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# Forming a Kingdom-Minded Missional Community of Discipleship Small Groups

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# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

FORMING A KINGDOM-MINDED MISSIONAL COMMUNITY  
OF DISCIPLESHIP SMALL GROUPS


Written by

SIMON MAK

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

  
Jonathan C. Wu

  
Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: September 30, 2016

FORMING A KINGDOM-MINDED MISSIONAL COMMUNITY  
OF DISCIPLESHIP SMALL GROUPS

A DOCTORAL PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

SIMON MAK  
JUNE 2016



## ABSTRACT

### **Forming a Kingdom-Minded Missional Community of Discipleship Small Groups**

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Doctor of Ministry

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2016

This doctoral project presents a formational process that develops disciples who may transform the congregation of Mandarin Baptist Church of Los Angeles (hereafter, MBCLA) into a Kingdom-minded missional community of disciple small groups. The contents of this paper are organized into three parts.

The first part of this project takes a closer look at MBCLA, exposing some of the critical issues and problems behind this apparently healthy church. Analyses are given to the Evangelical faith tradition, looking into the positive and negative effects upon various ministries, such as Christian education, mission, and local evangelism. Some understood practices are carefully examined to expose the blind spots in our approach to ministries.

The second part of this project consists of two chapters. The first chapter reviews the literature that provides the important resources of the theoretical and theological foundation that give rise to the basic concepts of the proposed process. The second chapter synthesizes the theology and biblical foundations that give rise to the meaning, purpose, motivation, and practices of the disciple-formation process.

The first chapter of Part Three focuses on applying the theological conclusions from Part Two to derive the goal, contents, and missional small group model of the proposed process. The next chapter presents the implementation plan for this process at MBCLA. The plan includes proposing an applicable infrastructure, setting up pilot projects, providing various levels of training, and designing an assessment method to track personal and communal progress. MBCLA has launched a discipleship campaign in 2010, which is gradually taking shape into this proposed form.

Content Reader: Dr. Jonathan C. Wu

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To my beloved wife, Becky, with whom I have shared my life and particularly this project, the fruit of years of hard work and study—without her support, understanding, and patience, I could not have completed this DMin program and project

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PART ONE  
MINISTRY CONTEXT

## INTRODUCTION

After two thousand years of development, what we call “Christian” and “church” today may differ significantly from what those terms meant to the followers of Christ and their faith communities in the early centuries after Jesus. Changes in organizations, polity, liturgy, architecture, arts, and music from one time period to another are understandable and even expected. However, if the purpose of life, direction of ministry, worldview, or core values of present-day Christians are vastly different from those of the early Christians, we have a serious problem.

About sixty years ago, the local church was still the center of its community, and the reputation and public image of a Christian was respectable and positive. Today, Christianity has an image problem. David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, devoted three years of study to Generation Y (also called Mosaics and Busters), and he found that these young adults exhibit a greater degree of criticism toward Christianity than did previous generations.<sup>1</sup> Non-Christians who feel favorably toward Christianity’s role in society have dropped to 3 percent from 16 percent a decade ago. In his book, *unChristian*, Kinnaman identified six major issues, including hypocrisy, the “get saved” notion, and judgmentalism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Kinnaman, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity . . . and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

On May 14, 2015, CNN released an article with the heading, “Millennials Leaving Church in Droves.”<sup>3</sup> The author writes, “[A] survey of 35,000 American adults shows the Christian percentage of the population dropping precipitously, to 70.6 percent. In 2007, the last time Pew conducted a similar survey, 78.4 percent of American adults called themselves Christian.”<sup>4</sup> Articles like this one are no longer news. Christian churches in the postmodern world have been declining faster and faster in recent decades. LifeWay Research of Southern Baptist Convention reported on June 10, 2015 that the number of churches increased by 0.81 percent, however the total membership fell 1.5 percent from the previous year.<sup>5</sup> According to the *Huffington Post*, Lord George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury and leader of the 85 million Anglicans, said on November 25, 2013, “We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. We are one generation away from extinction and if we do not invest in young people there is going to be no one in the future.”<sup>6</sup>

Instead of looking for possible solutions, some conservative Christian leaders blame this change on one event or another, including the 1963 policy of removing prayer from public schools, liberal policy makers, women’s right activists, or various forms of sexual immorality. In response to the blaming, author and pastor Erwin McManus

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Burke, “Millennials Leaving Church in Droves,” CNN, May 14, 2015, accessed May 23, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/12/living/pew-religion-study/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. This article was primarily based on the research done by Pew Research Center; see Pew Forum, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” accessed May 23, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

<sup>5</sup> LifeWay, “2015 Annual Profile Report,” accessed June 14, 2016, <http://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2015/06/10/sbc-reports-more-churches-serving-fewer-people/>.

<sup>6</sup> Huffington Post, “Church of England Faces Extinction, Says Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord George Carey,” November 25, 2013, accessed May 23, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/25/church-of-england-extinction-george-carey\\_n\\_4317580.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/25/church-of-england-extinction-george-carey_n_4317580.html).

contends, “The crisis did not begin when prayer was removed from public school but when we stopped praying. This event was not the starting place of our cultural decline but the result of years of the church’s diminishing influence on society.”<sup>7</sup> This is difficult to understand in a democratic society in which 78 percent of adults are professing Christians. Yet, again and again, with the passing of public policies that are hostile to or against Christian beliefs, it indicates that something is seriously wrong.

The problem is not due to a lack of resources, financial support, political influence, publicity, knowledge, technology, organization, structures, nor even the size of the Christian population. The root of the problem is not on the outside of the Church, but rather it lies within the Church and among Christians. This is a spiritual problem. Rev. Edmund Chan, founder of the Global Alliance of Intentional Disciple-Making Churches, states, “Chronic spiritual infancy is the ecclesiastical norm. Superficiality, immaturity and carnality characterize many Christians. Many church members don’t grow towards spiritual maturity, much less reproduce spiritually.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, spiritual superficiality has spread throughout churches like an epidemic, regardless of denomination or church size.

Today, the word *Christian* is a misused term. Michael Wilkins, professor at Talbot School of Theology, often asks his audience two questions when he speaks about discipleship at seminars or conferences: “How many of you can say, in the humble confidence of your heart, that you are convinced that you are a true disciple of Jesus

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<sup>7</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001), 27.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Chan, *A Certain Kind: Intentional Disciplemaking That Redefines Success in Ministry* (Singapore: Covenant Evangelical Free Church, 2013), 76.

Christ? Please raise your hand.”<sup>9</sup> He has found that people are visibly confused. Most of the people present do not raise their hands at all, some do so hesitantly, and others raise their hands half high or put it up and then down. Wilkins then asks, “How many of you can say, in the humble confidence of your heart, that you are convinced that you are a true Christian? Please raise your hand.” Most hands shoot up immediately with no hesitation.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, Christians are having an identity crisis. We do not know who we truly are. Wilkins explains that the Greek word μαθητής (*mathetes*) was a common term for various kinds of disciples, including apprentice, pupil, or learner in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>11</sup> It was Jesus who used this special term to describe his followers. According to Acts 6:26, in Antioch the disciples were called Χριστιανός (*Christianos*), meaning “little Christ” or “followers of Christ,” which was supposed to be the identity of Jesus’ disciples. Discipleship is nothing new, yet there are convincing reasons to emphasize it again today. The purpose of this doctoral project is to present a formational process that develops disciples in the way that Jesus prescribed so they may gradually transform their churches into Kingdom-minded missional communities of disciples.

### **Introducing Mandarin Baptist Church of Los Angeles**

Early Chinese immigrants to America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were mostly from the Southern coastal provinces of China. The majority of

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

them were imported laborers and farm workers. They primarily spoke Cantonese or the Toishan dialect (a variant of Cantonese). After the Communist regime overtook mainland China in 1950, the National Party regime retreated to Taiwan, together with the people fleeing from the communists. Because of the political alliance between Taiwan (the National Party government) and the United States, from the early 1950s and on, more and more Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrated to the United States from Taiwan. A large portion of these new immigrants originally came for higher education and later settled down in America for better opportunities and the American dream.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, there was no Mandarin-speaking Chinese church in the Los Angeles area. In order to reach out to the Mandarin-speaking Chinese, a Southern Baptist pastor, Rev. Dr. Y. K. Chang and his wife, teamed up with five other individuals and started to reach out to the Mandarin-speaking students at the University of California, Los Angeles. On Easter Sunday 1963, they founded the Mandarin Baptist Church of Los Angeles (hereafter, MBCLA) in the North Hollywood area. The church is a member church of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). After a few relocations, MBCLA settled in Alhambra, California in 1983, and remains there today.

Soon after it was founded, the church attracted Mandarin-speaking Chinese. Anticipating the needs of the English-speaking second generation (American-born Chinese), during its second year (1964) the church started an English worship service, which soon developed into a full-grown congregation. The church continued to grow and build its first church building within its first ten years. After moving to the more populated Chinese community of Alhambra in 1983, the church started a Cantonese-

speaking worship service in 1984, and the attendees of this service later became a third congregation, the Cantonese congregation of MBCLA.

MBCLA is now among the largest Chinese ethnic churches in the greater Los Angeles area, with Sunday attendance close to eighteen hundred. The church is currently tri-lingual, with services in American English and two major Chinese dialects, Mandarin and Cantonese. Although the children's ministry operates independently, it is closely tied to the English congregation since most of the children's teachers and helpers are English speaking. The English-speaking groups are culturally unique. Although they share the same church vision and direction, governed by the same leadership, they are in many ways operating independently from the Chinese congregations. The Cantonese-speaking Chinese are mainly from southern regions of China and are predominantly influenced by Hong Kong culture. The Mandarin-speaking Chinese are from various parts of mainland China and Taiwan; they are culturally diverse, and at times, even politically polarized. Although culturally different, the Chinese share the same written language, and nowadays most Cantonese understand intermediate Mandarin. Due to the political openness and economic expansion of communist China since the late 1980s, more and more Chinese have immigrated to the United States. This has created a new cultural challenge for the ethnic Chinese churches.

MBCLA is guided by the Southern Baptist faith tradition and has emphasized the authority of the Scripture, missions, and evangelism. Through the years, the church has planted six daughter churches, the most recent on in April 2015. For the last five to six years in a row, the church has raised an average of nearly a quarter of a million dollars yearly. In 2015 alone, the congregation gave more than \$500 thousand in contributions to



the denomination's mission fund. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (hereafter, SBC) had designated MBCLA to be the hosting church for the 2012 denominational missionary commissioning service. That was the first time such an event was ever hosted by a Chinese church in the SBC.

Another Southern Baptist tradition is Sunday school. Although the attendance has been dropping over the last ten years, the church's Sunday school board has been proud of the depth of its teachers and thorough curriculum. All the qualified teachers must take a list of courses from seminary, and among the listed courses, systematic theology, hermeneutics, and teaching methods are mandatory. A good percentage of the teachers have earned Master's degrees from various seminaries.

While many Protestant churches are gradually transitioning to a contemporary worship style, MBCLA has maintained four adult worship services in a solemn atmosphere of traditional Protestant form. This includes a full choir presentation and a pipe organ. These are accompanied by congregational singing of traditional Christian hymns, expository preaching, and set liturgy.

God has blessed MBCLA abundantly. The church is financially well off and is doing reasonably well in most ministries. MBCLA is program oriented. The church life is active and very busy. With relatively better facilities and attractive programs, the church draws a big crowd. The majority of the members are proud of their church, happy with what they see, and they enjoy what the church can provide. In contrast with the general declining trend, MBCLA is still in its prime, and although the growth curve has plateaued for the past eight to ten years, the church was named as a model healthy church in 2007 by LifeWay Research of the SBC.

In such a beloved church, the great majority of the members do not see the need for change nor the purpose of a discipleship program. Chapter 1 discusses some of the crises and problems behind the scenes of this model healthy church. What MBCLA does well today is no different from what many Western churches (that is, American Caucasian churches) did some fifty years ago. In fact, nearly everything we do we learned from Western churches, such as our theology, music, form of worship, church polity, church organization, and programs. We inherited almost everything, including strengths as well as weaknesses, from the West. Actually, some of the major problems that are affecting the postmodern church today, such as complacency, religious consumerism, spiritual superficiality, and hypocrisy, can be found at MBCLA as well. There is nothing we have done that is fundamentally different from churches around us that will immunize MBCLA from falling into the universal declining trend.

### **A Disciple Formation Process for MBCLA**

During the 2009 MBCLA pastoral staff retreat, the church leadership identified some potential crises of the church and decided to launch a discipleship training campaign along with a couple of other projects. As pastor of the Cantonese congregation, I was appointed to lead the discipleship training campaign. The campaign has not always been smooth. Although I have worked very hard, because of my ignorance and inexperience, the early stages of the discipleship campaign were disastrous. It took me a couple of years to realize that the primary cause of failure was my ministry philosophy and theological understanding of discipleship.

This is a common mistake that churches make while launching their discipleship training programs. John H. Oak, founder of the Korean SaRang Community Church, says, “Often times, the success of a ministry is accorded to a methodology, and the philosophy or principle hidden behind it is overlooked.”<sup>12</sup> Too many church leaders quickly dive into a sea of discipleship training materials, curricula, and methods without investing time and effort in understanding the meaning, purpose, and motivation of discipleship. Too many church leaders want to mass produce disciples by converting nominal Christians through a “production line” called a discipleship training program. They neglect to realize that disciple development is indeed a lengthy process that demands mentoring and modeling much more so than acquisition of knowledge. Thus, the disciple formation process presented in this project comes from years of hands-on experience of leading a discipleship ministry as well as a great deal of research.

The purpose of this project is to propose a formational process for developing disciples. This disciple formation process has not only evolved from years of experience with MBCLA discipleship ministry, but it is also designed for MBCLA. By continually developing kingdom-minded authentic disciples, the congregation may gradually be transformed into a missional community. The revival of the Christian Church is not coming from external conditions but from within, starting from each individual disciple.

### **Project Overview**

The first chapter presents some of the driving forces behind this admirable and successful church. These driving forces may be camouflaged as orthodoxy and

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<sup>12</sup> John H. Oak, *Healthy People Make a Healthy Church* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 68.

truthfulness, however they have unintentionally cultivated an inwardly focused and complacent congregation. In order to unveil it, objective evaluation and critical analysis are necessary.

The second chapter reviews six books that have helped shape this proposed disciple formation process. These six books have been chosen according to the four areas of this project's study and research, through which this formational process has evolved. These four areas are the meaning of discipleship, the purpose of discipleship, the motivation of being and making disciples, and the formation of disciples.

The third chapter, which is the foundation of the project, is a theology of discipleship. This theology of discipleship has grown with me as my understanding about discipleship has gradually broadened and deepened since the days I started leading the discipleship ministry in 2010. This theology is primarily based upon Scripture, and it is informed by research and practice.

The formational process is primarily described in Chapters 4 and 5. The role of leadership has been emphasized as the most critical factor of an effective execution of the process. The leadership structure includes top-level commitment, an individual disciple/group leader model, and leadership hierarchy. The design of the process has also been emphasized, while some details of the implementation have been left out, as implementation varies from church to church.

The purpose of this project is to present a disciple formation process for MBCLA. However, the model presented here can be applicable to other churches as well. In fact, it has been adopted by two of the daughter churches of MBCLA. If God is willing, it is hoped that this model will greatly contribute to the church community.

## CHAPTER 1

### A CLOSER LOOK AT MANDARIN BAPTIST CHURCH OF LOS ANGELES

At MBCLA, there are many things that we do routinely without knowing the purpose for them. There is a certain understanding of how things are supposed to be, and emotions run high when those ways are questioned. Many Christians think that being conservative is authentic and upholding traditions is holding onto the truth. This chapter considers the culture of MBCLA by looking underneath the surface of the ministries that MBCLA is proud of and exploring behind the scenes. With that goal in mind, it is natural that we see what we want to see and we hear what we want to hear. To avoid that tendency, an objective and critical evaluation is needed to reveal the true picture of the church and its ministries.

As a member church (cooperative church) of SBC, MBCLA is faithful to the SBC traditions and practices, and in many ways reflects the denomination's characteristics and faith. According to Thom S. Rainer, MBCLA was ranked 239<sup>th</sup> on the list of the "Largest Churches in the SBC."<sup>1</sup> However, in cooperative program contributions and annual mission fundraising, MBCLA has been listed among the top one hundred churches in the

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<sup>1</sup> Thom S. Rainer, "Largest Churches in the SBC," July 12, 2014, accessed May 25, 2016, <http://thomrainer.com/2014/07/2014-update-largest-churches-southern-baptist-convention/>.

SBC for a consecutive six years. Although SBC churches are highly autonomous, denominational influence is strong at MBCLA. The denominational influence is carefully examined in this chapter. The purpose of analysis and examination is to develop an unbiased perspective. The ultimate objective is to develop a strategy, the disciple formation process, to meet the challenge.

### **Centralized Community Church Model in a Metropolitan Area**

With the exception of the house churches in mainland China, Chinese churches have primarily inherited the centralized community church model from the West. For many centuries in Europe and America, the church has been the center of a homogeneous community, where the great majority of the people are Christians. The church provides various religious services and programs for the people of the community. However, in today's North American metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, demographic composition is highly diversified and the community is no longer culturally homogenous. The centralized community church model may not be able to face the challenge effectively.

Although relatively concentrated in a few cities, the Chinese population remains a minority as approximately 3.5 percent of the population of the Los Angeles metropolitan area is of Chinese descent.<sup>2</sup> In general, recent Chinese immigrants and others who are less adapted to American culture tend to cluster around the highly Chinese-populated areas for convenience, whereas those who are established and better adapted tend to move away from the centralized Chinese community for a better living environment.

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, "Los Angeles Metropolitan Area," accessed May 25, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los\\_Angeles\\_metropolitan\\_area#Demographics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles_metropolitan_area#Demographics).

MBCLA was founded in 1963 and is now located in a highly Chinese-populated area. Close to 28 percent of the members are English speaking and about 16 percent are Cantonese speaking. A large portion of the remaining members, who are Mandarin-speaking, were immigrants who came between 1960 and 2000. With the members commuting from all over the metropolitan area (which approximates 4,850 square miles), transportation and parking remains a constant struggle for MBCLA. Most of the church activities and programs, such as Sunday services, Sunday school classes, fellowship gatherings, and Saturday programs, all centralize around the church facility primarily on weekends. The cost of maintaining the large facility is very high, and it is difficult to meet the weekend demands. When attendance reached around 1500, it reached a saturated point for about six to eight years. In 2008 the church spent \$6.5 million purchasing a neighboring building, and attendance grew to 1700 by 2010. Since then, attendance has plateaued at about 1700 to 1800. The expansion of the facility can never catch up with the growing demands of utilization in a centralized church model.

Although situated in a highly Chinese-populated area, MBCLA has not been able to penetrate into the communities surrounding the church. The church was willing to spend a great deal of money on expanding the facility in order to house the members commuting from long distances, but similar funding has not been provided for outreach to the communities surrounding the church, such as discipleship small groups. Also, efforts have not been made to decentralize the church and create worship centers in the remote cities from which members commute. A centralized church, even a large one, has a limited contact area within the community, while a decentralized church, with many discipleship communities scattered over a larger area, has a much greater contact area.

At MBCLA, a decentralized model would have saved a large amount of money because the purchase of the neighboring building would not have been necessary. This model would also have encouraged local community penetration. This project proposes that it is not too late for MBCLA to adopt a decentralized model.

The problem with the centralized conventional church model has less to do with the organization, infrastructure, and methodology, and more to do with the philosophy of ministry behind it. Theologically, most members at MBCLA agree that we should be making disciples, seeking spiritual growth, and turning our eyes upon Jesus instead of gazing inwardly at ourselves. However, as the church makes decisions, these decisions are often directed by a philosophy that values numbers over spiritual growth; that emphasizes attracting people to a church with nice facilities and interesting programs rather than going into the community and touching people's lives; and that pays more attention to superficiality than authenticity. This kind of philosophy is prevalent among the leaders at MBCLA, and it unintentionally cultivates a religious consumerism mentality.

### **Analysis of the Major Ministries of MBCLA**

Objective analysis is very difficult to achieve, as we have a natural tendency to rationalize what we do and overlook what we do not want to see. Generally speaking, we tend to be satisfied with what is familiar to us and makes us comfortable. But if we have a sense of deep security in God, we should not fear criticism, even from non-believers. God allows criticism because it can serve as an objective examining tool to help us gain perspective and self-awareness; without it we are blind. In his book, *Practicing Greatness*,



Reggie McNeal lists self-awareness as the first out of seven practices of greatness for spiritual leaders:

The single most important piece of information a leader possesses is self-awareness. . . . The hazards for leaders of not being self-aware are serious and deadly. Without this insight into themselves and their behavior and motivations, leaders become subject to unknown or underappreciated forces that influence their actions and that can sabotage their work. . . . Leaders who operate without self-awareness run the risk of being blindsided by destructive impulses and confused by emotions that threaten to derail their agenda and leadership effectiveness.<sup>3</sup>

When motivated by a genuine love of Jesus and his Bride (the Church), an objective evaluation for the purpose of self-awareness and self-understanding may benefit the Church immensely.

#### Honoring God's Word

In an effort to honor God's Word, there are many people at MBCLA who will accept nothing unless it comes directly from Scripture. They would contend that any point of view or any terminology that does not have its basis in Scripture has no authority. This is true regardless of whether the Scripture has been quoted in context or not. Some faithful Baptists criticize the use of the term "Holy Communion" because it sounds Catholic. Instead, they believe that Baptists should use "the Lord's Supper" in order to be closer to the biblical phrasing. At MBCLA, many members request expository preaching, and they believe that this type of preaching must sequentially follow books and/or chapters of the Bible, rather than a topical format. These types of practices are characteristic of empty ideology; they seek to honor God's Word, but they miss the mark.

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<sup>3</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Wiley, 2006), 10-11.

On the other hand, many serious lay Christians take on a more intellectual approach to honoring the Bible. They believe that “honoring the Bible” requires diligent effort spent on studying the content of the Bible. The way to honor the Bible, they would assert, is to learn more about the Bible, to study it academically, to understand theories of hermeneutics, to compare various views, and to study Greek and Hebrew. They are dedicated to digging out the true meaning of the text or the author’s original intent. Yet often all these pursuits have little to do with their spiritual lives. David Fitch, author of *The End of Evangelicalism*, points out, “The idea that we can locate the one true interpretation of these inspired words is elusive. Yet this also is implied in the idea of the inerrant Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

At MBCLA, Sunday school has long been a major focus and is considered to be the primary means of equipping the saints. In the past ten years, attendance in the once-prominent adult Sunday school has shown a significant decline to 34.5 percent of the total Sunday worship attendance. Frustrated teachers lament that members lack a spiritual appetite. It is not that members are no longer interested in God’s Word, but what they learn in Sunday school is irrelevant to their lives. The problem is not the quality of the Sunday school teachers, as most of them are well equipped, faithful, and dedicated. They think their calling is to faithfully teach God’s Word correctly so that others may gain biblical knowledge, and their efforts should be appreciated. But gaining biblical knowledge does not necessarily lead one to spiritual maturity.

The problem lies deeper in the education philosophy. The theology of many of the Sunday school teachers assumes that the primary goal of a Christian is to correctly know

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<sup>4</sup> David Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 53.

about God through the Holy Scripture. It is believed that the accumulation of biblical knowledge is equivalent to spiritual maturity. Hence, an emphasis is placed on knowing correct theology.

