goal of discipleship is not to make a child of God become like another child of God"<sup>10</sup> but "to be conformed into Jesus' likeness."<sup>11</sup> Discipleship is not knowing more information about Jesus, but knowing Jesus and being transformed into His image through the constant exposure of the Gospel of grace. "Discipleship will only be complete when we see Jesus face to face in glory. Until then, every believer needs to engage the process of discipleship seriously."<sup>12</sup> This calls us to live faith in Christ everyday of our life by the

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<sup>8</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 134.

<sup>9</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 83.

<sup>10</sup> Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 138.

Holy Spirit's power. Every disciple of Christ needs to learn all of this, and keep learning for the rest of their lives.

### Three Dimensions of Discipleship

Discipleship is the process of learning to live for the glory of God by faith in and obedience to Jesus through relationship with other Christ-followers over time.

Discipleship takes place with a relationship between one believer who assumes the role of mentor and another believer or non-believer who assumes the role of an apprentice. In most cases, discipleship involves one would-be Christ-follower learning from another more mature Christ-follower. In other cases, discipleship involves two maturing Christ-followers learning God's ways with one another. (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:1-8).

The researcher has found, however, that there seem to be three broad dimensions or aspects of discipleship. Each of these dimensions emerges differently for each person, but the general principles behind them are the same. The three dimensions are listed in the order in which a person typically experiences them along the journey from non-believer to mature disciple or leader.

**1. Person-Oriented Discipleship.** This is where most discipleship relationships begin, particularly between a Christian and a non-Christian. Since the purpose of discipleship is not to increase the number of Christ, but to make people become like Jesus. In this kind of discipleship, the mentor is focused almost entirely on the apprentice's personal relationship with and attitude toward Jesus. The goal is to help the person being disciplined to believe in and experience the person of Jesus Christ at work in

his or her life. This aspect of discipleship involves “not merely imitation but also a relationship with Jesus characterized by allegiance.”<sup>13</sup> It is the most casual kind of discipleship and it often happens in the context of friendship within everyday life: at the office, over a meal during lunch break, playing games or hanging out while watching the big game. You can think of this as discipleship of the heart.

**2. Content-Oriented Discipleship.** This kind of discipleship often happens between a mature Christian and a seriously interested Christian who is eager to grow in his or her faith. With content-oriented discipleship, the mentor and apprentice typically spend most of their time reading through books of the Bible together, studying doctrine and discussing specific topics such as the Trinity, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, spiritual growth and obedience. This is the dimension in which a person is learning what the Bible teaches, why it’s important and how it affects his or her life. This can be referred to as discipleship of the head. It can be effective as we consider the role of pastors as they help to “identify where a person is at spiritually in their relationship with God.”<sup>14</sup> Within this aspect of discipleship a mentoring discipler must be sure to continue with the person-oriented discipleship, while adding to it a more content-oriented dimension of discipleship. No person can grow in Christ if he or she doesn’t know about Christ. Content-oriented discipleship ensures that the disciple is learning about Christ,

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<sup>13</sup> Peter K. Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship: A Study of Luke 22:24-30* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press, 1994), 242.

<sup>14</sup> Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 62.

while person-oriented discipleship ensures that he or she is actually getting to personally know Christ.

**3. Task-Oriented Discipleship.** Where person and content-oriented discipleship focus classically on the matters of the heart and head, task-oriented discipleship is concerned with matters of the hands. In this aspect of discipleship, the mentor is typically training the apprentice to do a particular task or responsibility such as lead a small group discussion, oversee an area of ministry or serve in a particular way. This dimension of “discipleship involves not merely following, but following and leading.”<sup>15</sup> The mentor does not abandon the matters of the heart and head, but rather helps the apprentice understand how the matters of the heart inform the way they think (head) and affect the way they use their skills (hands). “When a disciple has made real progress in his discipleship, it will be clear to everyone that he had been with Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> This discipleship allows the disciple to not only learn a skill, but to understand how the gospel informs the way they think about and do that skill.

Most approaches to discipleship involve all three dimensions. This enables them to make well-rounded disciples who not only believe the gospel, but whose lives are shaped by the gospel.

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<sup>15</sup> Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 242.

<sup>16</sup> Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 54.

## How to Make Disciples

Discipleship processes provide believers the opportunity to grow into the likeness of Christ. As Jesus concluded his time on earth, he commanded his disciples to make disciples and provided a disciple making process in the Great Commission. Bosch “making disciples does not simply mean the numerical expansion of the church.”<sup>17</sup> Rather, making disciples means that every church will provide a formation process of basic discipleship. This process will help Christians fulfill their divine mandate to both become disciples and to make disciples. This process of “making disciples require access to the Word of God.”<sup>18</sup> In this process it will be best to follow Jesus’ ways of discipleship. He was not a man who only came with words, but also with action. To be Christ’s disciple is to take action in following Him into disciple making. However, “we will never make disciples unless we are disciples.”<sup>19</sup> This entails first of all experiencing Christ’s transformation in their lives. They will be able to lead people into discipleship if they have been transformed by Jesus Christ.

In order to understand the basic capacities of disciple making, the researcher has identified four basic tasks that a mentoring discipler will take up within a “Christ-centered friendship”. This Christ-centered friendship process calls for great humility on the part of the mentoring discipler.

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<sup>17</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 84.

<sup>18</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 138.

<sup>19</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 135.

**1. Teach-** At its core, discipling is teaching. According to Barnett and Martin, “teaching is a lifelong process” for the impartation of knowledge.<sup>20</sup> They teach all the words Jesus taught his disciples, and all the words of the Bible. “Believers need to know the Bible front to back. They need to understand the great themes of the Bible and the flow of biblical revelation.”<sup>21</sup> They also encourage people in an educational process like attending a Bible studies program that provides a several-year curriculum through different areas of the Christian life. Once people complete such a curriculum, the next step is to walk someone else through it because in teaching the teacher herself or himself they also learn more deeply. Furthermore, teaching occurs as people learn to have spiritually meaningful conversations with each other. Conversations about many kinds of things in life deepen friendship relationships and conversations about God and the Scripture offer depth and breadth to every relationship, and in that sense retain a priority in our lives together as the people of God. For instance, ask your friends what God has been teaching you about your own way of loving the world. Small groups are another tried and true approach to nurturing these kinds of Christ-centered disciple-making relationships.

**2. Correct-** Sometimes discipling requires the mentor to warn others about the pitfalls of life as well as the perilous decision making and choices that people sometimes make. People grow when they are taught the general truths, yes, but also when they are corrected for their particular errors. Part of being a Christian is recognizing that sin

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<sup>20</sup> Barnett and Martin, 138.

<sup>21</sup> Barnett and Martin, 137.

deceives people, and that they need other believers to help them see the things they cannot see about themselves. New sins become visible in the course of their discipling relationships. In fact, they can lead in a discipling relationship by *inviting* others to correct them, those are called accountability partners. But the Scriptures regularly warns us to fear God more than humans and this means being willing to correct others when necessary. Discipling mentors of all kinds, as well as pastors will find the spirit of Jesus' mandate in Matthew 18:15-20 to be extremely fruitful. Experienced pastors and discipling mentors who regularly follow Matthew 18 will find that the great majority of situations of fruitful correction in a church occurs in the private context of discipling relationships.

**3. Model-** Jesus didn't just command his disciples only to *teach people*. He exhorted them to *teach people to obey*. The goal of discipling is to see lives transformed, and transformation involves more than reading a book or even the Bible with another person. Ultimately, discipling involves living out the whole Christian life before others. Jesus is the ultimate example here; he "left you an example that you should follow" (1 Pet. 2:21). "We need men and women who also can say to men and women younger in this way of faith, "Follow me.""<sup>22</sup> Hence effective disciplers communicate not merely with words but with their whole lives. What happens in a discipling relationship requires more than classroom teaching. An apprentice learns by listening *and* watching *and* participating, little by little, with more responsibility being given over time. Most of all,

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<sup>22</sup> Akanni, *Raising Agents of Transformation: Discipleship, Disciples and Disciple-Making* (Gboko: The Peace House Press, 2013), 105.

discipling looks like what God desires for the home, where parents teach in word and deed through all areas of life and then draw the children into the work of adulthood. This arena of disciple making entails more than we can explore in this study and must await another opportunity.