The problem is confusion regarding the purpose of Christian education and the goal of a church Sunday school. Sunday school is not a seminary. Teachers often fail to recognize the spiritual needs of the members of the congregation, particularly that they need to be motivated, guided, cared for, and patiently mentored. There is an unspoken comparison among some teachers, and they measure themselves against their peers by what classes they teach. The goal of education in a church should be targeted towards the needs of the students rather than the gratification of the teachers.

Many teachers and participants in the Sunday school program at MBCLA have failed to understand that we honor God's Word by practicing his commands rather than gaining an unnecessary depth of knowledge. Clearly, the Sunday school program at MBCLA needs change. Instead of having a top-down major reform, a gradual transition may be better received. Disciple making is a long-term process; by developing more kingdom-minded, mature disciples, the trend of understanding may change gradually.

### Evangelism

For many years, MBCLA has faithfully taught an evangelism training program called Continuing Witnessing Training (hereafter, CWT). CWT is a thirteen-week, four-hours-per-week course, which not only emphasizes theologically correct content, but is paired with evangelistic opportunities following most of the lectures. CWT was originally developed in the early 1980s at a Baptist seminary as a personal evangelism course for

students in the MDiv or MA program. It was later adopted and promoted by the North America Mission Board (hereafter, NAMB) to the SBC member churches. However, because of the complexity of the content and the demanding time requirement, many lay Christians were not interested in participating. For this reason and because of the changes in culture as the world became more postmodern, NAMB replaced CWT in the late 1990s with a few other evangelism tools, such as NET.<sup>5</sup>

MBCLA had helped translate the CWT course materials into Chinese, and the church has been faithfully promoting and teaching it ever since. Some of the influential CWT leaders refused to change and claimed that NET was not as “solid” or “biblically sound” as CWT; they disagreed with NET’s emphasis on personal testimony and experiences, whereas CWT is primarily Scripture based. At MBCLA, being able to pass the CWT course has become a mark of achievement. However, after the training, the majority of trainees do not continue to actively reach out to non-believers. The “CW” part of the CWT has disappeared.

There is nothing wrong with the CWT course design, although the material is a bit too complex for many lay believers. The problem is the misdirected focus on training and learning the method, rather than the continuing witnessing aspect of evangelism. The problem is the lack of a supportive environment that encourages trainees to continue witnessing for Christ and provides opportunities to do so. Nonetheless, CWT continues to be offered routinely twice a year, and very often there are more trainers and assistants than enrolled trainees.

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<sup>5</sup> NET refers to nets used by fishermen to catch fish. NET is a relational, testimony-based, and gospel-driven tool of evangelism developed by NAMB.

Evangelism at MBCLA is departmentalized. The Evangelism Department is designed to first provide trainings (mainly CWT) of evangelistic skills; second, to organize yearly evangelistic events; and third, to provide short-term care for the spiritual growth of the new converts. However, the response from the congregation has been weak. Although the majority of members are fully aware of the significance of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, they appear to be very passive when it comes to witnessing for Christ. They are willing to support financially but hesitate to participate because it means breaking away from their comfort zone. To most people, evangelism means events, activities, and programs. By repeating the same routine year after year, local evangelism appears to be stagnant at MBCLA.

However, evangelism is supposed to be the way of life of all Christians rather than the responsibility of a department. As Jesus said to the disciples, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21).<sup>6</sup> To revive evangelism at MBCLA, this formational process introduces missional evangelism, which emphasizes motivation rather than skill, a relational instead of a confrontational approach, communal presence rather than events, and group support.

### The Purpose of Doing Mission

In contrast to local evangelism, MBCLA has always emphasized mission. Each year the church commits the largest budget and resources to mission and mission-related works than any other single ministry. Members of MBCLA have been known to express a certain sentiment about blessings following mission, such as, “Churches that do mission

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<sup>6</sup> All biblical references are taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

have fewer problems” and “Our church is blessed because we emphasize mission.” But the purpose of doing mission is not to have fewer problems, nor is doing mission a means of getting blessings from God. Problems do not disappear when a church shifts its attention to mission. It is generally understood in the SBC that mission is ministry that is cross cultural, and even the International Mission Board of the SBC insists on this narrow definition of mission.

As a result of these strong feelings about mission, MBCLA motivates about two hundred people every year, especially during the summer, to participate in various kinds of short-term missions. These programs include helping a church in Taiwan to organize an English Vacation Bible School, supporting a church in Mexico with children’s Sunday school once a month, forming a medical team (sometimes including non-Christian medical doctors) to provide short-term medical care in a remote area in India, or volunteering at the Joni and Friends International Disabled Center. While these programs are valuable, one must ask how they differ from community service or social concern. It is clear that at MBCLA there is not a clear understanding of mission. For some reason, the members of MBCLA are overwhelmingly supportive of “mission” in terms of participation and the annual budget. Yet local evangelism is proportionally overlooked.

#### Confusion regarding the Meaning of Discipleship

MBCLA launched a discipleship training program in the mid-1970s using the book, *Master Life*, written by Avery T. Willis, who is SBC’s discipleship expert.<sup>7</sup> By design, the program was supposed to produce disciples one generation after another.

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<sup>7</sup> Avery T. Willis, Jr., *Master Life: Developing a Rich, Meaningful Relationship with the Master* (Nashville: B&H Books, 1998).

However, the program did not even survive past the second generation, and the program disappeared quietly. Thirty-some years later in 2009, a different pastoral team (including myself), during a two-day staff retreat, came up with the idea of launching a discipleship training program. Three of us attended a conference offered by SaRang Community Church, a successful disciple-making church in Korea, in Anaheim, California.<sup>8</sup>

Having adopted the curriculum and one-to-one mentoring system of SaRang Community Church, we then promoted and launched the discipleship program at MBCLA. However, we had learned the method but not the ministry philosophy behind their system. Our understanding of discipleship training was not much different from any other special training classes offered outside of Sunday school, like the CWT, parenting, or conflict management. Changing from classroom lectures to individual mentoring did not cause it to be any more successful.

We did not understand what was unique about the discipleship program, and we could not answer the many questions that came from other leaders: Is equipping the saints in Sunday school not a discipleship program? Is training in evangelism not training disciples? Why do we need a special discipleship program? We ran into confusion over the definitions of a disciple and discipleship. Because the discipleship training program overlapped with Christian education and evangelism, we ended up in a “turf war” with the Sunday school and the CWT teams.

Another factor that caused the failure of that early attempt at a discipleship program was the misconception that “training makes disciples.” As Rev. Edmund Chan

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<sup>8</sup> The Sarang Community Church of Korea offers a week-long intensive seminar, “Called to Awaken the Laity,” for pastors.

states, “The Church has misguidedly truncated discipleship training. The discipleship training emphasis has often been placed on content alone. . . . Many of us think that change happens when we know the content. This is true but inadequate. Information or content doesn’t change us.”<sup>9</sup> Because of this misconception, it was implied that discipleship involved acquiring a special set of biblical knowledge rather than being holistically transformed. Consequently we did very little to help the disciples to apply Jesus’ teachings in character formation and daily life. Having trained a few disciples myself and having observed their development, I eventually realized that the trained disciples cannot continue living the lifestyle of a disciple for long on their own; they need a supportive community and continued guidance for long-term growth.

### **Objective: Disciple Formation Process**

Christian discipleship is a lifestyle of following Christ. The foundation of this discipleship formation process is primarily based on the teachings of Jesus, from which we derive the meaning of discipleship, the purpose of discipleship, and the motivation for being and making disciples. Based on this foundation, an implementation strategy, infrastructure, and practical guidelines are developed. Such a holistic understanding of discipleship must be conveyed to the congregation with continuous effort through sermon series, special seminars, discipleship training sessions, and mentoring in a small group environment. Implementation is an extensive and long-term endeavor.

MBCLA is a program-oriented, conventional church, in which the infrastructure and organization do not provide a healthy environment for continuous discipleship

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<sup>9</sup> Edmund Chan, *Mentoring Paradigms: Reflections on Mentoring, Leadership and Discipleship* (Oklahoma City, OK: Lifestyle Impact Ministries, 2008), 114.



growth. Many studies suggest that small groups (also called cell groups) provide a more favorable environment for individual attention that fosters accountability, mentoring, and modeling, the three elements that are essential to the development of a disciple.<sup>10</sup> This doctoral project proposes that a network of small groups, called disciple groups, can coexist with the current MBCLA system of Sunday school and evangelism training. As the disciple groups grow and multiply, eventually they will transform MBCLA into a missional community.

### **Conclusion**

MBCLA has a reputation for being a healthy church. As I have led the discipleship ministry for the last six years, I have often wondered whether discipleship is truly needed at MBCLA. The church has many strengths, and at time it seems that we are trying to make the best better. On the other hand, if the church is willing to take a hard look at itself and dig deep underneath the surface, it is easy to see serious problems. If we continue along our current path, it is very likely that we may follow the same declining trend that other mainline churches are experiencing. This chapter has intentionally focused on the weaknesses of MBCLA's major ministries, such as Christian education and evangelism. Yet there is a hope. As we faithfully return to what Jesus has taught us, MBCLA can re-adjust itself along the right path again.

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<sup>10</sup> These include the following sources: Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundation for Small Group Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); M. Scott Boren, *Missional Small Groups: Becoming a Community that Makes a Difference in the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010); Chan, *Mentoring Paradigms*.

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This doctoral project focuses on making disciples. This starting point not only influences the books chosen in this review, but also the perspective of each review. Each book is presented in terms of what has inspired or affected my view on the subject of discipleship. The titles reviewed in this chapter do not simply reflect the theological foundation of the disciple formation process, but they are also arranged in order of four areas that are critical to disciple formation. These areas are: the meaning of discipleship, the purpose of discipleship, the motivation of being and making disciples, and the practice of discipleship (formation of disciples).

#### **The Meaning of Discipleship**

*Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus,*  
by Michael J. Wilkins

There has been renewed interest in discipleship over the last twenty to thirty years, and it is now becoming a much talked about subject among Christian circles. Consequently, a flood of books, training manuals, study guides, programs, and online resources have become available. Unfortunately, this phenomenon indirectly creates

more confusion in the area of disciple development. The majority of these resources are very practical, following a how-to model, which likely reflects the general quick-fix mentality. In fact, as Wilkins suggests, some of the practical handbooks are based upon incomplete or even faulty understandings of the biblical teaching of discipleship.

*Following the Master* is a much-needed book in the area of discipleship, especially for spiritual leaders who are leading discipleship ministries.<sup>1</sup> Discipleship impacts the entire life of a Christian, yet it is usually excluded from the MDiv curriculum or seldom a significant topic in systematic theology. *Following the Master* provides a biblical theology of discipleship. Wilkins writes,

Scholarly studies of biblical teaching and the world of the first century have produced an almost overwhelming mountain of material. Most of it is inaccessible – and often incomprehensible! – to the people of church. This book draws upon more than fifteen years of study of such material. To be frank, much scholarly work fruitlessly debates issues irrelevant to the church. But on the other hand, scholarly investigations of narrowly focused biblical and historical concepts of discipleship can be incredibly enlightening. They can make Jesus’ world much more real and practical to us. Our study will benefit from this scholarly work without getting off on insignificant or potentially dangerous side paths.<sup>2</sup>

The word *disciple* means different things to different people. The present-day confusion is coming from many different interpretations and perspectives of discipleship. Wilkins has done a broad survey and categorized the many “definitions” into five models. The real problem comes when people insist on their own view and fail to recognize the value of other perspectives.

Wilkins devotes three chapters (3-5) to exploring the biblical and historical understanding of a disciple in the ancient world. Wilkins explains that the Old Testament

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

is relatively lacking in disciple terminology. He writes, “The terms that later normally specified master-disciple relationship in Judaism are virtually absent from the Old Testament. They are found only four times.”<sup>3</sup> However, that does not exclude the fact that mentor-disciple relationships existed in the Old Testament, such as the Moses-Joshua and Elijah-Elisha relationships. Indeed, the concept of discipleship in the Old Testament is abundant. Wilkins writes, “Most clearly, discipleship relationships can be observed in three levels: (1) on the national level, in the covenant relationship of Israel and God; (2) on the individual to God level, in the relationship of certain individuals who follow God; and (3) on the human relationship level, in relationships found within the national life.”<sup>4</sup>

The term μαθητής (“disciple”) was a general term in the Greco-Roman world. Teachers, scholars, and Jewish rabbis all had their disciples. In fact, Jesus’ disciples and other disciples shared some common characteristics, such as mentoring and sharing their lives together. However, Jesus was uniquely calling upon the lives of his own disciples.<sup>5</sup> He even set the criteria for those who came after him. In Chapters 6-16, Wilkins gives a detailed and thorough account on the biblical meaning of following Christ. Within the four gospels, Acts, and the epistles, he explores the characteristics of the disciple through the different perspectives of these authors.

One of the very unique discipleship experiences took place during the persecution of those in the early Church. The martyrs paid the ultimate cost to follow Christ. Wilkins calls this Developmental Discipleship. He writes,

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

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

Although a Christian becomes a disciple through conversion, the life of a disciple is not a static phenomenon. Discipleship means growth and progress toward the goal of becoming like Jesus. . . . To be a true disciple means that a person has made a definite conversion commitment to follow Jesus, and it is expected that the person who makes that commitment will carry it through to completion. This is especially significant for those who were experiencing persecution.<sup>6</sup>

The last part of the book is particularly significant for today's reader. After providing much information regarding discipleship in the Bible and the early Church, Wilkins exhorts his readers to translate this into what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in today's world. Wilkins spends the last two chapters suggesting his definition of a disciple of Jesus, the implications of discipleship in the present day, and the practical advice of walking with Jesus in our world.

***A Certain Kind: Intentional Disciplemaking That Redefines Success in Ministry,*  
by Edmund Chan**

In the opening words of his book, Edmund Chan clearly depicts the central thought of his book: "The compelling question of discipleship is not merely 'Are we making disciples?' but rather, 'What kind of disciples does God call us to reproduce?' and, more importantly, 'What kind of disciples are we?'"<sup>7</sup> Filled with practical advice and spiritual wisdom, *A Certain Kind* challenges the reader to radically redefine success in ministry—not by "how many," but by "what kind." If I could recommend one book about discipleship, I would choose *A Certain Kind*.

As discipleship has received more and more attention in the past twenty years or so, the meaning of discipleship and the concept of discipleship training have become

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Chan, *A Certain Kind: Intentional Disciplemaking That Redefines Success in Ministry* (Singapore: Covenant Evangelical Free Church, 2013).

more ambiguous. It is necessary to clarify the meanings of these key terms in any serious work on discipleship, as they may mean different things to different people. To avoid ambiguity, Chan devotes the first few chapters to explaining and then defining the meanings of *disciple*, *discipleship*, *disciple making*, and what he calls an *intentional disciple making church*, based on his theology, ministry philosophy, and experiences.

Chan states that the first and most critical task in leading a discipleship ministry is to determine the vision.<sup>8</sup> Without a vision the leadership is leading in darkness. The common mistakes that churches make are either not putting enough effort towards finding the vision for discipleship ministry or spending too much effort on problem solving. From his rich experience, Chan lists twelve factors that may compromise vision. Avoiding mistakes is a first step on the road to success.

While most leaders leading discipleship ministry emphasize methodology, teaching materials, doctrines, content, and curriculum, Chan advocates “discipleship from within.”<sup>9</sup> While instruction and content are important, Chan emphasizes cultivating the spiritual quality of a disciple. In a similar way, while most people concentrate on getting more lay Christians involved in various short-term missions or sending more missionaries out, Chan advocates, “The mandate (our walk with God) must precede the mission (our work for God).”<sup>10</sup>

Typically, the established approach to discipleship ministry in most churches is to make it one of their many programs. But Chan warns that such an approach leads to the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

church being a church of discipleship programs rather than a disciple-making church.<sup>11</sup> A church intentionally committed to disciple-making is an intentional disciple-making church. After many years of experience in helping intentional disciple-making churches, Chan has created a list called the “Ten Commitments of a Disciple-Making Church.”<sup>12</sup> This list is critical for any discipleship minister.

Among the “Ten Commitments,” developing the leaders has proven to be most critical to disciple development. Leaders, by all means, must avoid producing disciples after themselves, but rather they should seek to develop true followers of Christ. However, the personal modeling, mentoring, and influence of the discipler play a major role in the life of a disciple. Based on the New Testament, Chan lists five marks of a biblical disciple, which can serve as the “specification” of the “producer” and the “product.”<sup>13</sup>

Chan also discusses the debate regarding whether church infrastructure matters in effective disciple making. In a conventional church setting, the norm is that 20 percent of the congregation serves the 80 percent. This may not be a favorable environment for effective disciple making. Chan advocates, “The cell facilitates a proper span of care by having people grouped in manageable numbers. . . . Ministry to one another is effective in a cell context as individual attention is made possible.”<sup>14</sup> Chan also discusses single-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 99-103.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 180-185.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 103.



level and multi-level discipling, and he contends that the cell group is an excellent part of a multi-level discipling program for the local church.

### **The Purpose of Discipleship**

#### ***The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission,* by Lesslie Newbigin**

The word *mission* is not an unfamiliar term and has even been widely used for different purposes. However, its denotation is not easily understood, let alone the theology behind its apparent meaning. As recorded in Acts 13:1-3, the church of Antioch sent out the Apostle Paul and Barnabas, and from that time until today, the meaning of mission has been understood in different ways, often in response to situations in different eras. As indicated by the subtitle, *An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Lesslie Newbigin, an internationally esteemed missionary, pastor, apologist, theologian, and a much-quoted author, starts this book with a brief yet comprehensive account of the historical background of missions before he goes on to discuss the mission characteristics of the Church today. Readers who do not have a background in missiology will find the historical background particularly helpful.

The purpose of this book is to explore the missional characteristics of the Church in the twentieth century. For many centuries, churches in the West have viewed missions mostly as enterprises that belong to the exterior of church life as some form of ministries somewhere overseas, such as Asia, the South Pacific, South America, or among marginalized people even at home. The missionary-sending churches have been situated in highly populated Christian communities where Christian culture is dominant. However,

with the radical secularization of Western culture in the last two centuries, US churches are in a missionary situation in what was once Christendom.

Newbigin's theology of mission is centralized in the Trinitarian characteristic of God. Mission is the proclamation of "God's kingship over all human history and over the whole cosmos. Mission is concerned with nothing less than the completion of all that God has begun to do in the creation of the world and of humankind."<sup>15</sup> Jesus was sent by God to proclaim the reign of God, and he sent out his disciples to do the same. The Kingship of God is present in Jesus and the Church. When the first-generation Christians spoke about the Kingdom, they spoke about Jesus. In this sense, mission is about sharing the life of the Son; it is love in action. Newbigin also affirms, "Mission is not just something that the church does; it is something that is done by the Spirit, who himself is the witness, who changes both the world and the church; and who always goes before the church in its missionary journey."<sup>16</sup>

Mission, of course has everything to do with proclaiming the gospel, yet the presentation of the gospel cannot be totally free from the influence of the culture. Without understanding the cultural aspect of the gospel, believers may end up propagating a culture instead of proclaiming the gospel. Regarding cultural relevance, Newbigin agrees with Donald McGavran:

In the "mission station" approach, as McGavran sees it, converts are detached from the natural communities to which they belong, attached to the foreign mission and its institutes, and required to conform to ethical and cultural standards that belong to Christianity of the foreign missionary. The effect of the policy is twofold. On one hand the convert, having been transplanted into an alien

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<sup>15</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1995), 56.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

culture, is no longer in a position in influence non-Christian relatives and neighbors; on the other hand the energies of the missionary exhausted in the effort to bring the converts, or more often their children into conformity with the standards supposed by the missionaries to be required by the gospel. Both factors have the effect of stopping the growth of the church. Schools, colleges, hospitals and programs for social action multiply, but the church does not<sup>17</sup>.

This mission station strategy vividly describes what has happened in China. When the missionaries came to China from the Western world, they brought with them not only the gospel but also the European Christian church culture. They bought lands, built churches, filled them with long pews, and even shipped from Europe the very expensive pipe organ so as to fill the church with European church music. All of this looked strange and foreign to the Chinese. Inevitably, it was regarded as a foreign culture invasion and was rejected.

The Church experienced strong resistance and opposition from the native Chinese. Believers were threatened, persecuted, and looked down upon as traitors by the general public. It was a long and hard-fought cultural war, and eventually, through the relentless effort by Western churches and even foreign political pressures, Christianity was finally established in China. Western missionaries brought science, medicine, technology, philosophy, and even women's education to China; they established universities and schools, and they built hospitals.

While it has contributed greatly to the modernization of China, Christianity has not had much impact on the Chinese culture. For the sake of comparison, Buddhism has been in China for more than two thousand years. It has shaped the Chinese culture in many ways, including art medicine, philosophy, politics, literature, and architecture. Even

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 122.

though it originated in India, Buddhism is regarded as the “authentic religion of China” by the majority of the Chinese, especially among the working classes.

Given my Southern Baptist background, I have been extensively involved in missions and thought I had a strong grasp on the history and purpose of missions. This book not only widened my understanding, but it has provided a valuable reference in analyzing and evaluating the mission ministry at MBCLA. The broadened understanding of mission affirmed my conviction of setting “missional” as one of the growth objectives for the proposed disciple formation process.

***Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America,*  
edited by Darrell L. Guder**

The word mission is seemingly quite well known and broadly used by many, yet *missional* is easily misused as an adjective in a general sense to describe mission. In fact, some common English dictionaries do not list this word at all. The term *missional* refers to a theological concept of the sending of a church. In his attempt to explain what makes a church missional, J. Todd Billings references both Newbigin and Darrell Guder’s book titled, *Missional Church*<sup>18</sup>:

A 1998 book titled *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* was the first work to introduce the concept of a missional church. The multi-authored book grew out of the Gospel and Our Culture Network, a group of professors and pastors that sought to bring the World Council of Churches' discussions of *missio dei* ("the mission of God") and Lesslie Newbigin's missionary insights to bear on North America. According to *Missional Church*, the American church had been tied to a “Christendom model” of Christianity, wherein the church focused on internal needs and maintaining its cultural privilege in society. The decline of Christendom provided the church an

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<sup>18</sup> Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998).

opportunity, they said, to rediscover its identity as a people sent by God into the world as gospel witnesses.<sup>19</sup>

Guder is the editor of *Missional Church* as well as one of the authors. Other contributors include Lois Barrett, Inagrace Dietterich, George Hunsberger, Alan Roxburgh, and Craig Van Gelder. The book presents a variety of views and perspectives of the subject of missional church. Although the common theme is clear, some degree of overlapping thoughts and different emphases are inevitable.

The purpose of *Missional Church* is not to propose another mission strategy or another pragmatic approach to a problematic ministry. The authors discuss the cultural irrelevance and confinement of today's churches, including its obsession with empty ideology, marketing, and techniques.<sup>20</sup> The ecclesiology of *Missional Church* emphasizes that mission is everything a church ought to be and do; mission should not be one among many church programs, but rather the core identity of the church as witnesses sent by God into this world.

Along the lines of Newbigin's thesis, the authors of *Missional Church* discuss the longstanding model of mission as being the sending of believers to other places, usually overseas, to reach other people groups.<sup>21</sup> The church is the sending agent and Christians play their part by offering prayers or monetary contributions to the mission fund. However, Guder and his colleagues contend, the Great Commission is for all Christians. While partaking in sending, we all are being sent by God into the world and among the

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<sup>19</sup> J. Todd Billings, "What Makes a Church Missional?" *Christianity Today*, March 5, 2008, accessed May 25, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/march/16.56.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

people, as Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21; 17:18). One of the fundamental notions of missional church is that every Christian is a missionary being sent to proclaim the gospel to the world, whether it be overseas, cross culturally, involving special people groups such as prisoners or the poor, or even among our own neighbors, co-workers, and friends.

About sixteen years since this missional vision was introduced, it has inspired countless Christian leaders, thinkers, and authors to continue to explore along the same lines. It has gradually become a “missional movement” now. I myself have become part of this movement, and my hope is that the discipleship ministry at MBCLA will benefit from the teachings of this book.

### **The Motivation of Being a Disciple and Making Disciples**

#### ***The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God,* by Dallas Willard**

In Dallas Willard’s book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, the two words in the title appear to be contradictory, as one would not expect to find a conspiracy having anything to do with God. Willard discusses particular problems in the Church today that hinder believers from true obedience and discipleship. He finds that many Christians believe they understand Jesus well and turn out simply repeating doctrinal statements that do not really mean much to them. He laments, “Presumed familiarity has led to unfamiliarity, unfamiliarity has led to contempt, and contempt has led to profound ignorance.”<sup>22</sup> The major reason for this, Willard contends, is not that Jesus’ instructions are unclear, but that

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<sup>22</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), xiii.

Christians today simply do not do what he said. When believers encounter teachings of Jesus that they feel are too radical, they often find ways to interpret these teachings so that they are more acceptable to their conscience.

Many Christians today focus on the grace of the gospel, saying, “Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.” But this saying can easily convey an unbiblical view, such as, “Just get saved. Don’t worry about being perfect, since no one can be perfect anyway.” Willard responds, “Christians certainly aren’t perfect. There will always be need for improvement. But there is a lot of room between perfect and being ‘just forgiven’ as that is nowadays understood. You could be much more than forgiven and still not be perfect. Perhaps you could even be a person in whom Jesus’ eternal kind of life predominates and still have room for growth.”<sup>23</sup> In line with this misunderstanding, many new converts are focused on “getting saved” rather than following Jesus. Christians are certainly forgiven, and that does not depend on being perfect but on faith. However, true faith should include a genuine love of Christ and an intention to obey his commands and follow him.

Willard also discusses another problem that hinders people from obedience, which is what he calls a “gospel of sin management.” In this case, the believer is focused on following a set of rules, but there is little sense that the Christian faith professed has much to do with the whole of life. When this happens, it definitely weakens the Church and reduces its impact on society. Willard writes,

When we examine the broad spectrum of Christian proclamation and practice, we see that the only thing made essential on the right wing of theology is forgiveness of the individual’s sin. On the left it is removal of social or structural evils. The current gospel then becomes a “gospel of sin management.” Transformation of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 36.

life and character is no part of the redemptive message. Moment by moment human reality in its depth is not the arena of faith and eternal living.<sup>24</sup>

When the Christian message is essentially concerned only with how to deal with sin, there is a problem. Clearly this is not the gospel as Jesus presented it.

Willard also cautions believers against a desire for doctrinal correctness when it is not secondary to following Jesus. The purpose of following Jesus is to enter his Kingdom, and the only correct way is through the narrow gate that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 7:13-27. The narrow gate is not doctrinal correctness, but obedience. Willard explains, “We can see that it is not doctrinal correctness because many people who cannot even understand the correct doctrine nevertheless place their full faith in Him. Moreover, we find many people who seem to be very correct doctrinally but have hearts full of hatred and un-forgiveness. The broad gate, by contrast, is simply doing whatever I want to do.”<sup>25</sup>

For those who are serious about following Christ and willing to do what Jesus would do in their own lives, many find it difficult to do what Jesus commands, such as the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. Willard makes it clear that the focus should not be on what one can do or cannot do, but rather, discipleship should be from the inside out. That means that following Jesus means, in the first place, being with him, learning from him to live our lives as if he would live our lives. It is not necessary to do everything Jesus did, but to learn to do everything we do in the manner of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

According to Willard, to be with Jesus means to be with him in his spiritual presence, and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 276-283.



to let him transform our lives and our character, so that we may grow towards Christlikeness. This transformation process can be facilitated through various spiritual disciplines, and these are essential for a disciple.

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard relates Christian spirituality to discipleship. Although discipleship is not a primary theme, in *The Divine Conspiracy* Willard addresses what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This book contributes to the project in that it deals with the spiritual formation aspect of discipleship.

### **The Practice of Discipleship**

#### ***Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrational Approach,* by Gareth Weldon Icenogle**

In his book, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, Gareth Icenogle asserts that we as a human society have come through a significant period of history—the Industrial Revolution—during which hierarchy and power pyramids seemed necessary to gain productivity through an established chain of command. This concept not only affected industry, but it also influenced all levels of our human society, including government structure, educational systems, organizational managements of many kinds, and even church organizations. When productivity and effectiveness become the objective goals, centralized control and management are the name of the game.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Upon entering the late twentieth century, a reverse trend began to occur in some places. Large, bureaucratic institutions are downsizing, and intentional face-to-face circles of empowerment and ownership are integrating. Top-down control systems are giving way to participatory and decentralized networks, often called quality circles. I happened to witness and experience such a trend during the 1980s and 1990s, when I was a R&D engineer in the telecommunication industry. Industrial giants such as AT&T, IBM, and even Erickson, the Swedish company, were downsizing in order to compete with many smaller and newer companies.

The Church, however, is dealing with people, where relationships and character formation are the objectives. Large organizational efforts may be more effective when handling big events and projects, such as sending and managing thousands of missionaries abroad, timely and effective disaster relief, and organizing large-scale events outreaching to great multitudes. However, Christian lives cannot survive on big events and projects. Life transformation happens in small communities or small groups through personal modeling and mentoring.

The small group, as a method or technique, has been widely used in various kinds of therapies. However, Icenogle points out that this is not a “how to” book but rather a “why” book. He writes,

The church of the 1990s is pursuing many kinds, styles and formats for small groups ministry: Bible study, recovery, mission, evangelism, support, house church, ministry team, sharing, prayer and so forth. Some churches worldwide have gathered huge numbers of members by making the small group the core focus of their ministry strategy. . . . [But] the Christian small group movement has experienced very little theological depth. Small groups still tend to be a program or technique of ministry rather than a call to return to the roots of the very nature of what God created humanity to be. Most of the current small group activity in the church is not organic but technical and curricular. Churches do groups because they work. Deeper theological exploration is long past due.<sup>28</sup>

Icenogle’s book attempts to articulate the biblical and theological foundation for small group ministry and to integrate this material with parallel knowledge in spirituality, ecclesiology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

The purpose of this book is to provide theological tuning and rooting for small group ministry. Right from the beginning, Icenogle points out that “God lives as a small

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<sup>28</sup> Icenogle, *Biblical Foundation for Small Group Ministry*, 11.

group.”<sup>29</sup> The Trinity as three persons in one was the origin of the small group concept. Icenogle arranges the contents into three parts according to the biblical chronology: 1) Old Testament foundation; 2) gospel foundation; and 3) apostolic foundation.<sup>30</sup>

Icenogle is a well-seasoned small group pastor who helped organize the National Conference on Growing the Church through Small Groups from 1987 to 1990. Even though he claims it is not a “how to” book, I find it very practical. Icenogle includes many practical suggestions in every chapter, and always ends with a section called, “Small Group Ministry Implication.”

One limitation of the book is that Icenogle conveys the idea that community and small groups are one and the same, but they do have distinct differences. The Scriptures referred to in the book, especially in the Old Testament, actually refer to a large community (usually the Israelites) rather than a small group. While the principles that he draws are good ones, one should not necessarily substitute the term “small group” into Scripture whenever a community is referenced. In any case, the small group model fits very well for disciple formation, and Icenogle’s insights have much to contribute to this project.

### **Worthy of Mention**

In addition to these six books, there are a number of other books that have influenced my understanding, thoughts, and theology with regards to the Church and ministry. A few require brief mention as they have significantly informed this project. In

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Table of Contents.

the area of understanding of discipleship, ecclesiology, and ministry philosophy, *Follow Me*<sup>31</sup> and *Radical*,<sup>32</sup> both by David Platt, boldly point out the superficiality and misguidedness of the widely practiced personal evangelism among evangelical Christians, as well as the overly generalized confession of sin and conversion prayer, which are indeed misleading. Regarding the connection between church tradition and the small group model, Neil Cole's *Organic Church*<sup>33</sup> and Alan Hirsch's *The Forgotten Ways*<sup>34</sup> are critical.

Having been a student of Dallas Willard, his influence is significant in the area of spirituality. He helped me to understand modern Christian spirituality, the role of spiritual disciplines in discipleship formation, and the fact that our hearts should be renovated if we care deeply about following Christ. In addition to several of Willard's books, Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell's book, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*,<sup>35</sup> provides an excellent survey on the tradition of spiritual practices. From the Evangelical and Baptist perspective, Ruth Haley Barton's *Sacred Rhythms*<sup>36</sup> offers valuable and practical suggestions in spiritual discipline.

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<sup>31</sup> David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die, A Call to Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Wiley, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

Regarding the practice of discipleship, *Transforming Discipleship*<sup>37</sup> by Greg Ogden would benefit those who are planning to or have been using his discipleship training manuals, such as the popular *Discipleship Essentials*. For a comprehensive understanding and practical advices, Bill Hull's *The Complete Book of Discipleship*<sup>38</sup> is excellent for those who are seriously pursuing discipleship training. In addition, Frank Viola's *Finding Organic Church*<sup>39</sup> is insightful and practical. Each of these books has influenced this project, whether directly or indirectly, and each deserves mention here.

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<sup>37</sup> Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Spring, CO: NavPress, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> Frank Viola, *Finding Organic Church: A Comprehensive Guide to Starting and Sustaining Authentic Christian Communities* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

## CHAPTER 3

### THEOLOGY OF THE DISCIPLE FORMATION PROCESS

The momentum behind the recently revived interest in discipleship may be hampered by the confusions it creates. The primary reason for this confusion is the failure to recognize that discipleship is not a doctrine but a continuous trajectory of growth towards Christ-likeness; it is not a methodology or a program, but rather a lifetime process of following Jesus. Edmund Chan similarly contends,

Discipleship is a way of life. It is not a program. Discipleship is a passionate following after Jesus. It is not merely a training course to take in church. Rather, it is a life to be lived. It involves the faithful living out of the implication of the Gospel in our life. It is being transformed by the Holy Spirit to live out the redemptive purpose of the Kingdom of God in all arenas of our life.<sup>1</sup>

Many church leaders who set out to lead a discipleship program often blindly adopt a workable method or system from other churches, or they directly jump into setting up training courses, rather than investing time and effort in studying the theology of discipleship in order to understand the meaning, purpose, and formation of disciples. Failure is often inevitable. This chapter aims at laying a theological foundation for

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<sup>1</sup> Chan, *Mentoring Paradigms*, 118.

practicing discipleship in terms of the meaning, purpose, motivation, and formation of discipleship.

### **The Meaning of Discipleship**

Most committed Christians want to be faithful followers of Christ, yet the notion of what a disciple is varies greatly and creates much confusion. This is partially due to the fact that discipleship is not a favorite subject of discussion among systematic theologians. They spend a great deal of time discussing the doctrine of humanity, the origin of the world, the fall, the sinful nature, and the salvation of humanity, but almost no mention of discipleship can be found in most of the popular textbooks on systematic theology or biblical theology. However, an understanding of discipleship is so critical to Christian development that it affects the entire life of a follower of Jesus. Jesus warns the disciples in Matthew 7:21-23,

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”

This passage indicates that many Christians live their whole lives with full confidence that they already have a passport to enter the Kingdom of God, only to find out that they are rejected by the Lord.

### **Different Views of Discipleship**

Wilkins writes “Being a disciple of Jesus is a phenomenon that is simple to appreciate yet incredibly complex fully to comprehend. . . . In the last twenty-plus years,

a virtual flood of discipleship studies has swept over the church, yet people may be more confused now than ever. The reason? No consensus reigns in understanding what Jesus was doing and in what we should be doing in making disciples.”<sup>2</sup> Wilkins categorizes the various understandings of discipleship into five models in Chapter 2 of his book, *Following the Master*, as follows: 1) disciples are learners who follow a great teacher; 2) disciples are committed Christians; 3) disciples are ministers; 4) disciples are converts, while discipleship comes later; and 5) disciples are converts who are in the process of discipleship.<sup>3</sup> All these views are born of good intentions to follow Christ according to a certain understanding of the Scripture.

The existence of different views of discipleship is not necessarily negative. As Wilkins explains, “The strength of each discipleship model lies in its emphasis upon a particular type discipleship teaching. The weakness of each discipleship model lies in its de-emphasis of other types of discipleship teachings.”<sup>4</sup> Appreciating the differences between the various discipleship models can actually enhance and broaden our understanding of various facets of biblical discipleship.

After giving a survey of the various models of a disciple, Wilkens provides his own definition:

*Discipleship* is the ongoing process of growth as a disciple. *Discipling* is the responsibility of disciples helping one another to grow as disciples. . . . Thus, when we are speaking of Christian discipleship and discipling, we are speaking of what it means to grow as a Christian in every area of life. Since *disciple* is a common reference for Christian, discipleship and discipling imply the process of becoming like Jesus Christ. Discipleship and discipling mean living a fully human

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<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 24-25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.



life in this world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image.<sup>5</sup>

Further exploration of the meaning of discipleship is beyond the scope of this project.

Nonetheless, this section presents a working model of discipleship, which highlights what it means to follow Jesus. This working model is the basis for the formational process of discipleship as presented in this project.

### A Working Model of Discipleship

The word *disciple* used in the gospels broadly included everyone in the crowd who followed Jesus. Platt writes that the crowd following Jesus can be categorized into three kinds of people: casual followers, convinced followers, and committed followers.<sup>6</sup> A multitude of many thousands who came to Jesus were casual followers for different reasons: many came with curiosity, others hoped to follow a political leader, some came for personal needs, and some were referred by other masters (John the Baptist).

Eventually, Jesus prompted them to either commit or leave, telling them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). Jesus also said, “He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:38). In later incidents, Jesus asked his followers to count the cost in order to follow him (Luke 14:28-33). In response to these words of Jesus, many casual followers left, yet many others were convinced by Jesus’ teaching remained with him. According to Acts 1:15, after the ascension of Christ, there were about 120 committed followers left.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> See Platt, *Radical* and Platt, *Follow Me*.

To “count the cost” means that followers must understand what they have signed up for, and what it means to follow Jesus. The cost of following Jesus is not always known beforehand. Jesus asked the rich young ruler to sell all that he possessed and distribute it to the poor (Luke 18:22), but he did not ask Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9) nor Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) to do the same. To a few others, such as Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they abandoned their possessions, families, and occupations to follow Jesus. For all who follow him, the cost is having total faith in Jesus and being in total submission to him. Whatever the cost may be, Jesus has the right to call for it.

To those disciples who stayed to respond to Jesus’ call, Jesus told them what it meant to be his disciple on various occasions. First, Jesus explained, his disciples abide in his Word. Jesus told the Jews who had believed him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32, NASB). The phrase, “continue in My word,” is translated in the ESV as “abide in my word” and in the NIV as “hold to my teaching.” These three translations give us a broader understanding. They imply obedience, living in accordance with Jesus’ words, and continuity, which means practicing Jesus’ teachings on all occasions at all times. Living out the truth extends to one’s cognitive knowledge of the truth, and the truth will eventually transform one’s being.

Second, Jesus’ disciples abide in him and bear his fruit. After the Last Supper, Jesus used the vine and branch analogy (John 15:1-11) to remind his disciples to abide in him so that they may be his fruit-bearing disciples. Verses 5-8 state,

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them

into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

The last sentence points out that bearing the fruit of the vine will bring glory to God the Father and that proves that we are disciples of Jesus. This passage is an important foundation on which the purpose of a disciple is based.

Third, Jesus' disciples love one another. Jesus gave the disciples a new command of loving one another: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). The Apostle John further emphasizes, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:7-9). Loving one another has become a mark of those who follow Jesus.

Fourth, Jesus' disciples make disciples of all nations. Before his ascension, Jesus told his most committed followers to make disciples of all nations by following the lead of the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses. He said,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Disciple-making is not just limited to making new converts, but a lifetime process of discipleship. Every committed follower of Christ should be making disciples.

Fifth, Jesus' disciples are the sent people. God the Father is a sending God. He sent Jesus to the world in the form of a human being, and Jesus lived among us so as to deliver and save us. In his prayer, Jesus asked the Father not to take the disciples out of the world but to keep them from the evil one, and as the Father sent him into the world, Jesus also sent the disciples into the world (John 17:15, 18). Furthermore, Jesus told the disciples, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father" (John 14:12). Every disciple is a sent missionary (by Jesus himself), and everywhere in the world is a mission field.

The call of Jesus, "Follow me," still stands today. Whoever responds to this call should make an intentional and continual commitment to follow him, and needs to understand the meaning of counting the cost. Although this is not easy, Jesus is willing to work with anyone with great sincerity and love, just as he worked with Peter (John 21:15-22). This is where grace comes into play. In short, it takes genuine faith, intentional effort, and the Lord's grace to follow Jesus.

### **The Purpose of Discipleship**

The sole purpose of growing the vine is to produce fruit, and all the vinedresser does is prune, train, and cultivate the vine so that it may bear more fruit. In referring to the people of Jerusalem (the Israelites) about whom the metaphor of the vine is used, the Lord told the prophet Ezekiel,

Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Can wood be taken from it to make anything, or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel? If it has been put into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends and its middle part has been charred, is it then useful for anything? Behold, while it is intact, it is not made into anything. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it still be made into anything! (Ezekiel 15:2-5)

A vine is useful only for its fruit; the vine branches are not strong enough for any constructive purpose, and only fit to be fuel for fire.

On the very night when Jesus was about to part with the disciples, he revealed what was in his heart: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. . . . My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:1-2, 8). This passage vividly states the reason why Jesus called the disciples. Just as a vine that does not bear fruit is useless, so also a disciple is useless if he or she does not bear the fruit of Christ. The purpose of a disciple is not to gain personal achievement or even church accomplishment, but to bear the fruit of Christ.

#### Understanding the Meaning of Fruit

In the “vine and branches” passage (John 15:1-11), Jesus does not elaborate on what constitutes fruit. The fruit comes from the vine and grows through the life of the vine (John 15:5), but it is important to determine what genuine fruit looks like in the life of a disciple. Genuine fruit is the life of Christ manifesting through the branches (disciples) and it can be characterized by three traits: 1) the unity of the disciples; 2) the spiritual maturity of the disciples; and 3) the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

First, genuine fruit manifests in the unity of the disciples. Loving one another is an important mark of Jesus' disciples (John 13:35). A relationship begins with providing care and comfort, as the Apostle Paul suggests: "contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:13, 15). But loving one another also means dealing with conflict and friction as taught in Romans 12:14, 16-21:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. . . . Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Unison implies sameness, but unity embraces differences working in harmony towards the same goal. Unity is genuine fruit, as it is the nature of the triune God. Jesus prays for unity among the disciples: "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. . . . The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one" (John 17:11, 22). A truly loving relationship will preserve unity.

Second, genuine fruit manifests in the spiritual maturity of the disciples. It is God's divine plan that his children grow towards spiritual maturity in conforming to the likeness of his Son Jesus. The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 4:12-13, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the

body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” The faith community is made up of disciples, and naturally, spiritual maturity should be the purpose and goal of the community as well as the individual disciple. Chan emphasizes that spiritual maturity is not automatic; it is not measured by spiritual giftedness, nor by merely knowing the truth, but by the likeness in the character of Christ, and the application of the truth.<sup>7</sup> He further advocates that spiritual maturity is characterized by love, good conscience, and by a sincere faith.<sup>8</sup> The defining mark of spiritual maturity is Christlikeness.

Third, genuine fruit manifests in the fulfilment of the Great Commission. New converts are sometimes described as fruit or firstfruits in the New Testament. Paul writes in Romans 16:5, “Also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.” The Greek word ἀπαρχή, which means “first fruit,” is metaphorically translated as “first convert” here. In fact, the NASB translates the same word as “first fruits” in 1 Corinthians 16:15, “Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),” whereas, the ESV translates the same term as “first converts.” Indeed, a new convert is a born again new life.

Making disciples of all nations is a direct command from the Lord, and this is not an option, but an order. The Great Commission is indeed the “commission of

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<sup>7</sup> Chan, *A Certain Kind*, 117-119.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-124.

discipleship.” The NASB faithfully translates Matthew 28:19-20 as follows: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” The phrase, “make disciples” is actually an imperative verb of the sentence; both “baptizing” and “teaching them to observe” are nominative participles. That means there are two aspects or two levels of disciple-making. One is converting non-believers into new disciples. The second is developing new converts towards maturity through teaching them to observe (or obey) what Jesus has commanded. The conversion may be a moment of making the decision to follow Jesus, but the development process towards maturity is a lifelong effort. The meaning of “observe” also implies to watch and then follow, which describes mentorship. Hence, the center of the Lord’s Great Commission is instructing the disciple to obey the teachings of Jesus. Ultimately, disciple-making should be a life transformation process rather than simply a decision.

### Being Missional

Understanding the meaning of being missional is crucial in defining the purpose of discipleship. The term *missional* can be easily mistaken as an adjective describing something related to mission. For example, a missional church can be misinterpreted as a church, such as MBCLA, that has an active mission program. This situation is indeed a result of the traditional ecclesiocentric understanding of mission. The concept of mission, though, has evolved through the course of church history. In this project, the term missional, as it appears in the project title, “Kingdom-Minded Missional Community,”



demands further explanation. To be missional is to be theocentric, kingdom minded, sent to represent the reign of God, evangelistic, and a community of the Holy Spirit.

First, to be missional is to be theocentric. God is a God of mission. God himself initiates mission. He has sent his messengers, prophets, his only Son, the incarnated Jesus, and his Spirit to reveal himself to humankind. Mission is all about God, not about believers or a particular church. Guder writes,

Western mission had been very much a European-church-centered enterprise. The Gospel to which we testified around the world had been passed along in the cultural shape of the Western church. This ecclesiocentric understanding of mission has been replaced during this century by a profoundly theocentric reconceptualization of Christian mission. We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation. "Mission" means "sending," and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history. . . . God's mission unfolded in the history of God's people across the centuries recorded in Scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God's work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected. 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. It continues today in the worldwide witness of churches in every culture to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it moves toward the promised consummation of God's salvation in the eschaton.<sup>9</sup>

When it comes to mission, most of us think of existing programs and perceived needs, instead of responding to a call from God. Chan advocates, "The mandate must precede the mission."<sup>10</sup> He illustrates this with the incidence of Jethro advising Moses regarding delegating the responsibilities to selected able men who fear God (Exodus 18:13-27).<sup>11</sup> Before discussing how to delegate (verse 22), Jethro advises, "Then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the

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

<sup>10</sup> Chan, *A Certain Kind*, 113.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-113.

work they are to do” (verse 20). According to Chan, “The work they are to do” is the mission. “The way they are to walk” is the mandate.<sup>12</sup> The tendency is to focus on the mission instead of the mandate. Chan explains,

The reason we do that is because we are so drawn to the urgent and tangible nature of the work of our mission that we tend to forget the timeless pertinence of our walk. As a result, the urgent call of the Church is “do this do that, get engaged in this, get involved in that!” rather than, “People, let’s stop and reexamine what God required of us. Let’s affirm afresh that “the way we are to walk” precedes “the work we are to do.”<sup>13</sup>

George R. Hunsberger points out that theocentric mission theology recovered the Trinitarian character of mission. He writes, quoting Newbigin, “Missionary practice must be grounded in the person and work of Christ, seeded by the ‘trust in the reality and power of the Holy Spirit’ and rooted in a practical faith.”<sup>14</sup>

Second, to be missional is to be kingdom minded. The kingdom of God is in fact a major theme of Jesus’ teachings throughout the gospel books in the New Testament. In fact, Jesus was kingdom minded right from the beginning. His first message was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Jesus told the disciples that his food was to do the will of the Father who sent Jesus and to accomplish his work (John 4:34). Even at the young age of twelve, Jesus loved to stay in the temple, asking and answering questions among the teachers. When his parents came to look for him, his response was, “Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49, KJV).