**4. Love-** A final task within a “Christ-centered friendship” understanding of disciple making comes in the amazing form of mutual love. Love is the platform that real relational discipleship takes place. “Relationships are what God uses to communicate His truth and help people grow. Without relationships, the journey of discipleship is boring and ineffective.”<sup>23</sup> As one who’s been doing this for a long time, the researcher has often been served and blessed and encouraged in the faith by those he is discipling. They help me appreciate and follow Jesus better. Disciple making without relationships, “may be informative, but it won’t be life-changing.”<sup>24</sup> Together we learn what Paul means in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.” And we work together to fulfill Hebrew 10:24-25: “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” This disciple making proposal imagines disciplers who look for those who have the desire to know Christ, and “*teach them to obey everything I [Jesus] have commanded you.*” (Matthew 28:20).

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<sup>23</sup> Jim Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual: Equipping Disciples to Make Disciples* (Colorado Spring, CO: NavPress, 2010), 60.

<sup>24</sup> Putman et al., 60.

## Models of Discipleship

A discipleship model is important because people can talk about discipleship, on the one hand, but if there's no organized model or strategy to accomplish discipleship, it ends up not happening at all. A discipleship model is a philosophy of how you help people grow in their faith. "Jesus modeled relationship by being with His disciples. To be intentional and relational as a leader, you must spend time around those you are discipling."<sup>25</sup> Most churches use one of three major disciple models to their congregation grow in spiritual maturity:

### **Life-on-life Discipleship Model**

"Life on Life is a movement led by churches, pastors, and church members, with experience following Jesus' model to bring about spiritual maturity in the local church."<sup>26</sup> The goal of the life-on-life discipleship model is to build trusted friendships with other Christians. Trusted friendship is where discipleship begins through challenging one another, teaching one another, and edifying one another. "Discipleship happens in relationships such as that can be formed in a small group."<sup>27</sup>

The life-on-life model can work best among pastors in LCCN. It can be a small group where pastors can get together with the purpose of doing a study to learn together and build relationships with one another. This could be a Bible study, sermon study, book

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<sup>25</sup> Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual*, 84.

<sup>26</sup> Randy Pope, *Ignite a Movement of Discipleship in your Church*, <https://lifeonlife.org>, accessed 3/6/2020.

<sup>27</sup> Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual*, 69.

study, or any other type of spiritual study. The entire process of the life-on-life model can be built around interaction, relationship building, and forming deep connections in order to build and strengthen the course of discipleship.

### **The Family Discipleship Model**

The family discipleship model entails a local church focusing on teaching and equipping a family to be the center for discipleship. Parents are the primary disciplers of their children, husbands and wives are discipling one another, or fathers are spiritually discipling their homes. Putman states, “God calls us to disciple our children (see Deuteronomy 6:5-9), so encourage your disciples to put their families at the top.”<sup>28</sup> In the family model churches structure most everything around equipping people within a family to disciple one another as a family unit.

The family discipleship model could also effectively incorporate Rich Melheim’s FAITH5 resource as a powerful tool for family discipleship. The FAITH5 is a quick, easy and exciting way to open up the communication lines with your family and with God at the same time. FAITH5 connects church to home, faith to life, and parents to kids in a powerful way. FAITH5 practices provide a beautiful window into one another’s lives by teaching empathy, sympathy, compassion, active listening and life coping skills that

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<sup>28</sup> Putman et al., 185.

connect people with one another and with God. “Everyone will quickly experience the power of FAITH5 to impact relationships with one another and with God.”<sup>29</sup>

### **The Classroom Discipleship Model**

The classroom discipleship model is a formal classroom setting with a teacher teaching about a certain topic as curriculum. There are three types of classroom models that churches use. In a Bible-focused class, the teacher goes through a book or portion of the Bible in a verbal commentary manner, verse by verse. In the topically-focused class, the class picks topics relevant to the context of people and then the teacher leads discussions around topics such as parenting, finances, end times prophecy, or other practical things that may be pertinent. The third type of classroom model is the age group class, which is formed around various ages. Teachers typically teach the Bible, for instance in a way that is tailored in a specific age-appropriate way.

“Jesus was the master disciple-maker, and we can study His methods and imitate Him. None of us will ever be perfect at making disciples, but we can look to Him as our Perfect example,” notes Jim Putman.<sup>30</sup> Following Jesus a disciple-maker can instill in people that church and its members care in authentic ways for them. Without an intentional disciple making too often does not happen at all or at least very effectively even though discipleship is crucial to the church.

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<sup>29</sup> Rich Melheim, *Faith Inkubators: Incubating Faith Every Night in Every Home*, <https://faithink.com>, accessed 3/6/2020.

<sup>30</sup> Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual*, 64.

## **Biblical Framework for Discipleship**

The matter of disciple making is uttermost in the heart of God. Discipleship is the way the mission of God is carried out. Akanni describes disciple making as “God’s means of achieving His eternal purpose and central goal of calling any man to Himself to be conformed to the image of His only son, the Saviour Jesus Christ.”<sup>31</sup> Discipleship does not just occur, it has a starting point, and the entrance point is the call to discipleship. Jesus called the first two disciples, Simon and Andrew, and called them to follow him “and I will make you to become fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19). This was the calling to all the disciples. It was a calling to follow Jesus and become fishers of human beings. The goal for the disciple was to become like Jesus. The means for achieving that goal was to teach the Word of God, be changed by the Word of God, and live by the Word of God. It was the disciples’ mission to make more disciples for Christ throughout their lives and ministry.

To better understand discipleship, it is important to have a good grasp of the Bible’s own principles for discipleship. This is crucial for the process of disciples making in LCCN. The Bible itself offers the reason for both becoming and making disciples. The overall principle of discipleship is fivefold: accept the call to follow Christ, be transformed by Christ, share the good news with others, be willingly obedient in following Christ, and be a servant to all. These Bible-based principles give meaning to the whole process of discipleship. Looking at these five different elements of this overall

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<sup>31</sup> Akanni, *Raising Agents of Transformation*, 101.

principle of discipleship brings clarity involved formation, transformation, and commission of disciples.

The first element is to accept the call to follow Christ. Matthew 11:28-30 states, “Come to me, says Christ and I will give you rest.” This invitation is not simply for rest but also for a relationship in which a disciple learns from a gentle, kind, and loving Master. Akanni says, “discipleship is the instrument that brings a man into an imitate and deep relationship with the Lord Jesus. It is a means of making us to be at God’s disposal for His use.”<sup>32</sup> In order for an individual to receive this rest they must first come to Christ. This means that the individual accepts the call of Christ to receive salvation. This salvation is God’s free gift to humankind, the only part that people play in obtaining this salvation to come humbly to Christ by faith. Coming to Christ means “we recognize and accept who Jesus is as Lord, leader and master of our lives.”<sup>33</sup> To accept the call to follow Christ is the initial step in becoming a disciple of Christ.

The second element is being transformed by Christ, as is written in Matthew 4:19. Here we see Jesus molding the hearts of his disciple to become more like his. Jesus invites disciples to follow him and tells them that he will make them into fishers of human beings. “He transforms his disciples into something new, people who are different than they were when they first met him and started following him.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, a disciple of Jesus is changed by Jesus. Before God uses a man or woman in God’s own service, God’s kind of life will first be formed in the person. Not only will a disciple

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<sup>32</sup> Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 89.

<sup>33</sup> Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> Putman and Harrington, 48.

trustingly receive the invitation to follow Christ, the disciple will be caught up in a process of transformation deep in the heart and affections. Romans 8:29 tells us that we are being conformed into the image of Christ once we commit our lives to following discipleship. This process of disciple making precedes being commissioned.