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 111-112.

<sup>14</sup> George R. Hunsberger, “Chapter 4,” in Guder, *Missional Church*, 82.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus prays, "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). Later, in the Great Commission, he exhorts, "Make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20). Taking these together, one may conclude that missions and making disciples is part of the fulfillment of the coming of the Kingdom; it is the practice of "God's will be done." Mission is not merely sending people to proclaim the gospel, but it is to represent the reign of God, as Hunsberger writes, which is "characterized by peace, justice, and celebration."<sup>15</sup> In fact, that was what Jesus so often announced: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Following the same train of thought, Inagrace Dietterich describes the missional church as a community "called to represent the compassion, justice, and peace of the reign of God."<sup>16</sup>

Third, to be missional is to be sent to represent the reign of God. The Father has sent his Son to establish his kingdom in this world, just as Jesus sends his disciples, not as a religious vendor but as an individual and community for the purpose that represents Jesus' reign in this world. Hunsberger suggests, "Both the passive and active meanings of 'represent' are intended when it is said of the church that it represents the reign of God, and adds particular force to the missional calling of the church."<sup>17</sup> Hunsberger contends that the Church represents the reign of God in four ways: as its sign and foretaste; as its

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>16</sup> Inagrace Dietterich, "Chapter 6," in Guder, *Missional Church*, 142.

<sup>17</sup> Hunsberger, "Chapter 4," in Guder, *Missional Church*, 101.

community; as its servant; and as its messenger.<sup>18</sup> Christians cannot do everything that Jesus did, yet we can do in his name those things that Jesus has entrusted to us.

Fourth, to be missional is to be evangelistic. Our God is a missional God. He wants to reveal himself to all people so that they may know him and have a loving relationship with him. This motive led him to send Jesus to the world: “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus did not just come to die on the cross, but also to show the people that he is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through him (John 14:6, paraphrased). In proclaiming the truth, Jesus lived among the people, felt their joy and sorrow, understood their needs, taught them the truth, suffered with them, and eventually died for them.

Mission is being sent. Father God sent his Son, and in the same manner the Son sends the disciples. Evangelism is proclaiming the message of gospel, which is centered on the love of God. To proclaim the message of God’s love, a disciple must have experienced the love of God. With genuine love inside, they will go where Jesus goes, do what Jesus does, and teach what Jesus teaches. In other words, disciples should do more than simply invite people to church to listen to an evangelistic message; they ought to go into the community, the world, and live out the message of gospel among the people. This is the basic concept of missional evangelism. Unlike the conventional view of evangelism, which is usually associated with methods and skills, missional evangelism is about being sent to represent the reign of God.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 93-109.

Fifth, to be missional is to be a community of the Holy Spirit. Dietterich writes, “[Communities] are not formed by human intentions and efforts, individual or collective, but instead by God’s empowering presence. . . . Through this power of the Holy Spirit a ‘people sent’ are cultivated and motivated as missional communities.”<sup>19</sup> The church tradition has long held a view of the Holy Spirit as the giver of life, noting its primal and ongoing participation in the life of Christian communities. But modern Western Christianity has somehow connected the Spirit with love and grace rather than with creation. Consequently, a false distinction has arisen between the spiritual world and the material world of our daily lives. Even more seriously, the Spirit becomes a totally mysterious power used to explain incomprehensible statements of faith, gaps in human knowledge, or extraordinary spiritual experiences. Dietterich advocates,

The church owes its origin, its destiny, its structure, its ongoing life, its ministry – in short, its mission – to the divine Spirit of life, truth and holiness. . . . God’s promised reign of love and hope, compassion and reconciliation, harmony and justice, is incarnated in a new humanity, a people commissioned to represent the gospel of peace to the alienated and hostile powers of the world.

This communal reality of holy living, mutual support, and sacrificial service the New Testament calls *koinonia*. Challenging the old competitive order of independence, self-interest, and private privilege, Christian community indicates a new collaborative order of interdependence, shared responsibility, mutual instruction, and commonality. Within this new company of believers studying, sharing, eating, and praying together, the promised fulfillment of creation is visible, tangible, and experienced, even though not perfected. While the Spirit is the “unseen Lord,” the movement of the Holy Spirit has real and visible effects.<sup>20</sup>

Evangelical Christians today are often ignorant about the Holy Spirit and even afraid of it.

Many do not even mention the Holy Spirit in their evangelistic message. In contrast to this, the Apostle Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit as a critical element as he preached the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 145-146.

gospel: “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5).

### **The Motivation of Being and Making Disciples**

While thousands of people followed Jesus with many different intentions, only a small portion found the motivation to commit themselves to him. Commitment is usually derived from a purpose, regardless of whether it is godly or selfish. In other words, a wrongly motivated person can be a committed follower of Jesus too. Luke recorded the disciples’ inquiry to Jesus before his ascension in Acts 1:6, “So when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’” Given the first-century political situation and social background, many people following Jesus, including the most committed ones, were hoping to follow a leader who could deliver them from the Roman regime and reestablish the state of Israel. Mixed motivations may be inevitable at the early stage of the discipleship pilgrimage, but following Jesus is a lifetime process, which demands a long-term commitment. The key to a long-term commitment is finding the motivation to sustain focus on the target, which will help one recover from setbacks along the way and keep one on the course.

Such a profound motivation of following Christ must be rooted in a foundation of thorough understanding of the meaning and well-defined purpose of discipleship. Commitment is an outward expression, whereas motivation is an inner state of mind. Though many initially decide to follow Jesus based on an improper motivation, as they

experience Jesus, the relationship with him grows. Understanding of the truth becomes broader and deeper, motivation may be adjusted, and the level of commitment may be changed accordingly as well. This section presents motives for following Jesus that are biblical, such as love for God and people, love in practice, and a desire to abide in Jesus.

### Love for God and People

There was a lawyer among the Pharisees who asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus answered, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus emphasized that loving God is first and foremost, which means it is the most important, most fundamental, and should precede all else. Jesus commented about loving one’s neighbor, “The second is like it.” This implies that the difference between the two commandments is only in order, but they share the resemblance in significance, indispensability, and usefulness. The conclusion is, “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

The particular Pharisee who asked the question was so impressed with Jesus’ response that he replied, “Right, teacher.” Mark not only records the same interaction, but also includes the subsequent conversation between the Pharisee (or scribe) and Jesus:

The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him; and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the

kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. (Mark 12:32-34)

The scribe does not just rephrase what Jesus said in agreement, but he adds a short comment of his own: “[Loving God and one’s neighbors] is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” Jesus validated his response, implying that indeed, burnt offerings and sacrifices, which represent religious rituals and activities, are certainly an essential part of the religious life; however, without love for God and other people, all outward expressions become meaningless. In a similar way, one may commit to follow Christ, preach, evangelize and make disciples, and even perform miracles in the name of Christ; but if he does not do so out of love for God and others, all he does may end up in vain.

The phrase, “with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” may appear with slightly different wording each time it is mentioned in Scripture. The central meaning of this phrase is indisputable, which is to love God with the entirety of oneself. It must involve all our intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual being. One common problem among today’s Christian is that of loving God primarily through an intellectual understanding, and neglecting love for God in other facets of ourselves.

Furthermore, these two commandments—loving God and loving others—are related to the inheritance of eternal life. Luke records another incident in which a lawyer discusses eternal life with Jesus:

And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” (Luke 10:25-28)



Thousands of believers regard themselves as born-again Christians or disciples of Christ, living an outward religious life (that is, giving “burnt offerings and sacrifices”), but they lack the corresponding inner love for God and others. It is very common to be busy doing all kinds of Christian deeds while forgetting to be a disciple. The Apostle Paul writes,

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

It is a good sign that in the recent years, more churches have become aware of the necessity of discipleship training and devote more resources and effort to pursue it. However, this motivation of loving God and people is rarely addressed in discipleship programs or discussed in training materials. Those who teach discipleship cannot assume that every disciple already knows the importance of love; all believers must be reminded and encouraged to practice love. Love is the mark of a Christian and cannot be neglected.

### Love in Practice

It is not uncommon for disciples to have difficulty in loving an unseen God in practical ways. However, loving the unseen is not foreign to the human experience at all. Family members love each other even when separated or unseen. Love can be cultivated in relationship. We can love the unseen God in many ways, such as getting to know more about his character, nature, and attributes through studying his Word; interacting with him in prayer and meditation; or loving the people he loves. In whichever ways we love God, we absolutely cannot ignore the way suggested by Jesus: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Jesus further explains,

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. (John 14:21-24)

The Lord's commandment in his Word and his teaching includes not only the two previously mentioned commandments but all the teachings that are based upon those two. Keeping the commandments and obeying the Lord's teaching is desirable, but it should not be done in a legalistic way. Keeping the commandments is not equivalent to loving God; loving God involves our entire being. Consciously we must make an intentional commitment to love the Lord. Cognitively, we ought to know who God is, understand his character, his nature, and his commandments through his words. Emotionally, we develop a father-child relationship with him through our spirit. Outwardly, we live a life that pleases him.

The result of keeping the commandments is that one will experience the love of God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. In return, we love God (and Jesus) with our whole being. Then the Lord will come to us and make us his dwelling place, which is the ultimate fulfillment of true *κοινωνία* ("communion") and a constant motivation for our long-term commitment of following Christ.

### **Formation of a Disciple**

Those who seek to encourage disciple-making in the Church today have two tasks before them. The first is the discipleship process itself: beginning with helping non-believers decide to follow Christ, and then guiding them through a development process that helps them grow towards maturity. Newly converted disciples may be more readily

brought up through a designated process of disciple formation. The second task is that of helping other Christians understand the importance of disciple-making. Within the Church, there are many different views of discipleship, and often these conflicting views present an obstacle to discipleship ministry. The founder of the SaRang Community Church of Korea, Pastor John Oak, told his disciple leader trainees in a lecture that transforming an established and inward-focusing church into a disciple-driven church is very difficult, and that it demands extra patience, effort, dedication, and love.<sup>21</sup> Jesus loves all of his churches, large and small. As disciples of Jesus, we should never give up on helping our churches and at the same time we must keep expanding our understanding of discipleship. We shall never initiate change for the sake of change itself, but for the love of the Church that Jesus has entrusted to us.

In light of the various understandings and misunderstandings of discipleship, the initial stage of a disciple formation process in a church is to help congregants understand discipleship and adjust the course of development as needed. Helping Christians make adjustments in their understanding may be the most difficult step, especially when one is dealing with leaders and teachers in well-established churches. This step involves more than simply presenting new ideas and suggesting that certain things be done differently; it should directly impact the ministry philosophy. It is in fact a paradigm shift, which involves continuous effort. Early adopters<sup>22</sup> can be a great aid in this process.

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<sup>21</sup> John Oak, lecture, "Called to Awakening the Laity Discipleship Seminar," SaRang Community Church, April 19, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> *Early adopter* is term used by Everett Rogers in his book, *Diffusion of Innovation*. These are people who are the first to catch a new vision and join the team of those initiating change.

Once a particular church is behind a disciple-making effort, a disciple formation ministry can be launched. Teaching or training is probably the most well-known process in disciple development. Learning biblical content should be an ongoing process throughout the life of a disciple. Learning can be achieved in various forms, such as classroom lectures, small group sharing, personal instruction, and the practicing of truth in life. It is critical that the concept of abiding in Jesus should be at the forefront of the disciple formation process, and spiritual disciplines should be undertaken by disciples who wish to follow Jesus seriously.

### Abiding in Jesus

Loving God is the motivation throughout our lifetime pilgrimage of discipleship. This is a long-term commitment, and it is certainly a challenging one. Understanding our needs and difficulties, Jesus promised to send the παράκλητος (“helper”), the Holy Spirit, to be with us. Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17). The Holy Spirit was sent to help disciples keep his commandments. Jesus also accentuates the important role of the Holy Spirit as the παράκλητος (“helper, comforter”) in a disciple’s life. He said, “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:25-26). As

the Scripture indicates, the Holy Spirit teaches disciples everything they need to know, and reminds them of all that the Lord has said.

Another role of the Holy Spirit is taking Jesus' place in terms of being with disciples. In the vine-branch analogy, Jesus emphasizes the significance that disciples must abide in him (John 15:5). This is a well-known verse; however, not many Christians today take Jesus' warning seriously that "apart from Me you can do nothing." Instead, we rely on ourselves and our own resources. We govern our churches with our management skills, lead worship with our talents and technology, preach and teach with our knowledge, and run our programs with our resources. We must remember to give thanks to God, so that we remember that it is God who has accomplished all that has been done.

Most of us do not experience the reality that apart from Jesus we can do nothing. We cannot experience it because we dare not let go of our control; we cannot let go of our control because we do not have true security inside; we lack security because we have failed to find ourselves in Christ. If we do not abide in Jesus, we cannot find the constant motivation to sustain our lives following Christ.

Another reason for not being able to experience this is because we do not understand it. Jesus says that without abiding in him, disciples will produce no fruit. However, we assume that our religious activities and church accomplishments are the fruit. But the branch must grow out of the vine; it is not a separate entity that is inserted onto the vine. It is the life of the vine that produces fruit through the branches. We tend to ornament the branches with what seems to be fruit rather than letting real fruit grow through us.

## The Role of Spiritual Discipline

All three synoptic gospels record the incident of Jesus fasting for forty days in the wilderness and being subjected to Satan's temptation (Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13). Many believe that Jesus was able to overcome Satan's temptation in the wilderness because he used Scripture to defeat Satan. Hence, Christians are advised to study God's Word diligently so as to be able to face temptation. The reality is, however, that many Christians who have plenty of Bible knowledge have failed before temptation. Clearly, knowledge of Scripture alone is not enough to get us through the test.

One very important aspect, the spiritual state of Jesus, is often neglected when this passage is discussed. As the passages record, Jesus was full of the Spirit and he fasted for forty days. It is nearly impossible to fast for forty days without first practicing fasting as spiritual discipline on a regular basis. Jesus was totally human, with human needs and desires just like any one of us. The fullness of his spiritual life was not a given condition. In fact, the Scripture describes that he was "led by the Holy Spirit" (Luke), or "the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness" (Mark), which shows the fact that Jesus was obedient to the Holy Spirit. As a man, his spiritual state was a direct result of his daily walk with the Holy Spirit and an intimate relationship with Father God.

In general among evangelical Christians, understanding of the Holy Spirit is very inadequate and experience with the Holy Spirit is neglected. Evangelicals may know the important role of the Holy Spirit doctrinally, yet often they do not know how to experience the Holy Spirit. Many evangelicals even find reason to criticize the charismatic Christian movement.

There are several reasons why this is so. First, many evangelicals overly rely on a rational understanding of the scriptural accounts of the Holy Spirit. Second, they insist on a systematic methodology of study. In his popular systematic theology textbook, Millard Erickson writes, “While study of the Holy Spirit is especially important, it is also quite difficult. . . . We have less explicit revelation in the Bible regarding the Holy Spirit than about the Father or the Son. . . . Unlike other doctrines there is no systematic discussion regarding the Holy Spirit.”<sup>23</sup> Third, evangelicals often restrict God by stating that he can only reveal himself through the Scriptures that they understand. Fourth, they lack the experience of encountering the Holy Spirit on a regular basis.

As a result, most evangelical Christians today are very ignorant about the Holy Spirit. They do not know and may even fear being in touch with the Holy Spirit, and only rarely do they know how to discern the Holy Spirit from other spirits or from simple human desire. We have failed, not because we do not have knowledge of the Truth, but because we have failed to obey. We fail to obey because we lack the power of the Holy Spirit to subdue our own desires. We lack spiritual power because we are not used to nurturing our spiritual lives, because we are unfamiliar with the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual disciplines are exercises designed to help develop an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus. When we properly practice these spiritual exercises in sufficient regularity, we will gradually get to know the Holy Spirit. With this understanding, the formational process, as proposed in this project, is meant to encourage spiritual maturation of disciples. The experience of the presence of God will bring about a holistic growth that transforms one’s spiritual life towards Christ-likeness. For practical

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<sup>23</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 863.

reasons as an initial effort towards spiritual formation, this project recommends only a few exercises. These are daily devotion, self-examination, and accountability.

### **Daily Devotion**

Daily devotion with the Lord may be the most basic, useful, and fundamental spiritual discipline for all Christians. It can be practiced in many varieties, from a simple format for newly converted disciples to an imperative daily exercise of the soul for very mature believers. Daily devotion is a comprehensive spiritual exercise. It includes a few different kinds of spiritual disciplines in simplified forms. In daily devotion, one will practice prayer, contemplative reading of Scripture, meditation, and reflection (self-examination). These are indispensable disciplines valuable to spiritual growth. Simply developing a consistent habit of devotion by itself is an excellent exercise of self-discipline. Daily devotion can be lively and interesting, and is for everyone regardless of their level of spiritual maturity.

Daily devotion is a discipline for life, and the biggest challenge is consistency. Believers ought to commit to a time of daily devotion, but it is hoped that they will find sources of motivation so that it does not become an exercise of duty. Many Christians seek a particular method of daily devotion, and these may or may not be very helpful. The Onnuri Church of Korea has developed a “QT sharing group” model, which has been proven to be effective in sustaining persistent daily devotion.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “QT” stands for quiet time with the Lord, and it is a form of personal devotion. Further explanation of the QT sharing group model is given in Chapter 5.



## Self-Examination

Like daily devotion, the discipline of self-examination can be practiced in various ways. It can be a daily reflection on the providence and presence of God or a dedicated period of time in solitude and silence, in which one may come face to face with God alone in honesty and sincerity. Psalm 139 has vividly described a natural soul-searching experience that we call “self-examination” today. The omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent nature of God is described in this psalm by the psalmist, David, who is totally overwhelmed and responds with the following words:

O Lord, You have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You understand my thoughts from afar.  
You scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before there is a word on my tongue,  
Behold, O Lord, You know it all. (verses 1-4)

...

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way. (verses 23-24)

Self-examination may be the most challenging and important spiritual discipline. Barton regards it as “a practice that facilitates spiritual awakening—an awakening to the presence of God as God really is and an awakening to ourselves as we really are. . . . It offers us a safe place to see and name those places where we are not like Christ, and it opens us up to deeper levels of spiritual transformation. Self-Examination is the Christian practice that opens us to the love we seek.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 93.

This spiritual discipline can be practiced as examining the consciousness and examining the conscience. According to Barton, the purpose of the former is to practice recognizing the unconditional love and presence of God as the ultimate and unchanging reality of our lives.<sup>26</sup> The latter is to ask God bring to mind attitudes, actions, and moments when we fall short of exhibiting the character of Christ or the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Barton continues,

The examen of consciousness involves taking a few moments at the end of the day to go back the events of the day and invite God to show us where he was present with us and how we respond to his presence. . . .  
When we first begin practicing the discipline, we may not be conscious of God's presence at all during the moments of the day, but our examen helps us to become conscious of evidence we might not otherwise have noticed. . . .  
Through the examen of consciousness, we become aware of God's presence with us even in moments that are tinged with regret, and we begin to believe, little by little, that nothing can take us out of God's presence.<sup>27</sup>

Examining one's consciousness can start with a simple way that even new converts may be able to practice. As this discipline continues, one's awareness penetrates deeper inside the soul and may even reveal some of the unnoticeable darkness of the inner self. Barton explains,

When we enter into the examen of conscience, we are willing to listen without defending and to see without rationalizing. We do not depend on our own morbid introspection or keen insights; rather, we surrender ourselves to the Spirit of God, who reveals truth to us as we are able to bear it. As God brings different areas to mind, we are willing to reflect on what contributed to the situation and how we might respond differently in the future.<sup>28</sup>

The key to this discipline is the willingness to allow God to guide the process and allow it to elevate from our self-help methodology to a spiritual practice.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 95-103.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 65-96.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 101.

## Accountability

Community plays a significant role in the disciple formation process. Accountability is a form of communal spiritual discipline. One should never underestimate the power of Satan and the power of sin. Practicing spiritual disciplines, having a closer walk with the Lord, and being willing to pay the high cost to follow Christ does not exempt us from temptation. Even in the grace of Christ, all are vulnerable to sin. In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren states, “Given the right circumstances, any of us are capable of any sin.”<sup>29</sup> Steven W. Manskar points out in his book, *Accountable Discipleship*, “Disciples are vulnerable to self-deception, temptation, and distraction. The powers of the world constantly strive to deceive and tempt with the lure of materialism and greed in all their vulgar and subtle ways.”<sup>30</sup>

One of Satan’s powerful deceptions is making us believe that simply relying on a personal relationship with Jesus will be sufficient to conquer all obstacles to spiritual growth. If one neglects communal spiritual discipline, the chances of success are limited. In fact, God surrounds us with fellow disciples so that we may support each other.

Manskar continues,

Accountability is how we make sure our discipleship happens. The primary task of Covenant Discipleship is to give disciples the means to prevent and resist the temptation to self-deception. Watching over one another in love helps disciples stand against the trap of believing and living as though they were self-sufficient. Mutual accountability prevents us from believing there is no need to “work out [our] own salvation” (Philippians 2:12).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 215.

<sup>30</sup> Steven W. Manskar, *Accountable Discipleship: Living in God’s Household* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2010), 23.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Accountability is a much-needed spiritual discipline; however, if accountability becomes rigid, it turns into legalism, and it does not change the heart or affect one's inner being.

That was exactly what Jesus found to be so objectionable in the case of the Pharisees. On the other hand, in dealing with difficult weaknesses, we need to honestly share our struggles with someone godly and trustworthy. Warren plainly writes,

If you're losing the battle against a persistent bad habit, an addiction, or a temptation, and you're stuck in a repeating cycle of good intention-failure-guilt, you will not get better on your own! You need the help of other people. Some temptations are only overcome with the help of a partner who prays for you, encourages you, and holds you accountable. God's plan for your growth and freedom includes other Christians.<sup>32</sup>

The Bible also teaches believers to “confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another” (James 5:16). Accountability can be applied with genuine love, authentic and honest fellowship, with continuous prayer support, with sincere individual effort in discipline, and drawing power from the Holy Spirit. In this case, it will gradually change the inner being of a person.

### Grace and Effort

Abiding in Jesus is not an automatic outcome of conversion, although it is a necessary initial step. Jesus says, “He who abides in Me and I in him.” The NASB translates this phrase in the same word order as in the Analytical Greek New Testament,<sup>33</sup> which implies that the disciple should take the initiative in the abiding process, and that by grace, Jesus (the Holy Spirit) will make it complete. In his lecture, Willard explained,

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<sup>32</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 212.

<sup>33</sup> In the Analytical Greek New Testament, the verse reads as follows: “ὁ μένων ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ.”

An indispensable truth: We grow in spiritual life and in ministry by well-directed effort. Nothing else will suffice. Not revivals, not religious experiences, though both may help. Not by being taught the truth. . . . Grace is not opposed to effort, but earning! The basic plan for growth into mastery of life, in companionship with the Master of life, is to follow Him into His practices. Grace does not eliminate the need for disciplines and for planned growth.<sup>34</sup>

The process involves intentional effort in learning the truth, living out the truth, and submitting oneself to transformation by the Holy Spirit. Life must first be transformed before it can be fruitful. In a similar way, discipleship must start from the inside out.

### **Conclusion**

Practicing the truth and observing Jesus' teachings are irreplaceable processes in disciple formation. Not only did Jesus ask his disciples to keep his commandments, but the Apostle John regards that as the will of God. He writes, "This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us" (1 John 3:23-24). This step requires action and is not simply a mental exercise.

In Jesus' time, a teacher took on a role of a mentor, which is an effective strategy for developing disciples. Most disciples should be involved in various levels of mentorship. Throughout the life of a disciple, one may be coached by a few mentors at different stages. Disciples should be encouraged to mentor other fellow disciples. Being mentored may have a positive impact upon one's the maturity process. The more

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<sup>34</sup> Dallas Willard, lecture, "Spirituality and Ministry," Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center, Sierra Madre, CA, June 4-15, 2012.

practical details of the formational process, including mentoring and modeling, are discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

PART THREE  
MINISTRY PRACTICE

## CHAPTER 4

### A MINISTRY PLAN OF THE DISCIPLE FORMATION PROCESS

Chapters 2 and 3 have laid a theological foundation on which the meaning, purpose, and motivation of discipleship are derived. Following the same train of thought, Chapters 4 and 5 aim at translating the abstract theological concepts into a viable ministry plan and implementation strategy. This proposed disciple formation process is built on a small group (or cell group) model, which happens to be a widely adopted infrastructure in many disciple-making churches. Some church leaders quickly equate discipleship ministry with small groups, and they eagerly change their church infrastructure by introducing small groups. But without understanding what discipleship is about and without knowing the culture of a particular congregation, simply adopting a small group model is not enough. This chapter describes the vision, and each of the three goals of the project—establish disciple group leadership, launch disciple groups that are committed to the particular growth objectives, and implement methods that achieve the growth objectives—is presented in detail. The importance of the discipleship community environment is also discussed.



## **Vision and Goals**

After some two thousand years, today's Church has unexpectedly created a vast multitude of people who call themselves Christians but do not really know how to follow Jesus. Jesus warned his disciples that not everyone who calls him Lord will enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:21-23). Hence, the vision of this project is to establish a disciple-driven missional community that brings forth revival and transforms MBCLA from an inwardly focused religious organization into a missional and Christ-centered church. This disciple formation process should be founded upon a sound theology and backed with rich field experience.

The goals of the project are threefold. The first goal is to establish disciple group leadership that is visionary, committed, focused on shepherding, and focused on serving. The second goal is to launch disciple groups that are committed to four particular growth objectives: sharing, growing, serving, and maturing. The third goal is to implement methods that achieve the growth objectives, including spiritual formation, practicing the truth, mentoring and modeling, and "gospel in action." As each goal is presented in the sections that follow, specific objectives are outlined.

### **Establish Disciple Group Leadership**

The first goal of the project is to establish leadership for the disciple groups (hereafter, DGs). Disciples need an appropriate environment in order to experience healthy growth. However, such an environment does not happen automatically. It takes intentional effort from everyone involved, and the role of the leadership is crucial. Leadership is more than the senior pastor or the lead pastor for discipleship, but it

involves all levels of leaders, including pastoral staff, disciple group leaders, disciple group coaches, and disciple group lead pastors. Getting the entire leadership team to see the same vision, agree on the same purpose, and commit to the same goal is no easy matter. But this is a necessary condition of a successful disciple formation process. For MBCLA, four leadership qualities stand out as being essential for disciple making. These are visionary leadership, committed leadership, shepherd leadership, and servant leadership. Among the four leadership qualities, visionary leadership is most crucial at the top level of leadership, and the other three are necessary at all levels.

In this DG system, leadership development is the most critical element for the success of the disciple formation process. Unlike conventional church fellowships, for which leaders are usually elected by the fellowship members,<sup>1</sup> in this DG system the leaders are appointed by the DG leadership with consensus from the immediately related DG members. Identifying and developing potential leaders is an ongoing crucial responsibility of the DG leadership. In general, leaders that are developed from within have a better understanding of the vision, a higher level of commitment to pursuing the same goal, and are more familiar with the practice.

### Visionary Leadership

God selects leaders, trains them, delegates them with responsibilities, and co-labors with them, but first and most importantly, he gives a leader a vision. God gave Moses the vision of leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Jesus gave his followers the vision of making authentic disciples of all nations. He raised leaders, walked with them,

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<sup>1</sup> Typically, an elected cabinet is composed of various positions such as chair, treasurer, secretary, devotion leader, and so on.

mentored them, guided them, and encouraged them. Concerning leadership, Chan comments,

The greatest need of the Church is godly visionary leadership. . . . The distinguishing mark for such visionary leadership is not its ability to produce more followers, but rather to reproduce more leaders who would effectively reproduce more leaders, through spiritual multiplication, to change the world. . . . A critical task of leadership is to determine vision. The leader cannot effectively lead without having a clear sense of direction as to where the organization is and where it should be headed. Without leadership vision, the whole organization is lost at sea. . . . The capacity to see defines the leader.<sup>2</sup>

Leadership is the most critical factor for the development and growth of any organization. Particularly in the early stages of developing the formational process, it takes visionary leadership to define the ministry direction and design the ministry plan.

#### Committed Leadership

It takes a visionary leader to design the ministry plan, and it takes committed leaders to oversee implementation and execution. Discipleship and disciple-making must eventually become the main focus at MBCLA, before the discipleship ministry will flourish and produce fruit. Unless the leadership is committed to disciple-making, it will not happen. The time needed to obtain leadership commitment varies from church to church. Usually in a well-established, large, traditional church like MBCLA, it can take quite a long time to reach this necessary stage of leadership commitment. Nonetheless, leadership commitment is the necessary first step to take, and that leadership needs to cast the vision and lead the entire congregation to follow. Chan suggests, “[The] vision is not simply cast by the pastor alone but is also owned by the entire leadership and the

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<sup>2</sup> Chan, *A Certain Kind*, 145 and 66-67.

majority of the church. It is a pervasive vision, clearly articulated by the leadership and passionately adopted by the church.”<sup>3</sup>

### Shepherd Leadership

As recorded in John 21:15-17, in which Jesus manifested himself to the disciples after rising from the dead, he asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” After each time Peter answered, “You know that I love you,” Jesus responded, “Tend my lambs,” “Shepherd my sheep,” and “Tend my sheep.” In this way, Jesus emphasizes the importance of this mission—the shepherding of his flock—to Peter and entreats him to accept it out the love of the Lord. In fact, it is clear that Peter was supposed to follow Jesus’ own model of shepherd leadership.

Jesus is the good shepherd. As described in John 10:1-9, he calls his sheep by their names, he leads them in and out of the pasture, and his sheep recognize his voice. Jesus says of himself, “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10: 14-15). Jesus demonstrated this teaching in his own leadership style. Just as the Apostle Peter was exhorted to follow Jesus in this way, disciples of generations to come are to lead according to this shepherding model as well.

Jesus also distinguishes the good shepherd from the hired hand, as he explains in John 10:11-13, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 57.

scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.” The employed herdsmen tend sheep just as shepherds do. But the difference lies in the sense of ownership. It is one’s passion, heart, and dedication that makes the difference in a leader. There are many leaders who can cast a vision, lead groups, impart knowledge, and catalyze action. But leaders involved in discipleship must also shepherd leaders, that is, they must have genuine concern for those being led.

### Servant Leadership

Even committed followers of Christ may not always be aware of their intentions and motivations. The sons of Zebedee, John and James, requested seats at the left and right sides of Jesus in his glory. That request stirred up resentment among the disciples. Jesus patiently taught them about spiritual leadership as written in Mark 10:41-45:

Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

A shepherd leader is also a servant leader. On the last evening with his disciples together, Jesus took that occasion to teach them the meaning of humility by setting an example of washing the disciples’ feet. He explains his action in John 13:12-17:

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

## **Launch Disciple Groups with Specific Growth Objectives**

The second goal of the project is to launch DGs with specific growth objectives that are observable, relatively measurable, and attainable. These growth objectives for the DGs are sharing, growing, serving, and maturing, and the acronym SGSM is being used at MBCLA to indicate these. The fourth objective, maturing, is composed of three qualities: to be maturing means that a DG is multiplying, making disciples, and missional.

### **Sharing**

The growth objective of being a sharing DG is based on the concept of *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*), the communion with the Triune God as well as among the saints. As the Apostle John says in 1 John 1:3, “What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Although communion and fellowship may sound abstract, these can be experienced through various kinds of sharing in the DG community.

First, disciples in the DGs are encouraged to share insights and experiences from their own personal daily devotion time with the Lord (this time is also known as quiet time, hereafter QT). Through this type of sharing, disciples learn to experience the presence of God and to share their spiritual experiences. Second, disciples are encouraged to share their own life experiences of living out the Christian faith in daily life. These experiences may be either “successes” or “failures.” Through the process of sharing, they experience trust, support, encouragement, and consolation in the group life. Third, disciples are encouraged to share about the DG experience with other church members who are not in a DG, and to invite them into the group. With the testimonies of

observable changes in people's lives and the vitality of the DGs, other church members may be motivated to move out of their complacency and renew their commitment to following Christ. Fourth, disciples are exhorted to share about their own faith experiences with non-believers. Group evangelism is encouraged, as this can provide community support and has proven to be far more effective than individual evangelism.

### Growing

The next growth objective is to be a growing DG. Growth is a phenomenon of life. Even the unseen spiritual life will manifest through observable aspects. Spiritual growth towards Christlikeness is not only an objective, but also the purpose of a disciple. From the perspective of this formational process, growth touches two areas, personal growth and communal growth. Each is associated with a list of activities that are tangible and palpable so that disciples may observe and follow.

For personal growth, the first activity is to learn and understand the Word of God. A knowledge-based and systematic learning of the Holy Scriptures is essential. Group members are encouraged to attend Sunday school for a systematic understanding of the Scripture. Basic skills of Bible study, such as the inductive method, should be taught and practiced by all group members, as gaining biblical knowledge is one form of personal growth. The second activity is to apply biblical principles to daily life. Discipleship is not only about knowing the right things, but also practicing Jesus' teachings. This is a crucial process in the formation of character. Until the truth actually impacts a disciple's behavior, values, and inner being, it has not been truly learned. The third activity is connecting with Jesus. All DG members are encouraged to develop a consistent

devotional life through having quiet time with the Lord. The fourth activity is engaging in personal accountability with God. Disciples must develop this attitude of accountability before they can seriously serve God. Disciples must be truly aware of their accountability to God before they can be responsible followers of Christ. The fifth activity is to practice spiritual disciplines. This objective provides a continuous growing path, which is necessary for mature DG members, especially group leaders and leader trainees. No one can continuously give and nourish others without tapping into the true vine, the source of life.

Beyond personal growth, communal growth is also sought. While personal growth thrives in depth, the maturation of the DG community causes it to grow in breadth. Communal growth is related to the group environment and a sense of trust within the group, which is an indication of a healthy DG. Trust is an expression of love and is the fruit of loving one another. A trusting relationship nourishes the sense of security in the group and makes in-depth sharing possible. The discipline of mutual accountability is the counterpart of personal accountability to God. It not only fosters trusting relationships, which is the key to a healthy group environment, but it is also a powerful support that shapes behavior. Group accountability cannot be forced, but must be carefully and patiently cultivated. Without each DG member having a healthy accountable relationship with God, group accountability suffers. Another strategy to help a DG grow communally is the use of action plans. Action plans, which can be created within the group during meeting times, encourage every group member to apply biblical principles in within their daily lives. Action changes behavior, and the change in behavior helps people experience



biblical truths. This can relate to local evangelism and outreach, community service, prayer, formational retreats, and various other biblical topics.

### Serving

The third growth objective is to be a serving DG. Jesus said, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). By following the example of Christ, disciples also are called to serve. Service is far more than just doing good deeds or helping the needy, but it is serving people’s greatest need, that of spiritual poverty, as well. Ultimately, service is serving God according to his will. The key of this objective is in developing discernment in terms of recognizing true needs, which involves knowing whom to serve and when to serve. This discernment is closely related to our communion with God.

Service is the outward expression of inner maturity. It is not simply the act of service itself, but also the observable expression of service that reflects our spiritual state. Spiritual growth may appear to be abstract, but in fact it can become as tangible as physical growth. The key is in developing a sense of self-awareness through spiritual disciplines. Self-awareness is a common deficiency in many Christian leaders. Very often they serve for the sake of service, which causes frustration, burn-out, resentment, or judgmental attitudes. Service ought to be seen as the exercise of our spiritual lives. In the process of serving, certain aspects act as mirrors reflecting our inner selves; these aspects include how we interact with others, how we deal with the results of ministry, how we trust God, how we experience the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and our obedience. DGs

encourage disciples to experience the transformation of their spiritual lives through the process of serving.

### Maturing

The final growth objective is to be a maturing DG. Maturity is not the final stage of a growing life, but it has been reached when fruit is evident in disciples' lives. Spiritual growth does not stop at maturity, but it manifests in many ways. A mature disciple is passionate about making other disciples. A mature DG is meant to multiply and reach out to more. A mature community of disciples is kingdom minded and missional. Maturity is a result of the other three objectives. Mature disciples comprise mature communities.

When a group is mature, it will multiply. One of the key factors of group multiplication is developing group leaders. The emergence of new group leaders is an important sign of growth. Another key factor of group multiplication is the number of supporting core members in the group.<sup>4</sup> The disciple-making aspect of the Great Commission should be in the DNA of DG members. It should become a normal practice in the DG to seek creative ways to witness Christ, as well as to care for new disciples so that they may grow towards maturity. Disciple-making is a continuous growing process, and those who mentor others will continue to grow as they take on this role.

Mission is not something disciples do but rather something they live. Being missional as a community and as individuals is a major emphasis of this project. The

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<sup>4</sup> This concept is further developed in Chapter 5.

essential concepts of missional community should be communicated to all DG members, and the goal is to embed this sense of being on God's mission as part of their DNA.

### **Implement Methods That Achieve the Growth Objectives**

The third goal of the project is to implement specific methods that achieve the growth objectives. There is nothing particularly unique about the concepts of sharing, growing, serving, and maturing; these qualities are more or less a collection of ideas that many Christians are already familiar with. But at MBCLA, and at other churches as well, the problem is not related to what we do not know but rather to what we do not do. MBCLA has a nicely articulated mission statement, and while most members and leaders are aware of its existence, few could articulate it. In truth, the mission statement is simply a declarative slogan without much actual impact on the overall congregation. The reason may be partly due to the church culture, but the major reason is failure on the part of leadership in making it a driving purpose. There is no concrete plan to pursue it or specific process to achieve it as a goal. To ensure the success of the proposed formational process and to produce the expected result while pursuing the growth objectives, certain methods will be emphasized. These include spiritual formation, practicing the truth, mentoring and modeling, and gospel in action.

#### **Spiritual Formation**

The purpose of emphasizing spiritual formation is to ensure that the branch (disciple) remains connected with the true vine (Jesus). Only the life of the true vine produces fruit through the branch. Even with water, sunlight, and all the necessary nutrients, a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine. In the same way, a

disciple must regularly examine his or her spiritual state in order to maintain a relationship with the Lord. Hence, understanding spiritual formation and practicing spiritual discipline are essential for Christian maturity.

Spiritual discipline is strongly encouraged for all disciples participating in the DGs. For some, spiritual discipline may be a new area to be explored. However, for the majority, a few spiritual exercises—daily devotion, self-examination, and accountability—will be highlighted and encouraged. All should remember that spiritual disciplines are simply a means to an end, which is the formation of a Christ-like character.

### Practicing the Truth

Another method that will be implemented in the DGs will be practicing the truth, or real life application of God’s Word. At MBCLA, the Sunday school teachings and various forms of Bible studies are predominantly cognitive and relatively weak when it comes to life application. John Oak of the SaRang Community Church of Korea advocates,

We can be so moved and inspired by the Word that it is impossible to stop the tears. But if we don’t make an opportunity or room for that Word to change our life and character, then that inspiration cannot be said to be the Holy Spirit’s blessings. . . . There are many people who think that making a statement like, “From now on I’ll love my Christian brothers and sisters” is an application. This is nothing more than merely revealing a general thought. Application has to be specific. It must be accompanied by an actual plan. . . . Application must even go as far as designing a series of inspections to make sure that our obedience is carried out correctly. When that happens, we can stand in a position of becoming more like Christ<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John Oak, *Healthy Christians Make a Healthy Church* (Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004), 239.

Oak's words focus on the problem of superficiality in many Christian education ministries today.

In my role as lead pastor for discipleship, I have developed an application manual called, "Practicing the Truth" (see Appendix A) for use in the DGs. This manual explains step by step how to meditate on a given passage of Scripture, internalize the teaching through answering questions, and derive an action plan as a means of practicing the truth. The manual also includes examples for the reader to follow.

DG members are encouraged to share their insights in the group meetings. The leader provides questions to guide members toward discussion of life situations that are applicable, and all members are then encouraged identify a plan for practicing what they have learned. Once a concrete action plan is identified, the next step is to pray together and ask the Holy Spirit to lead and provide the opportunity to execute it accordingly. The last step is to follow up with the status of the action plan in the subsequent group meetings, providing prayer and support for one another as each person shares.

### Mentoring and Modeling

The DGs will also implement mentoring and modeling as a means of achieving the growth objectives. Many churches today experience a leadership deficit. In a culture that looks for short-cuts and quick-fixes, we are flooded with seminars, workshops, and training classes on the topic of leadership, but these do not necessarily create good leaders. Chan advocates mentoring as a biblical method of developing leaders. He writes, "Mentoring is biblical and is an effective means of raising leaders and expanding the leadership base. Spiritual transformation, and leadership development for that

transformation, takes place best through the biblical practice of mentoring.”<sup>6</sup> In his early stage of ministry, Jesus selected twelve disciples and developed them into leaders (Mark 3:14). While disciple-making was the heart of Jesus’ ministry on earth, mentoring was his strategy of developing leaders, leading the ministry through them to eventually impact all of human history from that point forward.

There are many kinds of leaders shouldering different responsibilities, serving in various functions, and leading people toward different destinies. After many years of leading an intentional disciple-making ministry and developing many visionary leaders to continue his work, Chan defines mentoring as follows: “[Mentoring is] the empowering life-investment, in an accountable relationship, through which knowledge, skills and attitudes are effectively modeled and imparted so that lives are transformed.”<sup>7</sup> From this definition, one may deduce several key characteristics of mentoring. First of all, mentoring is a life investment. Just as Jesus invested his life in his disciples and his followers, a visionary leader must develop leaders through mentoring. Second, the mentor-mentee is in a loving, accountable relationship. All leaders are vulnerable to fall, as are the mentors. Besides demonstrating knowledge and skills, what really impacts the mentee’s life is how the mentor deals with his or her own vulnerability, accepts imperfection, handles frustration, faces criticism, and handles success and failure. This is indeed the meaning of mentoring—not how great the mentor is, but how he or she manages to follow Christ. Lastly, mentoring is taking place when life impacts life and spiritual transformation takes place.

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<sup>6</sup> Chan, *A Certain Kind*, 145.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

Not all leaders are mentors. Only those who are willing to invest and engage in developing other people are mentors. There are many mentors who engage in different levels of mentorship in this disciple formation process. At the most basic level, many mature DG members take on this role by mentoring new group members. These mature members can model how to share in the group and serve one another. At the group leadership level, DG leaders show potential leaders how to run a group and lead group activities or projects. At the ministry leadership level, leaders who oversee several DGs are mentoring DG leaders as they assist them in their leadership role. While other methods of instruction may be used, whenever possible, mentoring ought to be used as the primary means of disciple development.

### Gospel in Action

The term “gospel in action” means proclaiming the gospel not only through spoken words, but also through actions in our daily lives. In fact, the Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). In the same way, the saints in Thessalonica proclaim the gospel message with their lives. Paul continues in verse 6-7, “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”

Gospel in action is the emphasis of being missional in practice. The meaning of being missional may be a little overwhelming for the average DG member. In order to

provide better understanding of the concept, DG members will be invited to experience being “missional” by taking one action or activity at a time as a group project. Though it may take time, they will come to understand what it means to be missional through experience.

The gospel in action group projects are initiated by the DG group leaders, who have been trained in missional evangelism and are able to render missional concepts in practical and specific action plans.<sup>8</sup> Leaders should be able to explain a specific missional concept in simple and straightforward terms, and then guide the group members in designing an action plan. Involving the entire group not only leads to group support and encouragement, but it also develops ownership, team spirit, and group relationships.

In addition, through praying together for the group project, members may be able to experience the love and guidance of the Holy Spirit together. The Holy Spirit gives discernment through guided group effort. With an understanding of the concept of being missional, the creativity of the group project is almost unlimited. It may include helping a neighbor who is a single parent, telling a story or doing puppet show for neighborhood children, or initiating a clean-up project for the community. More detail is given about these missional projects in Chapter 5.

### **The Importance of the Discipleship Community Environment**

The postmodern culture promotes individualism, self-reliance, and egoism, which have been subtly planted in the minds of many Christians. Many Christians in the faith community are not living a communal life. They have ignored the role of the Body of

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<sup>8</sup> Missional evangelism is one of the training sessions for disciple group leaders. See Appendix B, Discipleship Training Curriculum.



Christ and live as though Christ alone is sufficient. They believe knowing his Word and prayer is enough, and they even teach others to follow along a similar path.

But in fact, this is not what the Bible teaches. We need to be in a relationship with our fellow believers. We need communal life. In Hebrews 10:24, the author writes, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (NIV), elsewhere translated as, “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works” (NLT). The Apostle’s Creed also states, “I believe in the communion of the saints.” To Timothy, a godly and faithful minister, Paul advises, “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). Carl George, an authority figure in the area of evangelism and church growth, reckons that the needs of the future Church are best met through small group ministry infra-structure.<sup>9</sup> The DG setting is favorable in nurturing the biblical communal life. The DG is a small group system that is specifically designed to facilitate the disciples in pursuing the four growth objectives of being sharing, growing, serving, and maturing; to provide the environment that fosters spiritual transformation towards Christ-likeness; and to encourage disciples to undertake their missional purpose.

It takes good soil, water, and sunlight for a seed to grow into mature plant, and in the same way, disciple formation needs a healthy environment. Churches can train as many disciples as they want, but without a suitable nurturing environment, disciple formation will not take place. This reality is often neglected by church leaders who lead discipleship ministries. Chan vividly describes the situation in many churches:

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<sup>9</sup> Icenogle, *Biblical Foundation for Small Group Ministry*, 99.

Even in putting a disciple programme in place, we are caught in the deceptive trap of going through the motions! We institute a discipleship programme but fail to integrate a discipleship process. We embark on a discipleship emphasis but fail to establish a discipleship environment. Several classes are organized but we fail to lead towards consecration. . . . We have defined “discipleship” as head knowledge rather than complete transformation.<sup>10</sup>

There is no sustainability without a discipleship environment. A discipleship environment is vital for intentional disciple-making in the local church. For that, we need to be more process-oriented rather than merely programme-oriented.<sup>11</sup>

A healthy discipleship environment is essential to disciple formation, yet it takes a proper process to develop disciples. The infrastructure of the discipleship community plays a major role in the effectiveness of the process.