The third element is to share the good news with others, which is commanded in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). This element speaks to the message that disciples of Christ teach and share. The message that Christ taught the disciples was one of Good News. Today's Good News is the same message that Christ's twelve disciples preached. The Apostle Paul preached, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Romans 1:16). This was the message that Jesus built his Church upon and that the disciples of Christ preached to build up the Church. Building and edifying the church today requires that this same message of Good News be preached and taught, as Paul did, for instance in Ephesians 4:11-16.

The fourth element is to be willingly obedient in following Christ, as taught in Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." These words speak to the very way of life for a practicing disciple of Christ. Becoming a Christian is absolutely free of charge, it costs nothing as Paul notes in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Walter A. Henrichsen states, "but there is a cost attached to becoming a disciple. The cost is to

become involved in God's 'thing' rather than our own."<sup>35</sup> In his book, *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer used the notion of "costly grace" to conceptualize God's grace in the life of disciples.

It is costly, because it calls to discipleship, it is grace, because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly, because it costs people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live. It is costly, because it condemns sin; it is grace, because it justifies the sinner. Above all, grace is costly, because it was costly to God, because it costs God the life of God's Son.<sup>36</sup>

As Jesus noted, "If any man [woman] would come after me, let him deny himself." (Luke 9:23) Self-denial is never just a series of isolated acts of self-discipline. "Self-denial means knowing only Christ, no longer knowing oneself. It means no longer seeing oneself, only him who is going ahead no longer seeing the way which is too difficult for us."<sup>37</sup> Jesus has graciously prepared the way by speaking first of self-denial. Self-denial is the heart of willing obedience practiced by the disciple of Christ.

The fifth element is to be a servant to all, based on John 13:2-16. Here Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. As discussed earlier, this act of service showed that Jesus was the leader precisely by serving those whom he led. The disciples displayed this same type of ministry throughout the book of Acts, especially in the way that they cared one-for-another in Acts 2:44-46 and Acts 4:32-37. In being a servant to all people, the disciples of Christ were applying the Word of God to their lives, thus teaching by example. Barnett and Martin state,

A true disciple gladly embraces the service of his or her Lord. Because we exist only by his grace and for his glory, and because we are no longer our own but

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<sup>35</sup> Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 37.

<sup>36</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Bonhoeffer, 51.

entirely his, biblical disciples serve Jesus by working for the edification of his people and for the advancement of his gospel.<sup>38</sup>

In this subsection the researcher has presented five Scripturally based elements of the overall principles of discipleship: accept the call to follow Christ; be transformed in this calling; to share the Good News of Christ with others; be willing obedient to God's costly grace through self-denial; and to be a servant to all. This fivefold overall Scriptural principle for discipleship helps then to set the stage for considering a Pauline picture of discipleship, which is our next subsection.

### A Pauline Picture of Discipleship

God's intention for discipleship is not just to get us to heaven individually, but to form us into a transformed community that will be used by God to help transform this world. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes two brief sentences which suggests five brush strokes that make up Paul's picture of discipleship. These five Pauline brush strokes will be valuable and useful as we develop our own picture of discipleship. In Colossians 1:28-29, Paul writes,

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.

**The Heart of Discipleship: Proclaiming Jesus**—“Him we proclaim.” First and foremost, discipleship is about proclaiming Jesus. Two major themes of Colossians are that Christ is Lord over all creation, and that Christ is our redeemer. It is within this context that Paul writes these powerful words. Just before these words, in verse 27, Paul

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<sup>38</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 138.

reminds the Colossians that God has revealed the mystery of Christ to them and that Christ is personally present with them. “The disciples’ mission is similar to that of Jesus, since like Jesus they must accomplish the will, speak the words, and live for the glory of the one who sent them.”<sup>39</sup> This is wonderful news. It is wonderful news both to the lost and to the saved. Disciples who proclaim Jesus to particular men and women go on to proclaim Jesus to the world. The authentic motive for a disciple in “proclaiming Jesus” is to make Him known, not to make the disciples known.

**The Means of Discipleship: Teaching and Warning with Wisdom**— Here in our Colossians passage Paul makes a fundamental point that in proclaiming Jesus disciples are “warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom.” Teaching might seem like an obvious component of discipleship. As we saw in our previous section teaching is part of the overall practice of making disciples. Here Paul emphasizes that “the teaching component of discipleship must include the whole counsel of God.”<sup>40</sup> Making disciples means leading them into the Word of God and showing them how to live lives that glorify Him. Here Paul notes that the disciplers’ responsibility to teach fledgling disciples the right way is also accompanied by warning them when they are going the wrong way. The minds of all disciples need to be saturated with Scripture, and their worldview needs to be reshaped by the Scripture.<sup>41</sup> But such instruction requires “all wisdom” as Paul notes. Mature disciplers recognize the necessity of continually seeking the Lord’s

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<sup>39</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Barnett and Martin, 137.

<sup>41</sup> Barnett and Martin, 137.

wisdom and guidance. For this reason, disciplers will spend regular time in the Word and in prayer in order to receive God's wisdom.

**The Goal of Discipleship: To Present Everyone Mature in Christ**— In our Colossians text Paul does not only emphasize that Christ's redeeming work saves His people, but also that through Christ's redeeming work believers grow in maturity. The goal of discipleship, therefore, is not only to make converts, but to become increasingly like Jesus. Akanni correctly states, "discipleship is the only means designed by God to bring us in the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."<sup>42</sup> True discipleship involves mature disciplers investing in younger believers, walking through life with them, and shepherding them to Christian maturity. Throughout Scripture, discipleship is compared to parenting. It is appropriate for a discipler to view themselves as a sort of spiritual parent to those they disciple. Like a good mother, disciplers seek to nurture and love those they lead, and like a good father, disciplers seek to meet their needs and encourage them to live lives worthy of their calling (1 Thessalonians 2:12). However, all disciples essentially "know that we are all in a process of spiritual growth and that no one fully arrives at the destination of perfection in this life."<sup>43</sup> In spiritual parenting, disciplers will not want those they disciple to be too dependent on them to the point of thinking that the discipler has already attained the final destination of faith journey. Mature disciplers always point fledgling disciples to Jesus at all times.

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<sup>42</sup> Akanni, *Raising Agents of Transformation*, 101.

<sup>43</sup> Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 57.

**The Cost of Discipleship: Toil and Struggle**– Discipleship is purposeful, and rewarding. One of the greatest joys of disciplers is to see fledgling disciples grow in Christ. However, grace “is costly, because it calls to discipleship.”<sup>44</sup> According to Bonhoeffer, “those who enter into discipleship enter into Jesus’ death,” and entering into his death makes discipleship also costly.<sup>45</sup> In our Colossians text Paul uses the words “toil” and “struggle.” And the word for “struggle” is often used to describe the tireless effort that goes into a fight. Paul fought and labored to the point of collapse to present believers mature in Christ. Discipleship cost him greatly, and it will likewise cost all disciples of Christ. As Bonhoeffer notes, when disciples are uncomfortable and strained, that “is neither misfortune nor harsh fate.”<sup>46</sup> Rather it is an experience that comes as a result of our allegiance to Jesus Christ which summons us away from our attachments to this world. When discipleship is not involving struggle and sacrifice, mature disciples will question whether they are following an authentic path of discipleship.

**The Power of Discipleship: His Energy**– In our Colossian text Paul says that he toils and struggles, but he follows those words with a very important passage: “*I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.*” While discipleship takes a lot of energy, the good news is that the Lord gives disciples His grace to endure “toil and struggle.” This “grace is costly, because it forces people under the yoke of following Jesus Christ; it is grace when Jesus says, “my yoke is easy, and my burden is

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<sup>44</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 53.

<sup>46</sup> Bonhoeffer, 52.

light.”<sup>47</sup> Disciples toil and struggle, yet have Christ to depend on. No matter how experienced disciples are in discipleship, it remains vital that every disciple constantly comes to the Lord to ask for His energy and power. As disciples grow in discipleship and in knowledge of God’s Word, they might become less aware of their need for the Lord in our spiritual leadership. But the truth is that disciples never need Jesus less. It is not the knowledge or skill of disciples that will develop their discipleship, but the power of God working within them.

### **Luther’s Concept of Discipleship**

Christian discipleship always means being a disciple of Jesus Christ and saying yes to his invitation “Follow me.” In the Small Catechism Luther makes one point central: “Jesus Christ is MY Lord.”<sup>48</sup> In the New Testament that same confession is at the center of discipleship. Bonhoeffer articulated it this way: “Whenever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death.”<sup>49</sup> We all do die. But there are two ways to do it. One is holding what we have “for dear life,” and the other is clinging to Christ (and his Gospel). Peter Anstadt says “those who accept the call have therefore no merit in themselves before God, for it is all of free grace. But he who rejects the call excludes himself from the grace of God.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bonhoeffer, 5-6.

<sup>48</sup> Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther’s Catechism: Forming the Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>49</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Anstadt, *Luther’s Smaller Catechism: Explained, Analyzed and Illustrated with Appropriate Anecdote, Proverbs and Examples* (Washington: P. Anstadt and Sons, 1894), 159.

It means God is the only one who can justify and make us righteous. As Luther's unending attempts to achieve righteousness failed, this reality was revealed to him. Luther understood, and explained to the rest of the world, that God is the one who justifies sinners without any merit on the part of human beings. Therefore, "following Jesus now had to be lived out in the midst of the world."<sup>51</sup> This revelation makes it possible to live "in the world" while not being "of the world." It also spelled doom for those who thought that a committed call of discipleship was only for those who wanted a higher way of life primarily located in the monastery and in the priesthood. "Luther's reason for leaving the monastery was not justification of the sin, but justification of the sinner."<sup>52</sup> It is God's grace. This is why Bonhoeffer introduces his notion of "cheap grace." God's grace does not liberate the justified to live however they want. When God justifies a person, that person experiences God's grace. But many people confuse the freedom that the gospel provides with a libertarian way of life. However, that is far from the case.

Sadly, as with many Christian movements, the original intent of Luther's reform movement was distorted by many of his followers. They did not mention the commitment of discipleship. The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the justification of "the world" just as it existed. Therefore, "without discipleship, costly grace would become cheap grace."<sup>53</sup> Such followers of

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<sup>51</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Bonhoeffer, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Bonhoeffer, 10.

Luther spread his message without mentioning the spirit behind it, without defining grace with its true definition. This is what Bonhoeffer calls “cheap grace.”

Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord’s Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Church.<sup>54</sup>

Because of cheap grace people became lovers of theology and doctrine without discipline and obedience. The church has barely been able to lay hold of Jesus’ terms of discipleship and until she does the cycle will continue. Thankfully, every few centuries, God uses a servant to convict his church and bring her back into focus. Many men and women, like Bonhoeffer, have blessed our age and many have written extensively about discipleship.

Luther’s concern for proper Christian discipleship led him to introduce his Small Catechism with several instructions concerning how the catechism could be used to promote basic Christian instruction. The catechism contains the true confessions of Luther. Regarding the catechism Timothy Wengert states catechism is:

Something far richer and more complex than anything many of us had ever imagined. Moreover, what the Small Catechism is convicts our shabby use of it and opens the door to an entirely new way of viewing this little book.<sup>55</sup>

Luther designed the Small Catechism particularly with teaching young Christians in mind in order to help them memorize and adopt the basic chief parts of Christian faith. Once the young Christian becomes familiar with the Small Catechism and matures, Luther

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<sup>54</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 5.

<sup>55</sup> Wengert, *Martin Luther’s Catechism*, 20.

desires the catechist to begin explaining the meaning of the Christian faith to others. Luther instructed catechists to take their time with this step.

Luther also wrote the “Large Catechism” for pastors so that they could lead Christ’s people in the congregations. Luther states, “many regard the catechism as a simple, trifling teaching which they can absorb and master at one reading and then toss the book into a corner as if they are ashamed to read it again.”<sup>56</sup> But Luther himself read and studied the catechism daily, yet even he could not master it as he wished. Luther challenged church leaders to read and study the catechism daily throughout their lives for their own personal growth and for their discipling of other believers.

### **Theological Understanding of Following Jesus in Discipleship**

Quite simply, disciple making is helping people follow Jesus. As Jesus traveled throughout Israel urging people to repent and believe the gospel, “Follow me” was a constant slogan of his message. At the beginning of his ministry, he called his first disciples with the short and sweet command, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men [women].” As his ministry progressed, he told the crowds, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). At the end of his earthly ministry, he recommissioned the repentant Peter with the words, “Follow me” (John 21:19). Following Jesus begins when we respond to his call to repent and believe the gospel. “Following Jesus requires a decision to allow Him to be the authority (leader or head), which begins to change a disciple’s way of thinking and seeing the

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<sup>56</sup> Wengert, 22.

world.”<sup>57</sup> The Good News that God loves and has taken the initiative to reconcile the world to God’s very self by giving God’s Son to atone for sin awakens sinners to God’s grace and moves them to want to live for Christ and follow him.

When people turn their attention to what the Bible shows about how to actually follow Jesus in daily life, two things stand out immediately: obeying his teaching and following his example. For his first disciples, hearing and obeying Jesus’ teachings were fundamental to following him. This is evident in the fact that soon after calling them, Jesus gave his disciples the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), an extensive in-depth teaching on life in the kingdom of God-what can be called the basic principles of discipleship or the Christian life. At the conclusion of this sermon, Jesus emphasized with striking clarity the profound importance of hearing and obeying this. Following Jesus also involves following his example. Akanni says, “following Jesus then means, taking after the order, the pattern and standard of His own life.”<sup>58</sup> In the Upper Room, after washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus said, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should also do just as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15). The lesson Jesus was teaching is the importance of serving one another in humility of heart and of becoming servant leaders.

Following Jesus, then, entails both obeying his teachings and imitating his example. But this is not the sum of the matter. Following Jesus is “more than just going

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<sup>57</sup> Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual*, 39.

<sup>58</sup> Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 280.

physically after; but becoming conformed to His image.”<sup>59</sup> For obeying and imitating are not ends in themselves but are means to a greater end. That end or goal of discipleship is to become like Jesus himself: to think as he thought, to feel as he felt, to act as he acted, to desire what he desired. “No other way of living will please God, except this Jesus’ own way.”<sup>60</sup> As John puts it, “Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 John 2:6). Because Jesus is the image of God in human form (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1: 3), and as we become more and more like him, the image of God is increasingly restored in our lives. It is indeed a call to “walk as Jesus walked,” to live a life of radical faith and love.

Jesus knows we cannot follow him without a power beyond ourselves. “Following Jesus is made possible by the enabling power of the Spirit within our hearts.”<sup>61</sup> And that is why he sent the Holy Spirit to empower us. It is only through the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can obey the teaching of Jesus and follow his example. The Holy Spirit assures disciples of the Father’s love, makes the things of Christ real and makes the gospel precious. Moreover, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and assures forgiveness when there is repentance. Finally, the Holy Spirit transforms disciples from glory into glory, and thus into the likeness of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:16-18). According to Akanni,

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<sup>59</sup> Akanni, 293.

<sup>60</sup> Akanni, 281.

<sup>61</sup> Akanni, *Becoming Like Jesus*, 303.

The Spirit at work in you will produce the fruit that brings for the character of Jesus. He places you far above the reproach of men. The Holy Spirit produces an impeccable and impeachable lifestyle in all who abide by and do His bidding.<sup>62</sup>

For these reasons, disciples are taught to earnestly seek to be filled with the Spirit each day (Eph. 5:18) and to be led by the Spirit in all their ways (Gal. 5:16-25). When disciples do this, they find that they can live in newness of life. Not perfectly and not immediately. But day by day, as disciples walk in faith and obedience, the Spirit will produce in them the character of Jesus: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

#### Implication of Following Jesus

In all the four Gospels Jesus repeatedly commands, “Follow me.” While originally Jesus addressed this command most often to “the twelve,” (Matthew 10:3-4), it is clear that Jesus was calling anyone throughout the ages who wanted what he had to offer them (John 3:16; Mark 8:34). The same words, “Follow me,” personally invite disciples today. But this invitation goes beyond adopting new habits, embracing Christian beliefs, and living moral lives. Therefore, as Bonhoeffer notes, “the promise for those who follow Christ is that they will become members of the community of the cross, they will be people of the mediator, people under the cross.”<sup>63</sup> The Scriptures give sufficient evidence of what to consider when desiring to follow Jesus. Hence, before anyone would follow Jesus in discipleship, he or she should reflect on these important thoughts.