The ecclesiology, infrastructure, and organization of a traditional church model, such as MBCLA, are not effective in cultivating the kind of disciples described in this project. After much study, observation of successful disciple-making churches, and hands-on experience, it is clear that the DG is the most suitable small group model for implementing this disciple formation process. A healthy and suitable environment for developing disciples needs to be cultivated and nurtured with love and patience by a transformed leadership. Furthermore, the environment is organic, and it grows as the disciples in the community grow.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter aims at developing the main concept of designing this disciple formation process from the biblical and theological foundations laid out in Chapter 3. This chapter has described the vision and has presented the three goals of the project—

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<sup>10</sup> Chan, *A Certain Kind*, 89-99.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

establishing disciple group leadership, launching disciple groups that are committed to the particular growth objectives, and implementing methods that achieve the growth objectives. It has also discussed the importance of the discipleship community environment. The next chapter provides more detail regarding the structure of the DGs, leadership, and other functions of the discipleship ministry.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISCIPLE FORMATION PROCESS

When discussing discipleship, many pastors and church leaders want to know about discipleship programs and materials. Apparently, people are far more interested in methodology and materials rather than the theology and design philosophy involved. This project, particularly Chapters 2 and 3, focuses on the theology upon which this formational process is derived. This chapter presents the details of implementation, however the descriptions in this chapter should be taken as a reference rather than a program to follow, due to the fact that implementation varies across different ministry settings. For this reason as well, only the major principles are highlighted. This chapter includes the lay-out of the hierarchical network structure of the DG system, an explanation of the DG operation, pilot program examples, and the discipleship training program curriculum. At MBCLA, the disciple formation program was launched in 2010. It has since evolved into the current form presented in this project.

#### **A Community of Disciple Groups**

Without a supportive network, DGs are like single cell organisms; although they may survive and even reproduce, they remain individually operating and cannot work

together for something greater and more complex. Whereas, in a multi-cell organism, all the cells are guided by the same DNA, differentiated into various forms for specific functions, and together they achieve the same purpose. In a similar way, various types of DGs should be networked together, supported and managed to pursue a common goal.

Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, small group ministry pastors at Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, list two common mistakes in their book, *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry*. The first is the lack of a support network for leaders. Group leaders are often left alone to lead and manage groups, and they lack channels to seek advice and support. They also have no one to hold them accountable for what they do in the group. The second mistake is a lack of spiritual nourishment and mentorship by another mature leader, and a lack of continuing education to help them grow deeper.<sup>1</sup> The structure of the DGs and the leadership hierarchy has been designed with the goal of providing the support that many other groups are lacking.

### The Structure of the Disciple Group

The DG typically starts with four members and may grow to up to twelve members. A group of more than twelve members should consider multiplying to become two groups. The group members can be classified into three categories, only for the purpose of managing and understanding the DG.

The first type of members are core members. These are experienced group members who share the discipleship vision, understand the meaning of the four stated growth objectives (sharing, growing, serving, and maturing), and passionately support the

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 75-125.

DG ministry. They may help to nurture new group members, share administrative burdens, and proactively participate in group activities or meetings. They are the greatest asset of the group. The higher the proportion of core members, the stronger and healthier the group becomes. The second type of members are group leaders and leader assistants. They are the leaders of the DGs, and their roles and responsibilities are discussed later in this chapter. The third type of members are new group members. Newly joined group members need to be nurtured, cared for, and mentored by the relatively more mature core members. Some of the new group members may be new converts or seekers, while others may be church members, who may not be familiar with the concept of the DG model. A diagram of the DG structure showing the mentoring relationship of the group members is found in figure 1.

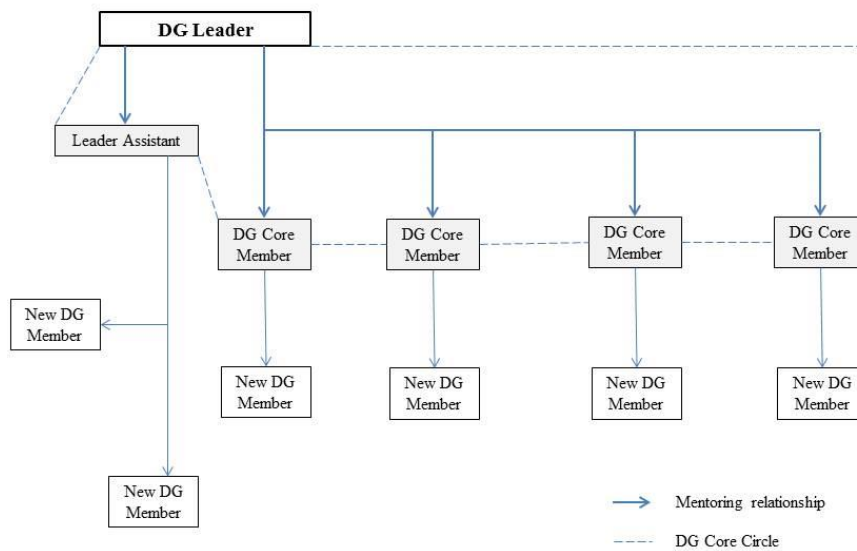


Diagram of Disciple Group Structure

Figure 1. Typical Structure of a Disciple Group

## The Disciple Group Hierarchy Network Structure

Like many other churches, MBCLA has fellowship groups and family groups of various sizes and compositions, yet it is lacking in overall leadership. These groups are not DGs, primarily because they operate on their own. Although they may not be aware of it, the unstated goal of such groups are sustaining the membership, keeping members happy, and tailoring content to the members' interests. Group leaders are not getting regular training and support.

In this DG model, disciple group leaders (hereafter, DGLs) are shepherds of their own groups, yet they themselves are in turn nourished and cared for by disciple group coaches (hereafter DGCs), who are experienced and well trained leaders themselves. A group of DGLs and the DGC assigned to those DGLs hence form a special group called a DG circle. These leaders meet at least once every quarter in order to share their problems and experiences, minister to one another, pray together, and encourage each other. In a similar way, the DGCs are cared for by the disciple group lead pastor (hereafter, DGLP), who provides overall leadership of the DG ministry. Together, the DGCs and the pastor form a leadership core called a DG network. A diagram showing the DG system hierarchical network structure is given in figure 2.

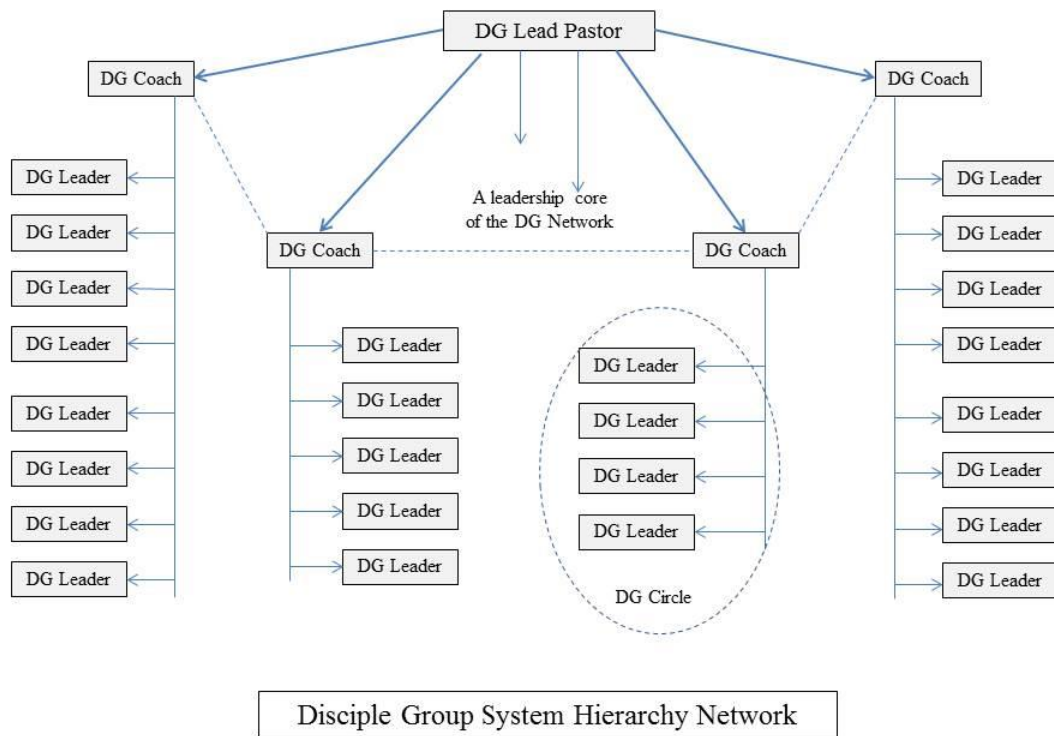


Figure 2. Disciple Group System Hierarchy Network

Assuming that each DGL ministers to an average of eight members in a group, each DGC ministers to eight DGLs, and one DGLP shepherds up to eight coaches, then the one full-time pastor may be able to oversee the shepherding of a total of 512 members in DGs. This is one of the fundamental differences between the DG model and a traditional church model, which solely or heavily relies on professional ministers to carry the shepherding load. Pastors should never neglect caring and visitation, but on the other hand, churches ought to follow the example of Acts 6:1-7, in which deacons were selected to help with the caring ministry. This DG model aims at raising many DG leaders and mature disciples. The leadership and shepherding load is shared.



## The Leadership Roles

From a point of view of conducting the ministry, leaders are the most crucial and valuable asset of the DG system. Each level of leaders must understand their role well, so that they will not be distracted by many tasks that should have been delegated, and end up majoring on the minors. Without the leaders there will be no groups; without maturing new leaders there will be no group multiplication.

DGLs and their assistants (hereafter, DGLAs) are the most fundamental leadership of the DG system. They are the ones directly in touch with the DG members, guiding them as shepherds, helping them as servants, and mentoring them as friends. DGLAs are in fact DGLs in training, and should understand the same role of the DGLs.

The DGC should be raised from the active DGLs, or it should be someone who fully understands this formational process concept and is familiar with the DG operations. The DGC should have completed all training curricula and have at least two years of DGL experience. Nurturing and developing DGLs is the primary function of a DGC.

The DGLP is a pastoral position; this individual is the lead pastor of the discipleship ministry. The DGLP must understand the theology and ministry philosophy, and should have a passion for the disciple formation process. Preferably, a potential DGLP should be developed from among the DGCs. Further detail regarding the roles of various levels of leadership in this disciple group system can be found in Appendix G.

## Formation of Disciple Groups

The DGs can be formed in a couple different ways. Some may be with a startup core group, while others may be formed by adapting groups that already exist. The latter

involves more than just changing the format and infrastructure, but also a shift in the paradigm. A risk of losing certain percentage of members is not uncommon while making this transition. The transition of existing groups into DGs may be complicated, yet it can be done with careful planning and patience. Startup DG formation mostly occurs during the pioneer stage of the DG system. This kind of formation takes time, but the growth is steady and healthy. The members grow to understand and accept the concept, have confidence in the DG system, and are readily committed to disciple-making. There is also a special group for leaders—the leader development group—that meets prior to launching the DGs.

#### The Startup Core

Typically, a DG starts with one experienced and trained group leader, gathering three other experienced members who understand the concept of the disciple group system. Together they form a startup core and meet weekly for three months, during which time they pray, study, and get to know each other. Together they develop relationships, mutual trust, and a common vision. Together they strategize their outreach plan. The members of this core group gradually reach out and recruit a few new members at a time.

Developing mature disciples is always the primary purpose of the groups. Through the process of growing the group, potential leaders and core members will gradually be developed. When the group reaches eight members or more, the group should aim at growing towards maturity. A mature group should prepare for

multiplication. The group reproduces only when the leaders are available and ready. The rate of multiplication depends on the rate of maturation of leaders.

### Transition from Other Kinds of Small Groups

There are various kinds of existing small groups in churches, such as Bible study groups, QT sharing groups, family groups, and parenting groups. These small groups may share a few common characteristics with DGs. These types of group meetings usually emphasize interactive discussion and sharing among the group members rather than unidirectional lecturing by a teaching speaker. A small number of members—approximately ten—allow for close, interpersonal attention. High participation rates are common among small groups.

What makes a DG different from these other types of groups is its purpose and motivation. Every small group exists to serve a purpose. The small group format is a means to achieve that goal. Being a small group does not necessarily make it discipleship driven. A small group can be self-serving and inwardly focused just like a large group can. DG has specific growth objectives—to be sharing, growing, serving, and maturing—that are unique. The transition from existing small groups to DGs should be concentrated on the conceptual understanding of the meaning of discipleship and learning how to put these four growth objectives into practice.

To make the transition, a few potential leaders should first go through the basic discipleship training classes to become familiar with the DG system. The next step is to prepare and motivate group members through vision casting; the target audience includes those who are willing to be part of a group that focuses on becoming committed

followers of Jesus. After the vision casting, the group commits to a three-month pilot DG program run by the trained leaders under the supervision of a DGC or an experienced DGL. Evaluation and adjustments should be applied as needed. After the completion of the pilot run, the group must decide whether to officially become a DG.

### Leader Development Group

The leader development group is a special group, usually formed during the pioneering stage of establishing the DG system. This group should be initiated directly by the DGLP by carefully selecting mature Christians who will consider serving as leaders. After sharing the vision with them, the DGLP invites them to form a leader development group. This is probably the most challenging task for the DGLP. Developing early leaders is critical, and the DGLP must closely work with the Holy Spirit not only in selecting members but also in every step of the development process.

This group meets regularly in order to learn about major DG concepts, the DG operations, and discipleship in the DG environment. These early leaders must experience basic discipleship as well as leadership training. The DGLP may selectively choose lessons from the regular training curricula as training material. The objective of the leader development group aims at establishing startup DGs. After forming DGs, the DGLP will continue to assist and monitor the development of new DGs and serve as a DGC. The growth of DGLs involves both instructional learning as well as field practical training.

### **The Operation of Disciple Groups**

The DG system is an organic community. The guidelines for DG operation are designed to achieve the growth objectives of being sharing, growing, serving, and

maturing. However, a rigid format should be avoided in order to allow room for the DGLs to make adjustments according to each particular situation. Bill Donahue points out that a common mistake in small group ministry is to have a narrow definition of what a small group should look like. He writes, “Many churches, however, seem to view their small groups through eyes narrowed by ‘spiritual glaucoma.’ By limiting their definition of a good small group, they miss opportunities to connect people to community. Narrow definitions also lead to turf wars, frustration among small group leaders, and fear among leaders of ministries that don’t use groups.”<sup>2</sup> A good DGL guides the members in pursuing the growth objectives, facilitates genuine communion, and promotes conforming to Christ-likeness. A good DG often assesses itself with the growth objectives and makes adjustments as needed. A good DG makes life-changing disciples.

### Operation Guidelines

Being flexible does not mean that there are no procedures, rules, or regulations. In fact, without clear guidelines, people will feel insecure and lost. Without clear boundaries, people often get hurt. In this project, the operation guidelines include an operation procedure and DG rules. In a spirit of love and a non-legalistic manner, the DG procedure and rules should be made known to every member in a constructive way.

The operation procedure is designed to provide a general rundown of a DG meeting, which consists of five segments: preparation, sharing, learning, follow up, and prayer (see Appendix C for the full DG procedure document). Each procedure is designed to facilitate the member working towards the four growth objectives. If time allows, it is

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 153.

good to include all of these procedures in a DG meeting. For a newly formed DG, following the procedure helps new members adapt to group life.

The life of a disciple is a communal life, and community is healthy and necessary. Through interacting with others in the community, we gain understanding of ourselves. Through serving one another, we learn to love and be loved. Through holding each other accountable, we learn to respect ourselves and others. DG rules are provided to guide the members as they grow in discipleship in community (see Appendix D for the full DG rules document). The rules include having respect for each other's privacy, avoiding gossip, and conflict management.

#### Pilot Projects: Various Forms of Disciple Groups

In the human body, a sensory cell in the eye looks very different in shape and size than a muscle cell or a skin cell, but all cells in a single body have the same DNA. The various DGs also take on various forms and have different activities. However, they all aim towards the same growth objectives. Listed below are a few examples of different formats of DGs that have been launched as pilot programs at MBCLA as well as at the Mandarin Baptist Church of Glory (hereafter, MBCG), a daughter church of MBCLA.

#### **QT Sharing Disciple Group**

The QT sharing DG in the Cantonese congregation of MBCLA is a successful example of a pilot program for middle-aged women. Two years ago, I identified a potential leader among this group of women who was already leading in QT sharing. I shared my vision with her and mentored her to be a DGL. The original group has now multiplied into two groups in about two and a half years.

The QT sharing group idea originated from the Onnuri Church of Korea in 1984. The church emphasizes mission and a unique way of discipleship training, which is a church-wide “QT Campaign.” They also publish a monthly QT magazine, *Living Life*,<sup>3</sup> a devotional material consisting of scriptures, simple commentary, a few reflective questions, and a short inspirational article for each day of the month. MBCLA adopted a similar QT Campaign on a voluntary basis beginning in January of 2010.

At MBCLA, the DG model has been merged with QT sharing to form the QT sharing DG, and the sharing is designed to correspond with the four growth objectives. This model also uses personal and group action plans for applying biblical teachings to members’ lives. When group members meditate on the same passage during their daily devotion time, they can share and respond to one another in a DG environment as well as on a personal level. This sharing and responding enhances members’ understanding of Scripture, builds relationships, creates interest, and generates motivation. When we obey Jesus’ teachings, we have gained deeper and wider understanding through practicing the Word. The QT sharing DG can also provide spiritual nourishment for new converts through mentoring. The QT sharing DG fits well for middle-aged adults.

### **Parents Disciple Group**

Young parents have unique characteristics and needs. In this stage of life, they strive to achieve financial stability for the family, which has already demanded most of their attention and energy. They are inexperienced, yet determined to be the best parents

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<sup>3</sup> The QT magazine consists of two editions for young children and teenagers.

they can be, which pushes their stress to a higher level than they can manage. Their solutions usually are to push themselves more and work harder.

This period of twenty years or so is a dangerous zone. Parents need support, not only in their spiritual lives but also physically and practically in their daily lives. Besides encouraging daily devotion for long-term and continuous spiritual growth, a Parents DG should include discussions on parenting, the marriage relationship, and conflict management. The key is to apply biblical principles in their interpersonal relationships. In the process of living out the truth with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one may gain awareness of oneself as well as other family members.

There is an excellent program designed specifically for this purpose called “Journey to Intimacy” (hereafter, JTI), written in Chinese by Dr. Wei-Jen Huang.<sup>4</sup> JTI is a workshop for intimate relationships, primarily for couples’ relationships, but equally suitable for parent-child relationships. The course design is a perfect fit for a small group setting. The program consists of twelve lessons, each divided into sections. Each section starts with a ten- to fifteen-minute video lecture by Dr. Huang, who explains the concept and exercises for a certain interpersonal technique. This is followed with discussions and exercises during the group session. The group members are encouraged to go home and practice with family members. The concept and model of this program aligns well with this formational process, and JTI is being used as one of the curricula of the DG system. An English translation of the program overview is provided in Appendix E.

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<sup>4</sup> Wei-Jen W. Huang, PhD, is an associate professor of clinical psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine.



## **Leader Development Group**

Leader development is a key to launching the discipleship ministry anew in churches such as MBCG, a daughter church of MBCLA founded in 1990. MBCG had been struggling through many ups and downs with an average attendance of about sixty throughout all the years of its existence. The church reached a low point, just one decision away from dissolution in 2014. At this point, I was asked to help rebuild the church, and after many meetings and discussions, the leaders decided to follow my suggestion to establish a disciple-driven church. This began with a special leader development group as a pilot program.

I initially gathered a special disciple group of twelve committed leaders from within MBCG. Tailoring to their needs and situations, I created a comprehensive curriculum by integrating the basic discipleship training and disciple leader training materials. Through this special time of hands-on training, these twelve individuals were able to grasp the major concepts of discipleship, understand the essence of living as disciples, and know the dynamics of group leadership.

After one year of training, I accompanied eight of them (four couples) to a facilitator training session of the JTI program. The purpose is to adopt the JTI program not only to strengthen their own marriage relationships, but also as a platform to reach out to their circle of acquaintances. While the DG provides a trusting environment where members build relationships and friendships, the gospel message can be proclaimed and witnessed through their lives. This is the gospel in action; it is missional evangelism in practice. The four couples are planning to branch into two groups, and each will invite two to four new couples to go through the JTI program during the fall of 2016.

The other four members of the leader development group are preparing themselves to form a DG startup group. They are targeting other church members as potential members. I will serve as the DGC supporting these groups. The MBCG leaders should be commended for their willingness to give up their old ways of doing church and their commitment to rebuilding using a disciple-driven church model.

### **Training Sessions**

Effective tools are a necessity for doing a good job, and training is an inseparable part of the disciple formation process. Training is meant to be a preparation for living as a disciple; it is not intended to be a credential to earn. There are two major areas of training: basic discipleship training and disciple leadership training. Basic discipleship training is designed to prepare the DG members for life in a discipleship community. Disciple leadership training is designed to equip leaders such as DGLs and DGCs.

The training courses are offered and administered by the discipleship ministry at MBCLA. Discipleship should be emphasized, but it should not be an isolated ministry in the church. New converts are encouraged to join a small group for the purpose of receiving nurture, care, and mentoring, and they are also encouraged to take four foundational classes offered by the Sunday school program: “Introduction to Christian Living,” “Knowing about the Bible,” “The Life of Christ,” and “Basic Doctrine.”

The training programs are specifically designed for this DG system. The curricula and teaching materials reflect the essence of the four growth objectives in that they emphasize the practices of sharing, growing, serving, and maturing. They resemble workshops rather than classes. At the time of this writing, the DG system is still in the

development stage. The majority of the teaching materials are taken from other authors, while a small portion has been created internally for the church. Gradually, more material will be replaced as needed with the materials developed specifically for MBCLA and MBCG. Details of the curricula and teaching materials are listed in Appendix B and will be evaluated and adjusted periodically.

### Basic Discipleship Training Program

All DG members are encouraged to take this four-part series of basic discipleship training, but it is not a requirement for joining the DG. In fact, the DGL can choose the basic discipleship training materials as study guides to be used in the DG meetings. However, it will take a much longer time to go through this material in the DG meetings, since the DG meeting is not designed for knowledge-based teaching. In the DG setting, sharing, discussion, and life application (action plans) are emphasized rather than a cognitive study of particular content. When training material is presented in a DG, quite often, one topic in a lesson can stretch across a number of DG meetings. On the other hand, a training course that takes place apart from DG meetings is more focused, specific, systematic, and aims at covering an equipping curriculum and a scheduled lesson plan. The disciple training courses serve to equip and prepare disciples, while the DG provides a healthy and supportive environment where the group members experience the life of disciple. The two are independent yet closely related and together contribute to the transformation of lives.

The basic discipleship training program is designed to achieve the following objectives: 1) introduce the meaning and purpose of being a disciple; 2) provide

understanding of the growth objectives of sharing, growing, serving, and maturing; 3) provide understanding of the meaning of living as a disciple (that is, living out the truth); and 4) share knowledge of the concept and skills related to witnessing for Christ. As of now, the basic discipleship training curriculum is primarily based on *Discipleship Essentials* by Greg Ogden,<sup>5</sup> with some additional teaching materials that I have developed. The curriculum will be evaluated and adjusted periodically.

### Disciple Leadership Training Program

The DGL is a Christ-like servant leader, leading the DG and assisting the group members to reach their goals and objectives. Although far from perfection, the leader should exemplify an authentic disciple who genuinely pursues Christ by obeying the Great Commission and commandments. Chan states, “Leadership is not about perfection, but authenticity, vulnerability, transparency, accountability, and integrity.”<sup>6</sup>

Although completion of the basic disciple training courses it is not a requirement for joining a DG, it is a prerequisite for the disciple leadership training. The curriculum leans towards character building and spiritual formation. As a leader trainee, one should have developed a consistent habit of personal devotion. In leader development training, emphasis is on the quality of personal devotion time. All leaders are encouraged to practice the spiritual discipline of self-examination, which is an important discipline that helps a leader to be accountable to God.

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<sup>5</sup> Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Chan, seminar on *Multiplying Authentic Disciples*, First Evangelical Community Church, Cerritos, July 19, 2013.