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<sup>62</sup> Akanni, 305.

<sup>63</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 67.

Be willing to obey and submit—Following Jesus does not mean you live independent of his example and instruction. Christ’s followers trustfully obey and humbly submit to his will by faith, even when it exceeds understanding. Consequently “in the process of making disciples, we must indeed teach knowledge, but along with that knowledge we must also teach obedience to everything that Jesus commanded.”<sup>64</sup> Jesus states in John 14:23, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” In discipleship obedience and submission is essential.

Be prepared to endure hardship—Following Jesus means hardship is not only a possibility, but a guarantee. “The call to discipleship is connected here with the proclamation of Jesus’ suffering.”<sup>65</sup> However, James 1:12 explains, “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” As we endure hardship, we can be assured of Christ’s provision for it:

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).

The cross is central to Jesus’ life and suffering is central in discipleship. God does not cause suffering, but God uses it to shape our lives and relationship with God. According

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<sup>64</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 138.

<sup>65</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 51.

to Bonhoeffer, “suffering becomes the identifying mark of a follower of Christ.”<sup>66</sup> No wonder Luther considers suffering as one of the marks of the true church.

Be ready to see the ugliness of your sin—Walking with Jesus Christ means seeing the sin he reveals, confronting it, and asking for forgiveness. “Whenever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death,” toward sin and self.<sup>67</sup> Disciples continue to fall short daily, and that can be frustrating for those who assume that following Christ is equivalent to perfection. It is certain that “no believer ever reaches the point of complete and perfect obedience.”<sup>68</sup> As disciples still yield to temptations and earthly pleasures, they will find that having a new heart means having a new awareness and sensitivity to sin when they never did before. But the good news is that Christ’s perfect sacrifice has covered his disciples from condemnation, and he will supply them with the grace and strength they need to flee from sin.

Be ready to know that the world will not always accept us—When disciples come to truly know Jesus Christ, it is often hard to understand why others would not receive him and his followers. But Jesus doesn’t shield disciples from this reality: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 15:18). If the world is not walking with him, they are fighting against him. Akanni states,

Persecution is part of our calling as believers. If you truly belong to Christ, the world must persecute you. If the world loves you and speaks well of you, watch out! For the world only loves its own.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Bonhoeffer, 54.

<sup>67</sup> Bonhoeffer, 52.

<sup>68</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 138.

<sup>69</sup> Akanni, *The Kingdom Lifestyle*, 94.

Therefore, as Christ followers, disciples will find themselves in similar situations of persecution, misunderstanding, condemnation, unacceptance, hostility, and oppression. Amid the world's hatred for Christ followers, disciples must adhere to what Peter and the apostles acknowledged in Acts 5:29: "We must obey God rather than men [women]."

Being willing to step outside our comfort zone—Being a disciple means living out the teachings of Jesus and following him in the mission of redemption for all creation. In following Jesus, disciples need to make a serious commitment to leave their comfort zone, and be "willing to go to the ends of the earth to make disciples of those who have never heard" the gospel.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, followers of Christ are called to partner with God in God's mission to seek justice, defend the helpless, and serve the poor. David Bosch states, "it is not possible to make disciples without telling them to practice God's call of justice for the poor."<sup>71</sup> Jesus left his own comfort zone in heaven and came to proclaim this mission (Luke 4: 18). This mission can be accomplished by sitting comfortably in the pew of the church or quietly in the homes. Jesus calls disciples to a willing and obedient heart that follows wherever he leads.

Be prepared to be held accountable—As Christians, disciples are spared from the penalty of eternal death, but all disciples will still give an account of themselves to God (Romans 14:12). Disciples are given much, and how they live and lead is to reflect biblical values. Disciples are God's standard-bearers. Being accountable to Him will ensure that disciples do not misrepresent Him during their time on this earth. Not only do

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<sup>70</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 140.

<sup>71</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 83.

disciples remain accountable to God, but also do they remain accountable to one another in the body of Christ. Putman states, “the beauty of God’s plan is that we do not do the work of discipleship alone.”<sup>72</sup> It is therefore important for every disciple to have at least one other person in which to confide, pray with, listen to, and encourage. Accountability seems intimidating, but it is a gift from God to help disciples walk the right path.

Be ready to accept God at God’s Word—The limited humanity of all disciples means that they will not always understand God’s sovereignty. They might question why God allows suffering, where God is in the silence, and why the prayers even of disciples seemingly go unanswered. But disciples have not been instructed to fully understand; disciples are to walk by faith, acknowledging that God’s ways are higher than theirs, and that God’s thoughts are greater than theirs (Isaiah 55:9). Barnett and Martin state, “no believer ever comes to the point where he or she has learned everything there is to know in the Bible.”<sup>73</sup> We have to accept and take God by God’s Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” God’s Word is a great tool for molding the life of Christ in the lives of his followers.

Be ready to leave things behind—Ephesians 4 tells disciples to no longer walk in the ways that they used to (v. 17) because their understanding had previously been darkened, they had previously been excluded from God, been ignorant of God, and had hearts that had been hardened (v. 18). But disciples become transformed and no longer

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<sup>72</sup> Putman et al, *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual*, 37.

<sup>73</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 138.

know Christ in this way (v. 20), they have heard his truth and listened (v. 21). Dallas Willard states, no one can “be a disciple of Christ without forfeiting things normally sought in human life.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, disciples put aside their old self, and put on their new self of knowing Christ, and thus living into the likeness of God (v. 24). Faith in Christ demands a radical change in the lifestyles of disciples from the way they once behaved. It may mean removing themselves from people or situations that ultimately do not glorify God, and this can be challenging.

To expect to be humbled—Philippians 2 tells us that followers of Christ do nothing from competitiveness or self-importance, but humbly count others more significant than themselves (v. 3) and look to the interests of others (v. 4). Christians are to walk humbly because Christ himself did not count equality with God as a thing to be grabbed, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant (vv. 6-8). Humility is “an attribute of Christ and is part of the fruit of the Spirit. It can be cultivated as we daily yield our lives to Christ’s teaching and leading.”<sup>75</sup> A humble person can easily take instructions without resistance or unnecessary quarrel. For God’s Word to be effective and productive in our lives, we need humility.

To prepare to love—At first glance, this final consideration sounds easily achievable. But in loving as Christ did, disciples cannot be selective about who to love. “God’s disposition toward us is one of love, and He expects our disposition toward others

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<sup>74</sup> Willard, *The Great Omission*, 8-9.

<sup>75</sup> Akanni, *The Kingdom Lifestyle*, 55.

to be the same.”<sup>76</sup> Following Jesus means loving without conditions. Loving here means loving in *action*, not *feelings*. John 13:34-35 spells this out.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

By loving others in spite of their sin, the world will see something different in disciples, that they are actually followers of Jesus Christ, unconditionally loved by him through his Gospel of grace.

### **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Discipleship Formation**

Jesus sent his followers into the world to reproduce his own mission of making disciples. He instructed his first followers to wait before beginning their mission of spreading the Good News: He promised to send the Holy Spirit, just as the Father promised. Barnett and Martin state,

The precondition for an effective witness is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Jesus therefore indicated the disciples should wait for the coming of the Spirit, so that they might be clothed with power from on high.<sup>77</sup>

The first disciples had to wait until the fulfilment of the promise. They were in the real sense not waiting for some natural process to get them ready for their assignment. They needed “power from heaven” and nothing less. Without the power of God, given through the Holy Spirit, no one can successfully do God’s work on earth. Disciples today cannot ever succeed in their mission without the Spirit. Unlike the first disciples in Jerusalem,

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<sup>76</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 82-83.

<sup>77</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 54.

disciples today do not have to wait for anything. Today disciples have been already commanded and empowered to go and make disciples.

In addition to telling his first disciples to wait for the Spirit to empower them, Jesus explained what the power of the Spirit would accomplish: “When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to make people his followers and to guide them as disciples. The Holy Spirit helps Christians to understand the work of the Holy Spirit, to clarify the role of the Spirit in their lives as believers, and to guide them to embrace the Spirit’s gifts and bear fruit to the glory of God. Hence, the church depends on the Holy Spirit to direct and define its ministries in the world. “God’s work can be done only in his power and at his direction.”<sup>78</sup> Therefore, to truly be a missional church is to follow the Spirit’s direction in making the name of Christ known and exalted in the world.

The mission of the Holy Spirit is to cause spiritual growth to happen in the church. Without the Spirit, the church cannot make someone grow any more than a farmer can make a crop grow. Disciple making is a divine work of God and a miracle to watch. The Spirit gives new life in Jesus. The Spirit is the one who opens the minds and hearts of disciples to hear and respond to the gospel (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). Putman says, “when it comes to disciple-making, whether someone grows as a disciple is not up to only the leader, God plays a role to create an environment” for the growth.<sup>79</sup> As God

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<sup>78</sup> Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 163.

<sup>79</sup> Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual*, 89.

creates the environment, the Spirit brings God's Word to the heart of a wayward person, as conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). The Spirit is the one who draws disciples to Christ, causes them to be reborn in the Spirit, makes them new on the inside, and places them into God's family (John 6:44; 3:5-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 12:13). From beginning to end, the Spirit draws disciples and brings them into a relationship with Christ.

Once a person is a believer, the job of the Holy Spirit has just gotten started. The Spirit lives in every follower of Jesus (Romans 8:9-11) and actually takes up residence in the lives of disciples (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The Holy Spirit "causes us to love Jesus Christ above all and to walk in his example and deed."<sup>80</sup> The Spirit leads disciples, teaches them, comforts them, and forms them to look more and more like Christ (Romans 8:4; John 14:26; John 14:16; Titus 3:5-7). The Holy Spirit helps them in their weaknesses as disciples, guides them into truth, empowers them to serve God with courage to tell others about Christ, and produces lasting change in their lives (Micah 3:8; Romans 8:26; John 16:13; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22-23). As disciples abide in Christ and keep in step with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit works through disciples to produce lasting spiritual fruit that will remain forever (John 15:4-5; Galatians 5:25; John 15:8). In reality, it is the Spirit who does the work of growing every believer toward maturity and fruitful living as disciples. Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, discipleship can never be effective.

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<sup>80</sup> Willard, *The Great Omission*, 75.

Because the Spirit does the work of growth on the inside of disciples, they are empowered to participate with the Spirit, and “this has to do with seeking to be led by the Spirit.”<sup>81</sup> Paul told the believers in Philippi, “Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him” (Philippians 2:12-13, NLT) The Spirit is the one who gives the power and the desire to please God; it is the disciples’ job to work hard to obey God and revere him in everything they do. Because the Spirit does the Spirit’s own work, disciples have work to do, too. In this way disciples live under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit day-by-day and moment-by-moment. Paul called this “walking in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16). Disciples then are empowered to keep in step with the Spirit and to walk along the path and at the pace that the Spirit provides for Christ’s disciples.

Unfortunately, disciples too often falter in their walk-in fellowship with the Spirit. When such faltering arises, the Holy Spirit calls together the communion of disciples in prayer and action to reach out in order to restore stumbling disciples to the path of the Spirit’s guidance and power. So, is to keep in step with the Spirit and follow his lead and obey his promptings (Galatians 5:25). The Spirit empowers disciples for full participation in the work of disciple making by bringing the abiding Christ into the midst of the communion of disciples. The Spirit accomplishes this through God’s Word and prayer in order that disciples may follow Jesus in all that Jesus has taught them in every part of their lives, and especially in their lives of making and forming disciples (John 15:4; John

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<sup>81</sup> Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 166.

8:31; Matthew 28:18-20). God gives the disciples the “Holy Spirit to use both his Word and his people in the process of calling people out of darkness into his marvelous light.”<sup>82</sup> It’s a beautiful thing to watch the Spirit of God work with the people of God in doing God’s mission. The Holy Spirit is the architect of the mission of God in the world today. The ultimate goal of the Spirit’s ministry is to fulfill God’s redemptive purpose in Christ. So, as disciples are doing their part as a church, they will know that God is always doing God’s part through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit empowers the church for mission and discipleship. The Spirit works as a missional bridge, guiding the community of faith in its discernment of its mission, discipleship, and witness to the broader community and world. The Holy Spirit pulls the Christian community into new and exciting missional opportunities for discipleship. For this reason, the church will desire to follow the Holy Spirit wherever and in doing whatever the Spirit desires. Too many churches failed their disciple-making calling because they remained inattentive spiritual discernment and thus to the leading of the Holy Spirit. “It is the Spirit’s leadership in the life of a congregation that brings about the faithful discipleship.”<sup>83</sup> Effective discipleship takes place in an atmosphere where disciples invoke the Holy Spirit to transform lives. Ultimately, a community of disciple making occurs because God the Father, the Son, and now the Holy Spirit is lived out in the life of the church.

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<sup>82</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 141.

<sup>83</sup> Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 166.

### **The Role of the Pastor in Discipleship**

In the process of discipleship, it is the pastor's responsibility to make discipleship a priority within the church. Bill Hull, in his book *The Disciple Making Pastor*, addresses the issue of making space for discipleship within the church. He gives three key steps to achieving this goal. First, the pastor will preach the concept of discipleship, which is the formation component of discipleship. Second, the pastor will write down the concepts of discipleship for all to understand within the church. This is also a key component of formation. Third, the pastor will model the lifestyle of a true disciple, which is the application component of discipleship.<sup>84</sup> It is clear from this resource that discipleship is a formation and application process. The pastor is the key individual in the process of discipleship within the local church. Disciple-making pastors will prioritize discipleship in their personal lives and in the ministry of the church. The failure to prioritize disciple making in these areas will negatively affect the church.

The pastor's role is to lead the disciple making process their book, *Spiritual Leadership*, Henry and Richard Blackaby focus on five tasks that spiritual leaders perform: (1) The spiritual leader move people from where they are to where God wants them to be; (2) Spiritual leaders depend on the Holy Spirit; (3) Spiritual leaders are accountable to God; (4) Spiritual leaders influence all people, not just God's people; and (5) Spiritual leaders work from God's agenda.<sup>85</sup> Disciples making pastors answer God's call to spiritual leadership by recognizing and taking on these five tasks of leadership

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<sup>84</sup> Bill Hull. *The Disciple Making Pastor: The Key to Building Healthy Christians in Today's Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1988), 117-20.

<sup>85</sup> Henry Blackaby & Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 20-23.

within the church. They recognize their own emotional and spiritual wellbeing is important for them to be effective spiritual leaders and they stay connected to God's mission and calling of the church.

### Conclusion

Discipleship is central to God's mission and this chapter explored the concept of discipleship biblically, theologically, and theoretically. Being a disciple is someone who follows the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in Jesus and are equipped by the Holy Spirit to become more like Christ. The process of discipleship is relational, includes teaching, correcting, modeling, and loving others, and is outward focused. Discipleship models vary, and three; life-on-life, family, and classroom were described here.

The Great Commission grounds the church's calling to make disciples, but many passages throughout Scripture focus on discipleship. This researcher describes a fivefold biblical framework for discipleship (accept the call to follow Christ, be transformed by Christ, share the good news with others, be willingly obedient in following Christ, and be a servant to all) and a Pauline picture of discipleship (naming the heart, means, goal, cost, and power of discipleship) as two ways of understanding discipleship from a biblical perspective. These understandings are expanded with a Lutheran perspective that recognizes God is the one who justifies with grace and discipleship includes loving our neighbor. The chapter ends recognizing the Holy Spirit's role in forming and directing disciples, leaders, and Christian communities and the important role pastors play in making disciples and modeling the way.