Neglect of ongoing leadership development is considered one of the “deadly sins” of small group ministry, according to Donahue and Robinson.<sup>7</sup> The disciple leadership training program is carefully designed to allow multiple phases of leader development. After completion of Phase I, the trainee leader should be able to co-lead a DG for gaining field experience under the guidance of an experienced DGL. With at least three months of hands-on leading or co-leading of a DG, the leader trainee is encouraged to pursue the Phase II training. With the completion of Phase II training, a DGL should be able to lead a small group with at least three supporting core members. Trained DGLs are encouraged to take Phase III courses at their own pace for continuous enhancement and development. Some of these courses are requirements for becoming a DGC.

### **Assessment Plan**

Many people believe that spiritual growth is so abstract and intangible that they either give entirely up or resort to other tangible quests for spiritual growth, such as gaining biblical knowledge, adding ministry tasks, or taking prominent positions in the church. All of these are good things to do, but they do not measure one’s spiritual growth alone. One pitfall in a formational process is the lack of an objective assessment or evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. Without it the program may gradually become unhealthy without anyone taking notice.

The spiritual life is not entirely abstract. In fact, there are observable behaviors that reflect the spiritual state of a person to a certain extent. Based on the growth objectives, evaluation questionnaires have been designed for individual evaluation of

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<sup>7</sup> Donahue and Robinson, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 101.


spiritual growth and group maturity (see Appendix F). All the questions are either true/false questions or questions that require a rating between 1 and 5. DG members are encouraged to complete the evaluation once every six months. Each group member keeps the personal evaluation for comparing with the previous one to look for areas of improvement. The DGL can collect group evaluations and compute group statistics for reference. Although this tool is not entirely objective, it serves as a helpful reference.

The progress of a DG toward maturity is closely related to the effectiveness of a DG. The DG operation evaluation focuses on the growth objectives, and seeks to determine whether the group is sharing, growing, serving, and maturing (see Appendix F). This is a simple evaluation that can be conducted as needed at the group's convenience. The results should be reviewed by the DG leader as well as all members of the DG, so that together they can determine how to grow as a group.

### **Timeline of Implementation**

The implementation of this disciple formation process has been a continuous project at MBCLA since 2010. It consists of many events, processes, and projects. Some of them have already taken place, others are ongoing, and some are future plans. The major events are organized in a timeline in Table 1, in which the time periods are arranged as follows: before 2015 (Pre-2015), first and second half of 2015 (2015 1H, 2015 2H), first to fourth quarter of 2016 (2016 Q1, 2016 Q2, 2016 Q3, 2016 Q4), and likewise, the first two quarters of 2017 (2017 Q1, 2017 Q2).

Table 1. Timeline of Discipleship Events at MBCLA

Event	Pre-2015	2015 1H	2015 2H	2016 Q1	2016 Q2	2016 Q3	2016 Q4	2017 Q1	2017 Q2
<b>Completed Events</b>									
<b>Pastoral Staff Retreat 2009</b>	●								
<b>Attend Disciple Seminar 2010</b>	●								
<b>Launch One-to-One Discipling</b>	●								
<b>2010 Church Retreat on Discipleship</b>	●								
<b>2012 Discipleship Essential Seminar</b>	●								
<b>2015 Deacon Retreat on Discipleship</b>			●						
<b>Continuous Events</b>									
<b>Pulpit Message on Discipleship</b>									→
<b>Discipleship Training Sessions</b>									→
<b>QT Sharing Disciple Groups</b>									→
<b>JTI Parents Disciple Groups</b>									→
<b>Future Events</b>									
<b>Comprehensive Disciple Leader Training</b>					→				
<b>Leaders Retreat on Discipleship</b>							●		
<b>9<sup>th</sup> Chinese Congress on World Evangelism</b>						●			
<b>Gospel in Action Group Projects</b>									→
<b>DG Leadership Core Support Network</b>									→
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual event</li> <li>- Continuous event</li> </ul>									

## Completed Events

Disciple making at MBCLA has come a long way to reach a state of maturity. At the time of this writing, a formational process is well defined, a general awareness of discipleship is beginning to form, and commitment of leadership is affirmed. Along the path of evolution, certain events contributed to the shaping of the disciple formation process that is presented in this project.

A significant decision to pursue disciple-making was made during the 2009 pastoral staff retreat. Afterward, three pastoral staff members were sent to a discipleship seminar offered by the SaRang Community Church in 2010, and subsequently launched a disciple training campaign based on the suggested material, “One-to-One Discipling.” In the summer of the same year, a church-wide retreat focused on the theme of discipleship. In 2012, the church co-hosted a discipleship training seminar open to the Chinese church community to promote a training manual, *Discipleship Essentials*, and the author, Greg Ogden, was the seminar speaker. MBCLA adopted Ogden’s materials following the seminar. In October 2015, the United Deacon Board of MBCLA invited me as the speaker of their deacon’s retreat on the theme of “Discipleship: A Vision with Action.” This event was a milestone in the development of the discipleship ministry at MBCLA.

## Continuous Events

A few projects have already been launched and are currently in operation at the time of this writing. Continuous does not mean that they are passively repeated but that they are continuously adjusting, adapting, and growing. Continuous does not necessarily mean that they have no end; these events include those which periodically happen and



continue for as long as needed, such as sermons on discipleship. Continuous events are essential, and are indeed the most integral part of the disciple formation process.

The pulpit messages on discipleship began in 2012 and continue at present. The most difficult hurdle to overcome in transforming a church like MBCLA into a disciple-making missional church is helping people to understand the theological concept of discipleship, to change their perspective, and to shift the paradigm of the church. Pulpit messages, such as a sermon series on a discipleship-related topic, play an important role in educating, motivating, directing the understandings, and shaping the mindset of the congregation. I began preaching discipleship-related sermons in 2012, mostly in the Cantonese congregation, and I will begin preaching a similar series to the Mandarin congregation in the near future.

Discipleship training sessions began in 2010 and continue today. MBCLA launched a discipleship training campaign in 2010, and since 2012, the pastoral leadership has devoted Tuesday evenings for various discipleship training sessions. The sessions include various levels of disciple training, disciple leadership training, and electives for continuous leader development. These sessions are usually held twice each year: from mid-January and to the end of May, and from mid-September to mid-December.

The QT sharing DG has been launched and continues at present. MBCLA launched a QT campaign in 2010, and since then, fellowship groups are instructed to include QT sharing in their programs. However, most of them do not truly incorporate the spirit of the sharing. I started a pilot project in January 2014 by adopting QT sharing into

a new DG. That group has now multiplied into two groups, and more QT sharing DGs are expected to form in the near future.

At the time of this writing, the pilot group for a parents DG has not yet launched, although training and preparation began in November 2015. This type of DG is based on integrating the JTI concept with the four growth objectives. It aims at outreaching to non-believers and Christians who are not currently in a small group.

### Future Events

The deacon retreat in 2015 raised the level of awareness about discipleship among the deacons, and it also catalyzed a few future events. A special comprehensive course for disciple leader training is scheduled to start in mid-February 2016. A leaders retreat on discipleship is planned for the third quarter of 2016. Four MBCLA pastoral staff members (including myself) will represent the church to attend the 9<sup>th</sup> Chinese Congress on World Evangelism in Taipei in August 2016. The theme of this conference is “The Glory and Mission of God: Becoming Radical Disciples of Christ.” This is a much-anticipated event that may bring the discipleship ministry at MBCLA to a new high.

Gospel in action group projects are aimed at reaching out to non-believers with special interests, such as JTI groups for parents and couples. As more DGLs are trained, these kinds of special groups are planned to launch in early 2017. Another significant establishment in 2017 will be the official DG leadership core support network (see figure 2). Also in 2017 is a church-wide summer retreat, the theme of which will be discipleship.

## An Implementation Consideration

In many ways, the implementation plan outlined in this chapter is tailor-made for MBCLA. A conclusive consensus came out from the 2009 pastoral staff retreat that initiated the discipleship ministry, and it remains in place today: “MBCLA is a well-established church and we are good; we may need some adjustments, for whatever we do in pursuing discipleship we will never ever over turn the church.” This is our rule, our bottom line. The implementation must be gradual; no matter how long it takes, it must not upset the stability of the normal church function.

Under this constraint, the implementation strategy is outlined in five action items. The first is to make discipleship the major ministry at MBCLA and establish a DG leadership core to support the DG network and to ensure healthy growth. The second is to continue to educate the general congregation through various channels, such as pulpit messages, seminars, literature, and decorative promotion. The third is to avoid large-scale changes to ensure church stability. It is critical to establish pilot groups to gradually influence church members and allow a long transition period in which the “new” and “old” infrastructures are expected to co-exist. The fourth action item is to allow DG leaders to scale down from other involvements voluntarily in order to concentrate on the discipleship ministry. The fifth and final action item is to emphasize DGL development; if there are no new leaders, there will be no new groups.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The project title, “Forming a Kingdom-Minded Missional Community of Disciple Groups,” centers upon the word “forming,” which implies action and implementation. This is happening in MBCLA and MBCG. The proposed formational process started in 2010 in its primitive form. Through the experience of working with DGs as well as completing the research for this project, this disciple formation process has gradually evolved into its mature form as presented in this project. In other words, this project is composed of both empirical material as well as theoretical elements.

Taking into consideration the context of MBCLA and the theological foundation explored in Chapters 2 and 3, this project seeks to translate the theory and theology of discipleship into practical reality. Chapter 4 focuses on designing the formation process and Chapter 5 presents an implementation plan that is tailor-made for MBCLA. Although the formational process is designed for MBCLA, the concept and growth objectives may be generally applicable to other churches. In fact, MBCG is adopting the same formational process, yet the implementation plan is quite different.

As demonstrated in the timeline, the current discipleship campaign at MBCLA can be traced back to 2009. A few congregation members have asked, “Why is there not much to be seen after years of pushing discipleship training at the church?” I gladly respond without the slightest feeling of offense, “Because of my ignorance and inexperience, as well as a wise instruction from our senior pastor to ‘go slow and don’t turn things upside down.’” Through the years of trial and error, I am the one who has gained the most. My confidence has grown to the point that I feel prepared to lead a

“disciple revolution.” When I look at the footprints left behind on the development path, everything makes sense, although not everything was originally planned. An implementation plan is necessary, however many unexpected events take place. Donahue testifies, “Life never works according to plan, and small group ministry never follows the model exactly.”<sup>1</sup> Through the years we have changed our curricula, our format, our infrastructure, and even our understanding and direction of discipleship ministry.

Among recent events, the 2015 October deacons’ retreat has a place in the development of MBCLA’s discipleship ministry. Not only did it mark a major milestone, but it also generated a ripple effect in terms of future developments. There is an ongoing (mid-February till end of May 2016) comprehensive DGL training that is worthy to mention here. This is a special comprehensive DGL workshop that is being held as a direct result of the deacons’ retreat. Besides lay leaders, the attendees include pastoral staff members, deacons, and seminary students. In addition to introducing the theology and design of this disciple formation process, one major goal is directing them to develop and propose an action plan to the MBCLA leadership. The direct involvement will enhance the plan with their creativity, and most importantly it will provide a sense of ownership that will motivate their future participation in MBCLA’s discipleship ministry.

While looking into the near future, the most critical and highly anticipated establishment is the formation of the official DG leadership core network (see figure 2). During all of its years as a church, MBCLA has never established centralized leadership in the discipleship ministry. The three congregations have historically done discipleship in their own ways, although we have a somewhat similar understanding of the concept.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 13.

Without this leadership core, the DG system cannot be fully functional and the formational process will not have a church-wide impact. At the time of this writing, the awareness of discipleship among the deacons is gradually increasing. More DGLs are being trained and available to lead. More pilot DGs are ready to form, and these pilot DGs need to be sustained with the support network. For the sake of continuing healthy growth of the discipleship ministry, the pressing need for an official DG leadership core is apparent.

In concluding this project, it is important to note major mistakes that church leaders often make while launching a discipleship campaign. Many faithful Bible believers take a Bible study approach towards discipleship training. They assume that by diligently studying the Holy Scripture, one may get to know more about God through doctrinal correctness, and knowledge will somehow transform life. Because of this misconception, they have defined discipleship as an accumulation of biblical knowledge rather than a holistic life transformation, and consequently they do very little to guide disciples toward living Jesus' way. Disciples must abide in God's Word. However, it takes more than simply knowing the truth to develop a disciple. The mistake is failing to understand (or in certain cases refusing to learn about) the formation of a disciple.

Another mistake is a belief that through employing an effective methodology, strategy, system, or infrastructure, the church will grow and make disciples. With this mentality, we often jump directly into imitating some successful method, model, or example without understanding what it means to be Jesus' disciple, without knowing the purpose of the life of a disciple, without comprehending the formation of a disciple, and without changing the philosophy of ministry.

The current age of industrialization and technology also leads to value being placed upon efficiency, mass production, and uniformity. Many church leaders tend to look for a system, a curriculum, or a set of training manuals that will mass produce disciples for Christ. Among various motives, the most common one is to bring more people to the church. Some church leaders think that since evangelism is the primary goal of discipleship, pushing discipleship training will help increase attendance. This pragmatic motive among church leaders is indeed the root of religious consumerism and spiritual superficiality.

In my own experience of seeking to launch a discipleship ministry, I have made every one of these mistakes. It is my hope that other churches can avoid making the same errors. Leading a discipleship ministry is full of challenge and uncertainty. On the other hand, it brings excitement and opportunities that can draw us closer to God and help us experience his greatness.

## APPENDIX A

### PRACTICING THE TRUTH

Discipleship training must be based on knowing and applying biblical truth and principles. Life application is generally neglected among Christians. Our Sunday school teachings and various forms of Bible studies are predominantly cognitive. John Oak of the SaRang Community Church of Korea advocates,

We can be so moved and inspired by the Word that it is impossible to stop the tears. But if we don't make an opportunity or room for that Word to change our life and character, then that inspiration cannot be said to be the Holy Spirit's blessings. . . .

There are many people who think that making a statement like, "From now on I'll love my Christian brothers and sisters" is an application. This is nothing more than merely revealing a general thought. Application has to be specific. It must be accompanied by an actual plan. . . . Application must even go as far as designing a series of inspections to make sure that our obedience is carried out correctly.

When that happens, we can stand in a position of becoming more like Christ.

A true life application is a discipline is characterized by great determination, guidance from the Holy Spirit, practical guidelines, and frequent practice. Some knowledge and Bible reading skills are necessary. Cognitive understanding of the Scripture is a rational process; being touched by the words of God is a move by the Holy Spirit; and responding in life action is obedience which expresses our love for the Lord.

#### Guidelines for Practicing Biblical Truth:

##### 1. Meditating on the Scripture

- Read a Bible passage prayerfully and slowly (never rush to cover a long passage of Scripture)
- Allow God to speak to you through the Scripture
- Spend time meditating on the verses that touch you

##### 2. Responding to the Movement of the Holy Spirit

- Respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit
- Communicate with God through prayer dialogue



### 3. Actualizing and Personalizing

- The “SPACE”<sup>1</sup> method of meditation is recommended
- Respond to the questions that you may have
- Personalize the responses (we are not reading the Bible on behalf of others but for ourselves) and apply it to actual life situations
- Be specific and concrete
- Ask questions that are worthy of attention, taking them one at a time

### 4. Deriving an Action Plan

- Determine what to achieve (action goal)
- Derive steps to take in order to achieve the plan
- Share your plan with a spiritual partner if you can
- Ask your partner to pray for you and follow up with you (this is an exercise of accountability)

The Holy Spirit moves and touches anyone freely according to His own will. The same Bible verse will generate many different possibilities when read by different people. Even for the same person, the same verse may elicit a different response in different times and occasions.

## Examples

### Example #1

**Scripture:** John 15:5-6

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

#### 1. Meditating on the Scripture

This is a familiar verse. I know it but I do not necessarily understand it.

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<sup>1</sup> SPACE meditation: S – sin to confess; P – promises to keep or to claim; A – action to avoid or to take; C – command to obey; E – example (positive or negative) to follow. Not all the Scriptures account for all five elements, even just one is precious. SPACE meditation generates self-asking questions that usually demand our attention.

- I believe what Jesus says, but in reality I do not experience it. What does it mean that I can do nothing?
- Yes, we pray, whenever and wherever we have gatherings, activities, and programs, we pray for God to be with us before the event, and pray to give thanks after.
- It appears that our prayers do not really have an observable effect on what we do.
- We always do according to what we have planned. Our prayer is simply a rite.
- I ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to me the true meaning of this verse.

## 2. Responding to the Movement of the Spirit

As I continue to meditate on the Scripture, I start to realize that when Jesus says, “For apart from Me you can do nothing,” he means that we will bear no fruit.

- We may work hard to produce a successful event or program that draws lot of praise and attendees. We then give thanks and we think that this must be the fruit that brings God glory. If this is the fruit that Jesus was talking about, we don’t really need to abide in Him; we simply rely on our own resources and hard work to get things done.
- In reality, we only pray for the unknown factors that we have no control of.
- We equate religious activity to the fruit. We think the results of our works are the fruit.
- I am afraid that what I have done (serving and ministering) at church is mostly simply religious activities.
- No one can produce fruit without Jesus truly living inside.
- The fruit is the life of Jesus manifest through the disciple who abides in him.

## 3. Actualizing and Personalizing

I personalize these thoughts in my life and my own situation (with SPACE meditation)

- I realize that I have sinned against the Lord.
- I confess that I did not take what Jesus says in John 15:5 seriously, I should have asked the Holy Spirit to reveal the true meaning to me, but I did not pursue understanding. I knew the Scripture well but it had no effect on my life.

- Instead of trying to discover what is meant by fruit, I hold on to Jesus' promise, "He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit." I simply concentrate on submitting my life to Jesus, pleading with him to change my life and live through me, knowing that the fruit will appear.

#### 4. Deriving an Action Plan

What should I do to respond to the thoughts that the Lord has inspired in me?

- I consecrate my daily devotional time to meeting with the Lord.
- I set aside specific days every quarter for a personal silent retreat.
- I specifically dedicate every Saturday evening to prepare my heart, my spirit, and my physical condition for the Sunday worship service. I shall refrain from social activities (other than special occasions like weddings and similar celebrations) and secular entertainment.
- I spend the quiet Saturday evening in spiritual reading, meditation, prayer, or rest.

#### **Example #2**

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:14-15

<sup>14</sup>Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" <sup>15</sup>And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

#### 1. Meditating on the Scripture

The disciples of John and the Pharisees were pious people. Out of good intentions they practiced fasting regularly to a point even beyond the requirement by the Old Testament law. The Pharisees set it as a standard of practice and even used it to judge other people's devoutness and piety.

Jesus used the bridegroom-and-attendants illustration to remind them about the purpose of fasting. A discipline is simply a means to reach the goal, not the goal itself. Fasting is a discipline of practicing to be with God. If it does not help one reach the goal, what good is the discipline? When God (the bridegroom) is already with the

disciples, the purpose has already been reached and the means is no longer significant. However, the Pharisees insisted on the discipline.

## 2. Responding to the Movement of the Holy Spirit

Like the Pharisees, many of us have a sincere desire to be a godly Christian. We have committed to serve our churches, we are motivated to learn and grow, and we are convicted to what we think is right. It appears that we are so busy in doing the Christian things (the means) that we forget about being a Christian (the end). Quite often I have found that we become involved in activities without realizing whether or not they are a good means to the end. We run programs for the sake of the programs. What make us different from the disciples of John and the Pharisees?

We are imperfect human beings, and making mistakes is inevitable. However, the mistakes are less important than our courage to face the mistake, our sincerity and honesty, and our sensitivity to being self-aware.

## 3. Actualizing and Personalizing

I am no different from any other fellow Christians. I have made the same mistakes as the disciples of John and the Pharisees. I may be join the Sunday school campaign “Read through the Bible” simply to show others that I have finished the Bible reading plan; I may have judged others for not joining; I may even have competed with others for who would finish first. While doing all these things, I may forget the primary purpose of reading God’s Word. Even though I may have accomplished the goal, my life may not have changed a bit.

The more I have examined my church life, the more similar incidences I have found.

## 4. Deriving an Action Plan

- Choose one or two areas such as the Bible reading campaign and singing in the choir.
- Make a plan to periodically evaluate and pray for my involvement in these two areas (personal accountability with God).
- Consider sharing my plan with a trusted fellow disciple and have this person pray for me and check on my progress (peer accountability).

### **Example #3**

**Scripture:** Matthew 23:11-12

*The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

## 1. Meditating on the Scripture

At a first glance, the Lord teaches us not to assert ourselves to be the teacher or the “father,” for there is only one. We all should learn to be humble ourselves and to be servant leaders. Jesus taught a similar teaching on several different occasions, usually after there were arguments about who would be the greatest among the disciples. When I review the text, I find that this familiar teaching is inserted among a series of condemnations about the hypocrisy of Pharisees. In fact, all of Matthew 23 is about wrongdoings of the lawyers and Pharisees.

As I start to think about the context, I begin to realize that Jesus may have been teaching something deeper than the apparent meaning of the words. There must be some relationship linking “humility” to the rest of the chapter.

## 2. Responding to the Movement of the Holy Spirit

Matthew 23:3 reads, “So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, **for they do not practice what they preach.**” The last (underlined) phrase strikes my heart. Being a preacher myself, have I practiced what I have preached? That is a big challenge; this is an integrity issue. The first thing I realized is that to be truly humble, one must deal with one’s own integrity issue, or else we may not have true humility.

Matthew 23:5 reads, “Everything they do is done for people to see.” This hypocrisy issue was a serious problem of the Pharisees, but is it also a problem among spiritual leaders today? Time passes by, culture changes, technology and knowledge change, but human nature remains the same! The second thing I realized is that to be truly humble, one must deal with one’s own hypocrisy, or else we may simply act humble when we are not genuinely humble.

This teaching is followed by seven “woe to you” statements directed toward the teachers of the law and Pharisees. I just cite one here, Matthew 23: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.” This is a serious problem! We have been encouraged and have made many new converts. If we don’t deal with our own hypocrisy, we may have taught them correct doctrines, but we have failed to pass on the life of Christ, because we have none.

**Humility is not what we do but what kind of people we are!** Humility starts from the inside out.

### 3. Actualizing and Personalizing

I have to admit that I sometime lack integrity and struggle with hypocrisy. Even though no one may see it, my Lord knows it well. I should stop making excuses and taking the imperfection of the human state for granted. Integrity and hypocrisy are not a one-time issue. I need to deal with them one case at a time throughout my life. I realize that the integrity and humility issue is not limited to just myself. Through realizing my own weakness, I gain deeper understanding of the difficulties of others as well. I should develop an empathetic and encouraging attitude towards others.

### 4. Deriving an Action Plan

I understand that I may not be able accomplish this on my own. I need help. Besides developing a regular practice of self-reflection (personal accountability to God), I need to share with one or two trustworthy individuals (my wife and a close colleague) about my willingness to deal with this integrity issue, and ask them to watch for me and kindly remind me.

#### **Note:**

This document was translated from an existing Chinese version which included twelve examples. The two rewritten examples here demonstrate how one can follow the proposed procedures to practice life application of the biblical truth.

## APPENDIX B

### TEACHING AND LEARNING EVENTS

The training courses listed here will be offered and administered by the Discipleship Ministry Department. Discipleship at MBCLA is not an isolated ministry. New converts are to be nurtured in the disciple groups through individual caring and mentoring, but they are also encouraged to take four foundational classes<sup>2</sup> offered regularly by Sunday school. Mature DG members are encouraged to take a leadership and mentoring role. Potential group leaders are encouraged to be equipped with disciple leadership training courses.

#### **Basic Discipleship Training Program**

All group members are encouraged to take this four-part series of basic discipleship training. The training course serves to equip and prepare the disciples, while the disciple group provides a healthy and supportive environment where the group members live a disciple's way of life. The two are independent yet closely related and together contribute to transform lives. Although the disciple group activities may go through some of the same material that is in this course, the purpose and goal are different. The training course is more focused, specific, and is aiming at a more thorough equipping curriculum. This is a prerequisite of the group leader training program.

The basic discipleship training curriculum is primarily based on *Discipleship Essentials*<sup>3</sup> by Greg Ogden, otherwise indicated.

**Basic Discipleship Curriculum** – The curriculum is based on *Discipleship Essentials* with enhanced material. The series takes eight months to complete, approximately two months for each part.

#### Part – I: Being a Disciple of Jesus

1. Called to be Disciple – A brief biblical theology of discipleship (by Rev. Simon Mak)
2. Introduction to “Transforming Discipleship” – the concept of SGSM (by Rev. Simon Mak)
3. Quiet Time – Introduction to a devotional life and contemplation (chapter 3)
4. Bible Study – Introduction to the inductive Bible study method and spiritual Bible reading (chapter 4)

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<sup>2</sup> The four foundation classes are as follows: “Introduction to Christian Living”; “Knowing about the Bible”; “The Life of Christ”; and “Basic Doctrine.”

<sup>3</sup> Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*.

5. Prayer (chapter 5)
6. Worship – understanding of corporate and personal worship (chapter 6)
7. Witnessing for Christ – Evangelism through testimony and a simple gospel message (MBCLA-developed material) emphasizing a simple method

Part – II: Knowing What We Believe

1. The Three-Person God (chapter 7)
2. Made in God's Image (chapter 8)
3. Sin (chapter 9)
4. Grace (chapter 10)
5. Redemption (chapter 11)
6. Justification (chapter 12)
7. Being the children of God – A call to holiness, a lifetime process of sanctification (by Rev. Simon Mak)

Part – III: Becoming Like Christ

1. Filled with the Holy Spirit (chapter 14)
2. Fruit of the Holy Spirit (chapter 15)
3. Trust and obey (chapter 16)
4. Love and humility (chapter 17)
5. Justice and Righteousness (chapter 18)
6. Witness (chapter 19) – Introduction to missional evangelism (by Rev. Simon Mak)

Part – IV: Serving Christ

1. The Church (chapter 20)
2. Ministry Gifts (chapter 21)
3. Spiritual Warfare (chapter 22)
4. Walking in Obedience (chapter 23)
5. Stewardship (chapter 24)

**Disciple Leadership Training Program**

The objective of the Leader Training Curriculum is to develop an effective disciple group leader with essential training and to enhance further growth of leadership effectiveness with continued education.

**Curriculum:** including two phases of leader training and extensive training courses

**I. Phase-I**  
**Prerequisites:**



1. Demonstrates some degree of Christian maturity
2. Maintains a steady and regular devotional life
3. Has completed Basic Disciple Training courses with *Discipleship Essentials* or equivalent (one-to-one DT or others); a mature and experienced lay leader can be considered as equivalent (with proper evaluation)

**Curriculum: (total of 13 sessions)**

**1. Group Leading Technique I**

- a. Understanding the concept of the disciple group system
- b. Exploring group leading techniques
- c. Leading with a purpose – Materials from selected chapters of *Leading Small Group with Purpose* (Steve Gladen)<sup>4</sup>

**2. Leadership Essentials (Unit one): *Leadership Essentials* by Greg Ogden<sup>5</sup>**

- a. Holiness (chapter one)
- b. Habits (chapter two)
- c. Humility (chapter three)
- d. Conquering Criticism (chapter eleven)
- e. Defeating Discouragement (chapter twelve)

**3. Hands-on group dynamic experience**

Trainees divided into groups of four, practicing group leading  
Total of eight group meetings, each member will have two chances to lead and receive feedback at the end of each meeting. There will be two 60-75 min. group meetings led by different people in each training session.

- Choose 4 different lessons from *Discipleship Essentials*; or 2+2 (2 lessons from *Discipleship Essentials* and 2 lessons from *Leadership Essentials*)
- Four meetings with QT sharing from “Living Life”

**II. Phase II - Equipping to lead a DG effectively**

**Prerequisites:**

Leader trainee has completed Phase I and has at least three months small group co-leadership experience.

**Curriculum: (total of 13 sessions)**

**1. Essentials of Devotion: A devotional life**

- a. Daily devotion as a spiritual discipline

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<sup>4</sup> Steve Gladen, *Leading Small Groups with Purpose: Everything You Need to Lead a Healthy Group* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Greg Ogden, *Leadership Essentials: Shaping Vision, Multiplying Influence, Defining Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007).

- b. Devotional reading (spiritual reading) of Scripture – selected chapters from *Contemplative Bible Reading*<sup>6</sup> by Richard Peace.
  - c. Spiritual journaling
  - d. Quiet time with the Lord
  - e. Truth in action - applying biblical principles in life through making action plans and executing them with support from fellow group members (training material developed by Rev. Simon Mak)
  - f. Leading of QT sharing
2. **Leadership Essentials (Unit Two):** *Leadership Essentials*<sup>7</sup> by Greg Ogden
- a. Kneeling (chapter four)
  - b. Teaming (chapter five)
  - c. The Compelling Christ (chapter seven)
  - d. Embracing the Kingdom (chapter eight)
  - e. Taming Temptation (chapter ten)

Phase III and Phase IV trainings are primarily courses are designed to enhance leadership effectiveness.

### **III. Phase III – Enhancing group leadership skills; building up the leader’s character; enriching and deepening the spiritual life of the leader**

**Prerequisites:** For small group leaders with completion of Phase I & Phase II

**Curriculum:** These are individual courses for ongoing enhancement of leader development. Leader coaches are encouraged to take these courses at their own pace.

1. **Understanding of Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Discipline**
- a. Understanding spiritual disciplines - the meaning and purpose of spiritual exercises
  - b. Understanding the role of discipline in spiritual formation
  - c. Exploring some useful spiritual exercises, such as spiritual reading, meditation, and prayer
  - d. Discipline of silence – taming the often distracted heart
  - e. Self-examination (accountable to God)
  - f. Hearing God and obedience
  - g. Personal guided silent retreat

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God through Scripture* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Ogden, *Leadership Essentials*.

**2. Nurturing Accountability with Love – Understanding Disciplines and Accountability**

- a. The meaning of accountability
- b. The relationship of disciplines and accountability
- c. Cultivating a trusting and loving environment
- d. Understanding the role of positive accountability in the growing process

**3. Issues in Small Group Leadership**

- a. Discussions on selected topics from *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry*<sup>8</sup> by Bill Donahue & Russ Robinson
- b. Leader Characters – discussion on selected topic from *Mentoring Paradigms* by Edmund Chan
- c. Practical evaluation

**4. Practical Evangelism**

- a. Evangelism in the postmodern world
- b. Evaluation of methods of evangelism
- a. Evangelism strategy (T4T<sup>9</sup> – Southern Baptist’s evangelistic strategy in the mission field; one of the fastest-growing church planting movements)

**5. Missional Evangelism**

This is a six-session Bible study course called *Missional Evangelism*<sup>10</sup> designed for small groups. This study will help the reader realize that all places are mission fields and that all people are missionaries. It will also challenge the reader to reach out to different cultures, ages, and those with broken lives. Finally, it encourages readers to start at the beginning—by getting to know unbelievers.

- 1) All Places Are Mission Fields
- 2) Reach Your Community
- 3) Reach Out to Different Cultures and Ages
- 4) Get to Know Unbelievers
- 5) Help Others to Repent
- 6) Touch Broken Lives

**IV. Other Enhancement Training:** These are individual courses for ongoing spiritual development.

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<sup>8</sup> Donahue and Robinson, *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry*.

<sup>9</sup> Steve Smith and Ying Kai, *T4T A Discipleship Re-revolution* (Monument, CO: 2011 WIGTake Resources, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Christian Bible Studies, *Missional Evangelism: How Do We Share the Gospel Where We Live?* accessed May 25, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/m/missional-evangelism-6-session-study.html>.

- 1. Spiritual Reading** – based on the concepts from *Shaped by the Word* by Mulholland.
  - a. Informational reading vs. formational reading
  - b. The functional and relational factors
  - c. The concept of knowing-doing-being.
  - d. Practice of spiritual reading – with hands-on study group using four to six selected chapters from *Contemplative Bible Reading* by Richard Peace.
  
- 2. Introduction to Spiritual Journaling**

Learning to recognize the progress from who one has been to who one is meant to become. By taking time to go back and understand the critical elements of one’s life – the events, relationships, patterns, and experiences that shape a person. Also learn to develop a view of the future through the lens of conformity to the way of Jesus. This course will go through the study guide, *Spiritual Journaling: Recording Your Journey toward God*<sup>11</sup> by Richard Peace.
  
- 3. Character of Christ**

A group Bible study on chapters 12 and 13 of the book of Romans, aiming at spiritual formation of Christ-like character. Using the study guide, *Spiritual Transformation: Taking on the Character of Christ*<sup>12</sup> by Richard Peace.
  
- 4. Listening to God**

This course is conducted in a format of three days of a guided personal retreat with a daily two-hour lecture learning how to hear God. Course materials include selected chapters from a retreat guide, *Learning to Hear God*<sup>13</sup> by Jan Johnson. Lectures taken from selected topics from *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*<sup>14</sup> by Dallas Willard.

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Peace, *Spiritual Journaling: Recoding Your Journey toward God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Richard Peace, *Spiritual Transformation: Taking on the Character of Christ* (not published, used with permission from the author).

<sup>13</sup> Jan Johnson, *Learning to Hear God: A Personal Retreat Guide* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012).

## APPENDIX C

### DISCIPLE GROUP OPERATION PROCEDURE

The disciple group gatherings need a general operation procedure as guideline so that the group members know what to expect. The operation procedure is designed to facilitate the group members reaching the four growth objectives and major emphases. The procedure should be taken as a guideline rather than as strict rules, and the group leader can make some adjustments according to the situation of the group. However, it should not be taken lightly and groups should not deviate too far from the original intent. Particularly for newly formed groups, it is better to follow this procedure.

The group should be consistently meeting weekly, bi-weekly, three times per month, or every week except the 5<sup>th</sup> week of the month. Meeting less frequently than every two weeks is not practical.

#### 1. Preparation

The purpose is to let group members settle down and get everybody in tune. Singing is most common, however it is not a must-do activity. Ice breaking games can also serve the purpose. Reading out an appropriate psalm in unison can be considered as well. Be sure to end this session with a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to move among the group members and prepare everyone's heart for the group meeting.

#### 2. Sharing

Group members should freely share insights from QT, spiritual experiences, life experiences, etc.

The group leader should encourage deeper sharing. When the sharing leads to sadness, despondency, or suffering, etc., then pause and have everybody surround the hurtful person and pray. The group leader should use his or her judgment.

#### 3. Lesson learning

This is usually the main event of the meeting. The learning session should be conducted in a small group interactive discussion format whenever possible. The learning activity can have great variety: discipleship training courses, QT sharing, interpersonal relationship, biblical conflict management, evangelistic Bible study, book reading / sharing, etc.

Leaders should bear in mind that all topics and materials are tools, and they should be sure that these activities facilitate group members pursuing the growth objectives of sharing, growing, serving, and maturing. All the learning activities should be organized and planned in a way that promotes application, real life practices, and group actions. Application-oriented learning often comes up with action items and action plans. Simply learning knowledge is not good enough.

4. Follow up

Follow up with the action plans from the previous meeting. Action plans are usually for group activities, for example helping a single mom neighbor, memorizing Scripture, or distributing food to the homeless. An action item is usually a personal action. Without follow up, the action may not get done.

The group leader should make sure that follow-up is an exercise of accountability, and it should be conducted in a trusting and loving group environment.

5. Prayer

This is the closing of the group meeting, but it is not to be taken lightly. The attitude towards prayer reflects how much we really trust the Holy Spirit. It is good to divide into groups of two or three to pray together.

## APPENDIX D

### DISCIPLE GROUP RULES

Members of disciple group are expected to abide with the following rules. These rules are meant to protect rather than govern the members. Members should willingly observe these rules.

#### **Basic Accountability**

- Attend every meeting unless out of town or let the host (or group leader) know the (good) reason of absence.
- Prepare the written “homework” before the meeting.
- Do the assignments such as reading, QT, praying or sharing with partners, or activity preparation.
- Participate in group action plan.

#### **Confidentiality**

- Maintain complete confidentiality.
- What I hear and say stays here.
- Respect people’s privacy.

#### **Affirming One Another**

- Acknowledge that every person in this group is unique and different.
- Everyone is entitled to express himself or herself freely.
- Respect one another; value and affirm people for who they are.

#### **Listen and Do Not Judge**

- Everyone should be encouraged to share, to be open, and to show emotion.
- Avoid being judgmental, trying to “fix” others or offer unsolicited advice.
- Learn to listen actively and understand the views of others.

#### **Self-Awareness**

- Understand that some members are talkers and others are quieter.
- Be aware of not dominating the discussion or always leaving the weight of it to others.
- Actively participate in group discussion.

#### **Vulnerability**

- Stretch to be as open and honest as I can with my perspectives and experience.

- Help to create a safe environment that might encourage others to participate.

### **Managing Conflicts**

- Understand that community can be messy and conflicts may arise.
- Offer grace (forgiveness) to each other.
- Do not leave the group over disagreements.
- Never gossip behind the back of a fellow group member.
- Do not take others' conflict in your own hand.
- Follow the biblical principle (Matthew 18:15-20) and let the group leader handle it.
- Realize that God might use conflict in my spiritual formation in some way I don't currently understand.



## APPENDIX E

### INTRODUCTION TO *JOURNEY TO INTIMACY*

*Journey to Intimacy* is a workshop program for marriage relationships in Chinese, authored by Dr. Wei-Jen Huang, and published by Focus on the Family Taiwan. The program consists of twelve lessons, each divided into sections. Each section starts with a ten- to fifteen-minute video lecture by Dr. Huang explaining the concept and exercise of a certain interpersonal technique. The key is doing and discussing these techniques among the group, then going home and practicing them with one's family members. In the next meeting, group members start with sharing their experiences and then continue with the next lesson.

The table of contents of the twelve lessons:

Lesson One	In Search of Love
Lesson Two	The Love Account: Understanding the Language of Love and Establishing the Love Account
Lesson Three	Understanding Differences and Conflicts
Lesson Four	The Harmonious Couple Relationship
Lesson Five	The Impact of Original Family to Personality and Intimacy
Lesson Six	Developing EQ
Lesson Seven	Four Types of Attachment and Intimate Relationships
Lesson Eight	“Four Killers” in Intimate Relationships and “Five Secrets” to Emotional Adjustments
Lesson Nine	“Ten Steps” to Restoring Relationships
Lesson Ten	Win-Win Situations and Developing a Healthy Personality
Lesson Eleven	Learning to Forgive
Lesson Twelve	Love in Action

\* Wei-Jen W. Huang, PhD, is an associate professor of clinical psychiatry and behavioral sciences of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

APPENDIX F

ASSESSMENT TABLE

Assessment for Spiritual Growth

Without objective and tangible references, spiritual growth becomes abstract and may be trapped in the pitfall of self-righteousness. Self-awareness is crucial to spiritual growth. The questions in these tables are designed with reference to the four growth objectives (sharing, growing, serving, and maturing) and may help in reflecting the spiritual state of the individual and the group. The personal assessment is meant to be kept as a personal reference for progress records. The group assessment should be collected by the group leader for computing group statistics as a reference of group status. There is no personal identification needed; one can respond to the questions freely according to one’s best understanding and knowledge.

I. Personal Assessment

Quantitative responses: On a scale of 1-5, indicating the range from disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and agree, otherwise indicated.

‘+’ means more than; ‘~’ means approximately; ‘-’ means less than

D’ly – daily; W’ly – weekly; M’ly – monthly; OCC – occasionally

Personal Assessment					
Group ID:	Date:				
1. I have been doing QT an average of a number of <u>times</u> every week.	No	1 – 2	3	4	5+
2. I spend an average of a number of <u>minutes</u> on each QT time.	5 –	10 –	~15	~20	30+
3. How many times per week on average do you share QT insights and experiences with others through whatever means?	No	OCC	1	2	3+
4. Your disciple group attendance percentage in last six months is:	No	50 –	50+	70+	90+
5. Your Sunday school (or weekly Bible study meeting) attendance percentage in the last year (12 months) is:	No	50 –	50+	70+	90+
6. Your Sunday service attendance percentage in	No	50 –	50+	70+	90+

the last year (12 months) is:					
7. How often you have personal worship?	No	OCC	M'ly	W'ly	D'ly
8. How often you have family worship (if applicable)?	No	OCC	M'ly	W'ly	D'ly
9. How many times you have witnessed for Christ (made testimony or proclaimed the Gospel) in the last year (12 months)?	No	1	2+	5+	10+
10. Your disciple group experience is basically enjoyable and satisfying.	1	2	3	4	5
11. How many disciples you have mentored?	0	1	2	3	4+
12. How many times have you actually acted on your action plan (life application) in the last 6 months?	0	1	2	3	4+
13. You basically feel secure and are willing to share your thoughts and emotions in the disciple group meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
14. How many times in the last 6 months has your disciple group made action plans together and followed through?	0	1	2	3	4+
15. How many times in the last 6 months have you shared with ungrouped people about your group-life experiences?	0	1	2	3	4+
16. In the last 6 months, how many times per month you have attended prayer (church or group)?	No	OCC	2	3	4+
17. Besides regular QT, how often (in min.) have you spent in daily personal prayer?	No	~15	~30	~45	60+
18. How many newly converted disciples have you made in the last 12 months?	0	1	2	3	4+
19. Besides the Bible, how many books about the Christian faith have you studied in the last 12 months?	0	1	2	3	4+
20. Besides regular QT, how often (in min.) have you spent on other forms of spiritual disciplines in an average week?	No	~15	~30	~45	60+
21. How often have you done full preparation	No	OCC	50%	Most	All

before attending the disciple group meeting?					
22. You have a passion for developing other disciples	1	2	3	4	5
23. You are familiar with and confident in the four growth objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
24. How many times in the last 6 months have you made an action plan after a Sunday sermon?	0	1	2	3	4+
25. For group leader: How many members are in your disciple group?	4	5	6+	8+	10+
26. For group leader: What is the core member percentage in your disciple group?	~30	~40	~50	60	80

II. Group Assessment

<b>Group Assessment</b>			
<b>Group ID:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
		Yes	No
1. Besides daily QT, I also have a regular Bible reading schedule			
2. I have completely read through the NT Bible at least once			
3. I have completely read through the OT Bible at least once			
4. Besides attending the disciple group, I am also serving regularly at church			
5. In the last 5 years I have participated in mission work at least once			
6. I have been trained in personal witnessing			
7. I have been trained in personal evangelism			
8. I am ready to witness for Christ or proclaim the Gospel if an opportunity is given at the moment			
9. I have a spiritual partner or prayer partner and we are staying in contact regularly (weekly)			
10. Besides regular QT, I have been practicing another form of spiritual			

discipline		
11. I have completed 1 <sup>st</sup> stage basic discipleship training (parts I & II)		
12. I have completed 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage basic discipleship training (parts III & IV)		
13. I have completed Phase I disciple leadership training		
14. I have completed Phase II disciple leadership training		
15. I have regularly (at least once every quarter) participated in community service		
16. I have been involved in serving a parachurch organization		
17. In the last 2 years my disciple group multiplied at least once		
18. I am willing to mentor another disciple if needed		
19. I am willing to be equipped and to help my group leader lead the group		
20. I am willing to be equipped and to prepare myself to be a disciple group leader later		

### III DG Operation Evaluation

Item of Evaluation	Score: 1-5 Or NA
Emphasizing and facilitating personal devotional life among the DG members	
Actively encouraging and supporting real-life application of biblical principles and teachings	
Encouraging and promoting DG members living out their faith in daily life and witnessing for Christ	
Cultivating an environment that fosters personal accountability to God and communal accountability the peers	
Support and follow up with personal action plans	

Support and follow up with group action plans	
Preparation time has been effectively used to create a proper atmosphere of the meeting.	
Time management – proper use of time in the DG gathering	
The main theme and content of the DG gathering has been clearly presented	
Member participation in DG meetings ( equal opportunity is given during discussion time )	
Discussions have been able to focus on the main themes	
Discussions have been properly facilitated ( The facilitator has been encouraging, supportive, inspiring, and comforting )	
Differences have been given equal opportunities to be expressed	
Differences are properly moderated to avoid arguments, alienation, and distance	
Sufficient time for prayer	

## APPENDIX G

### LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE DISCIPLE GROUP SYSTEM

The Disciple Group Leader (DGL):

- Responsible for forming the DG, planning and leading the group meetings.
- Responsible for identifying a DGLA – Identifying among the DG core members someone who consents with the DG concept, understands the DG operation, has a passion for making disciples, and has conviction and confidence in this DG system. Besides mentoring an assistant by demonstrating, modeling, and delegating appropriate responsibilities, the group leader may also encourage the assistant to attend leadership training sessions, so that he or she can have the systematic trainings. Developing DGLA is the greatest assets to the DGL in leading the DG and also is critical to group multiplication.
- Responsible for developing DG core members – developing new DG members is the most important responsibility of the DGL and the DGLA. The more core members there are, the lighter the burden is in leading a DG. The higher the proportion of DG core members there are, the more mature the group becomes.

The Disciple Group Coach (DGC):

- Shepherding (including counseling and mentoring) the DGLs and DGLAs is the primary responsibility of a DGC.
- Helping DGLs to identify and develop potential DGLAs.
- Visiting and observing DG meetings and activities of within the coach's DG circle.

- Individually meeting and praying with each DGL at least twice every month.
- Planning and scheduling the quarterly group meeting with all DGLs (DGLAs may be invited), cultivating an environment where the DGLs may share their experiences, pray together, and support one another.
- Helping or advising the DGL to handle interpersonal conflicts if needed.
- Love and protect the DGLs, guarding them from Satan's attack according to the principles that 1 Timothy 5:17-19 suggests.
- DGLs are valuable. By all means the DGC should care for and protect them, but they should not indulge their mistakes and wrongdoings, which must be dealt with in love. For this reason, the DGC should be watchful and tending carefully for the spiritual state of the DGLs.

#### Disciple Group Lead Pastor (DGLP):

- Responsible for the overall disciple group ministry.
- Forming and leading the leadership core with the DGCs and schedules for periodical ministry meetings.
- Handles interpersonal conflicts with love and God-given wisdom.
- Responsible for designing, adjusting, and maintaining the DG system.
- Determining the discipleship training and leadership curricula and training materials.
- Planning and scheduling for discipleship and leadership trainings.
- Casting the vision and introducing the concept of discipleship, especially in a setting of an established church.



- Responsible for shepherding 2-8 DGCs and supporting their ministries.
- Helping to identify and develop potential DGCs.
- Individually meeting and praying with each DGC at least twice every month.
- Arranging and partaking in fellowship with the DGCs once every six months for sharing, support, and prayer.
- Organizing one yearly event for rallying and meeting all DG members.
- Initiating a yearly growth assessment across the entire DG network; also responsible for analyzing and reporting the assessment data.
- Periodically visiting DGs as encouragement and support.
- Loving and protecting the DGCs while guarding them from Satan's attacks.
- Being watchful and carefully tending to the spiritual state of the DGCs. Their mistakes and wrongdoings must be dealt with in love.

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