The insight garnered here in Chapter Three can significantly move the LCCN into a more effective missional and disciple-making era led by the Holy Spirit when combined within the understanding of missional church presented in Chapter Two. The next chapter will articulate a missional understanding of discipleship that takes into account the direction of discipleship in a missional church, and how it can reframe the vision and process of discipleship in the LCCN.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCIPLESHIP WITHIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF MISSIONAL CHURCH

The goal of this research is to awaken a call to discipleship within the LCCN. In Chapter One the researcher stated the function of discipleship is for the whole church to be equipped for participating in God's plan for reconciling the world and raised a question about how the church is fulfilling that calling today. To guide a critical look at the LCCN today, the researcher asked: How would an understanding of the missional church and a Lutheran understanding of discipleship reframe the vision and process of disciple making in the LCCN? This chapter answers this question as it describes an understanding of discipleship within the missional church context, integrating findings from Chapter Two with Chapter Three, and addresses the process and strategy for missionally reframing the vision and process of discipleship in LCCN from institutional programming to intentional living. First, the chapter explores the conception of discipleship from the perspective of missional church theology. Second the chapter proposes a paradigm shift to missional discipleship. Third, the chapter, beginning with what already exists in LCCN, reframes the vision and process of the LCCN from the perspective of missional discipleship. Finally, the chapter engages in a concluding theological reflection on the prospect of missional discipleship within the LCCN.

### **Concept of Missional Discipleship**

“Mission is the overflow of our delight in God because mission is the overflow of God’s delight in being God.”<sup>1</sup> Mission is more than an activity the church engages in, mission stems from God and God’s plan to reconcile the world. God’s mission gives the church its purpose and is the deepest motive for why our passion for God should propel us to make disciples. Since God’s mission gives the church its purpose and discipleship is core to the church’s calling, then it seems natural for discipleship to be connected to a missional understanding of God.

At the heart of the missional church is missional discipleship. Disciples shaped by a missional view of church join the work of the Holy Spirit to form disciples on the pattern of Jesus Christ and send them out as missionaries. This understanding of discipleship is both a way of life and informs particular activities. This study designates this understanding of discipleship as “missional discipleship.”

Traditional concepts of discipleship have encompassed a variety of practices, such as catechesis, the teaching ministry of the church, spiritual formation, and mentoring other believers. Discipleship includes all of these aspects, but it also includes other practices centered on missional engagement. This researcher uses “missional discipleship” to push beyond traditional concepts and sharpen the understanding of a disciple to include someone who engages in God’s mission in the world. In the missional church, disciples are on a journey to becoming more like Christ, investing their lives in others, and embodying God’s love in the world. Missional disciples are followers of the

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 72.

life and teachings of Jesus and are committed to being witnesses. Too often, missional language has been divorced from the church because it was seen as something only missionaries did, or as something optionally added onto what it means to be a church. “Though we misuse and abuse the word disciple, it remains a foundational, biblical, and missional word to describe the method of God.”<sup>2</sup> The concept of missional discipleship therefore reestablishes the essential relationship and full integration of church and mission and provides a theological and practical approach to discipleship.

Missional discipleship includes both engaging in mission and being intentional about faithful discipleship. Just as the missional church movement has helped many churches to refocus the Gospel to include acts of compassion, justice, and love of both neighbor and community, so too does it help the church expand its understanding of discipleship. This missional church movement emphasizes a theology of the church based in the very nature of God as being missional. Indeed, the very heart of the triune God is mission.

The missional pattern of the triune God is captured in the words of Jesus, who tells his disciples in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” God the Father sent Jesus Christ to redeem all of humanity and creation; Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to empower and guide his disciple; and the triune God sends the church into the world to participate in the new creation. God’s mission in the world calls, gathers, and sends the church into the world to participate in God’s mission. “The task of mission will not be fulfilled until there are disciples of Jesus Christ among every people group on earth.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Barnett and Martin, 133.

Thus, the nature of the church remains to seek and follow wherever God is active in the world. The missional church is the instrument of God's mission as redemptive agents in the world. By the church participating in God's mission, God seeks to restore and redeem all of creation.

In missional discipleship, disciples learn missional practices by participating in them. These practices form disciples by hearing, reading and talking about God, but also by going, serving, listening, caring, visiting, and sharing the Good News in the world. This broadens discipleship to include not merely spiritual practices of Christian formation but also missional practices that shape Christian formation. Missional discipleship is an intentional process of forming Christ-followers to become more like Jesus for the sake of God's mission in the world. Jesus Christ is the model and participating in God's mission the goal of discipleship in the missional church. Missional discipleship focuses on the missionary nature of God, the role of the church in forming disciples, and the engagement of missional practices that usher in the kingdom of God. Missional discipleship represents the missionary nature of the triune God with the purpose of forming congregations to embody the Gospel and to equip Christians to participate in the restorative and redemptive mission of God in the world. Mission includes healing and being renewed as God's people gather for worship around Word and Table, and as they participate in God's redemptive mission in the world. Often, discipleship has largely been concerned with defending matters of belief or doctrine and focuses on church programs. While doctrine is important, missional discipleship focuses on practices more than upholding a particular body of ideas or suggestions and centers on joining God's movement in the world.

The life of disciples in the missional church is marked by their engagement in practicing discipleship in their everyday lives. Missional discipleship is a lifestyle that is deeply embedded in the practice of faith. This lifestyle includes simple acts of hospitality, inviting people to gather and engage in service as well as discussing broader social and cultural concerns, as well as prayer, studying Scripture, and gathering for worship. In order to be effective in reaching one's neighbors and engaging the culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, missional Christians understand our essential need to engage in missional practices that witness to the Good News of Jesus in word and deed. "Making disciples of all nations assumes that we go and live among them for an extended period of time. Nations must see the reality of Christ lived out in their culture"<sup>4</sup> To become like Christ means allowing God to become incarnate in our lives as we live in response to God's grace. Missional practices point people to the living Jesus, and are a means of grace that provide healing and restoration. A variety of missional practices help to bring about a faithful witness to God's mission. These practices include evangelistic outreach, as well as acts of compassion, creation care, community development, social justice, and acts of mercy. Missional discipleship invites different people to participate in God's reconciling work in the world, recognizing that both followers of Jesus and those not yet disciples can be changed as they see Christlikeness embodied around them.

Mission and discipleship work together, without close integration mission and discipleship become divorced from each other. Thus, missional discipleship is the process of making disciples, rooted in the worship of the triune God, within a framework of mission for the purpose of mission. Engel and Dyrness state, "mission flows from the

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<sup>4</sup> Barnett and Martin, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 104.

heart of a people who have been transformed by the Holy Spirit and who leave all to follow Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Missional disciples are equipped to do the work of ministry not merely in church sanctuaries, classrooms, and Bible studies, but in neighborhoods, streets, and natural places of connection in the world. Disciple-making in the missional church is formed around the practices of worshipping the triune God, sharing ecclesial life in community, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus, and reconciling the world to God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Paradigm Shift to Missional Discipleship in LCCN**

In order to appreciate the nature of missional discipleship as it applies to LCCN today, a paradigm shift is essential. This paradigm shift is both in understanding and in practice. The first shift is from a program-oriented, church focused approach to a practice-oriented, world focused approach. Seeing the world as the location for living faith expands the ways and means of the church’s discipleship process.

Traditional discipleship program models have been inclined to use school instructional models and methods for faith formation. While this model is both important and necessary, it is limited in its ability to address the dynamics of how faith is formed in the world. Many churches only stick to the traditional programs and have not been able to discover new missional programs for discipleship. They preserve an accommodating method that makes little impact on the community. Traditional models of discipleship can be incorporated into a missional understanding of discipleship, as they form people into

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<sup>5</sup> Engel and Dyrness, *Change the Mind of Missions*, 34.

Christ-likeness. Yet they need to be well-organized and strategic and include missional engagement.

Missional practices lead to encounters where God's activity and God's invitation to Christ's mission are discovered. They lead us into relationships with the triune God that in turn result in developing relationships of healing and fullness with others. The most crucial missional practice is an acknowledgement and practicing ideas of God as the active agent in our world. LCCN's focus must turn, again, to God's action. The practices of a missional engagement in LCCN must therefore be shaped by the principles of God's activity in the world and that LCCN is located within destructive social practices that depersonalize and deprive people of necessary support. The church as a missional community needs to engage in social services such as caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, eradication of poverty, and the provision of clean water to needy communities. The church as a healing community in every place needs to also look at the whole creation in the light of the gospel and seek for ways to restore the planet to health by engaging in local projects like tree planting and forest conservation for ecological rehabilitation.

The LCCN's largest possible ministry opening is the surrounding communities. Adamawa as the state where the LCCN is predominant is considered as one of the poorest in Nigeria, basically lacking many things that could better the life of the people. God expects the LCCN to serve as a lighthouse of the state and the nation reaching out to the people of the communities holistically. Thus, LCCN needs to discern what God is already doing in these communities in order to accomplish God's mission in the world. Indeed, part of the challenge of ministering to the communities will be learning about

them, talking with them, listening to them; this will go a long way in shaping the uniqueness of the LCCN. The practices of missional discipleship are discerned afresh from the place where God acts. The location for discerning the practices of a missional discipleship is critical for understanding how God is present and acting in the lives of the people in the localities where LCCN finds itself. These practices are discovered and discerned only by partnering with the Holy Spirit who is already in the communities as the agent of transformation. The triune God, out ahead, and God is inviting the LCCN to connect to these new opportunities of transforming and giving hope to individuals and families in the communities.

This shift in understanding will require congregations and pastors to reimagine their callings and practices. Shifting to a missional understanding of discipleship requires educating leaders as well as introducing new practices. Addressing this shift requires careful attention to pastors as well as the LCCN as a whole. The strategic work of the LCCN will be addressed in the next section, so this section will conclude by addressing the life of the pastors as leaders. Carrying out this new paradigm “means shifting how we think about our job, our calling as a pastor or leader.”<sup>6</sup> A paradigm shift to missional discipleship not only requires pastors understand missional discipleship, it also means full commitment on the part of pastoral leadership and on the part of a wide swath of lay leadership in congregations. A paradigm shift as momentous as missional discipleship depends on an unwavering trust in God and God’s promises for LCCN. God is not finished with LCCN and missional discipleship holds a promising future for the LCCN. Bringing about the momentous shift to missional discipleship requires that leadership

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<sup>6</sup> Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 119.

invest significant time and energy into a church culture committed to developing missional disciples.

### **Reframing the LCCN’s Vision and Process toward Missional Discipleship**

LCCN is an old denomination established over 107 years ago. As we saw in Chapter One those years included both a blessing and a curse. The blessing came in the form of expansion of membership across Nigeria with more dioceses, divisions, districts and local congregations. The curse came in the form of constant challenges of crisis that led to some parts of the church breaking away.

Now LCCN is in a new season, filled with great anticipation and high expectations. For the past 20 years, discipleship especially for new converts from the Muslim and Fulani background has been on a steady decline. Many now yearn to return to the LCCN of the past. In recent years, LCCN has been through a season of deep discernment that came up with a new strategic plan. To its credit, the LCCN is determined once again to be a beacon of light not only in Northern Nigeria, but in all of Nigeria and in the whole world. “The Church exists as God’s agency to spread the good news of salvation in Christ, render impactful diaconal services and remain prophetic in its engagements in church and society.”<sup>7</sup> LCCN is coming alive again with this reframed mission statement, with its visionary leadership, and trusting the Lord for a more missional future, a future that recaptures in a new and era some of its historic spirit.

The LCCN 2019-2023 strategic plan rightfully highlights discipleship by promoting “discipleship programs at diocese levels regularly and submit periodic

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<sup>7</sup> Musa Panti Filibus, *The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), Strategic Plan 2019-2023* (Numan: no publisher, 2018), 11.

reports.”<sup>8</sup> The LCCN’s strategic plan also takes a decisive step toward a missional self-understanding when it emphasizes that the LCCN “shall seek to inspire and equip members to each see themselves as critical players in the work of mission at all levels.”<sup>9</sup> This researcher’s question to the LCCN is: does this strategic plan sufficiently and effectively integrate missional theology and discipleship practice in order to bring about a paradigm shift to a missional discipleship culture?

Now is the time for a full shift to a theology, practice and strategy of missional discipleship. Such shift requires pastors to be open to a biblical model of discipleship that is both relational and missional. Relational models make discipleship personal bringing people into relationship with Christ. Missional models get people out in the world, extending the scope of discipleship as people witness to Christ in word and deed. One of the objectives for this thesis is to show that, in order to make Jesus visible, our discipleship model should be both relational as well as missional, focusing both on the time gathered in community and scattered in the world. That is what this researcher has identified as missional discipleship. Jesus’ own ministry was both relational and missional. Jesus was consistently inviting people to follow Him (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; Luke 9:23), but He was also intentional in meeting people where they were. Jesus modeled the significance of community (John 13:1-17; Matthew 18:20), while at the same time emphasizing the importance of one-on-one teaching (Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 9:37-38).

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<sup>8</sup> Filibus, *The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Filibus, 15.

In order for the LCCN to flourish with missional discipleship its pastors will need to make a significant paradigm shift to missional discipleship. Therefore, this research recognizes the need to shift the understanding of discipleship for pastors in LCCN to missional discipleship. Where pastors will no longer see discipleship as an imported idea, but as core to their missional calling. As disciples allow the Spirit to equip and empower them to live the Christian life and embrace their missional call to be sent into the world to join God's mission of reconciliation, they also invite others to become disciples themselves.

### **Concluding Suggestions Regarding Missional Discipleship within LCCN**

God designed the LCCN in a closely connected Christian community with a wealthy background of rich liturgy, continuous interest in mission, diaconal services and a great concern for social justice as indicated in her mission statements. The church since her establishment in 1913 has enjoyed spiritual leadership of four Bishops/Archbishops, with significant growth in membership. This shows that the church has passion for God and deep commitment to ensure that the church moves on with her missional responsibilities. God has blessed LCCN with rich resources and the congregations that have been tested with the history of stewardship in local missions over the years. Church was generous in missional giving and local missionary sending. However, the time has come for the LCCN to integrate this missional thinking into its understanding of discipleship.

Through LCCN's rich 107-year history, God has established this as a strongly missional church, concerned with the issues of the world, and joined together through worship. Indeed, LCCN's strengths are a gift from God. The Holy Spirit is living and

active in the church. Annually, all dioceses of the church assemble for worship services that centers on God and each other. This worship forms a community in which churches engage in discussion about missions, diaconal services, and social justice issues. The Holy Spirit works through these thoughts too. This community is shaped around accountability and transparency; commitment and devotion; respect and integrity, and equity and participation (priesthood of all believers).<sup>10</sup>

LCCN is a church in a complex world. The Holy Spirit works through LCCN's complex questions about its relationship to the world. Where do the local conditions around us, LCCN's collective gifts, and passions intersect? This is the question that the church has been examining since August of 2018. Based on this unbelievable feedback from our neighbors, the leadership of Archbishop Musa Panti Filibus is asking important questions about where LCCN's gifts, passions, and the reality of the world around them interconnect. The General Church Council of LCCN in its meeting of May 2016, approved the proposal to develop a five-year strategic plan.

The aim is to clarify the ethos and vision of the church, map out a way forward as to what it hopes to be and achieve and how to channel its resources in a way that is sensitive to its changing environment and that meets the expectations of various stakeholders.<sup>11</sup>

Through this, the church is asking, "what is our place in God's mission to the world?" But in order to understand LCCN's call to serve the church and society, we must first understand God's mission to the world. As the LCCN discerns a pathway forward, this thesis proposes a missional understanding of discipleship would be an integral to its future.

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<sup>10</sup> Filibus, *Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Filibus, 6.

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