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Contextualized Discipleship: A Catalyst System for the XXI Century

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CONTEXTUALIZED DISCIPLESHIP:
A CATALYST SYSTEM FOR THE XXI CENTURY

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**CONTEXTUALIZED DISCIPLESHIP:
A CATALYST SYSTEM FOR THE XXI CENTURY**

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of

Perkins School of Theology

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M. Div., Perkins School of Theology, SMU, 2017

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I would not have arrived at this point, without the support, patience, guidance, and companionship of many people. I am deeply grateful to my family, my mentors, my proofreaders, Casa Linda UMC, Custer Road UMC, The North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church, the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, and my advisor, Dr. James Lee.

To the One who called me and said, *come* and *follow* me, be given all gratitude.

ABSTRACT

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Contextualized Discipleship:
A Catalyst System for the XXI Century

Advisor: Professor Dr. James Lee

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The reality for the Christian churches in the U.S. is that congregations are declining in attendance. Local churches are being closed every year, and the people called Christians are decreasing in their discipleship practices more than in previous years. However, the reason for this disgraceful reality is not because people have stopped attending church; rather, it is because there are now fewer Christians. Unfortunately, churches in their effort to make disciples prefer to buy a curriculum that, in the end, does not reflect the needs and realities of their own context. More than ever, the Christian industry in the U.S. has benefited from discipleship and at the same time discipleship for many churches has become one more item to buy, instead of a contextual endeavor. The various contexts for churches in the U.S. require an alternative approach to this reality.

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose a contextualized discipleship system that could be an alternative to solve this reality that the church in the XXI Century in the United States is facing. The methodology used throughout this work will include church history, sociology, empirical data, demographic studies, discipleship surveys, and research in discipleship assessment. The work in this dissertation will disclose the way certain faith communities in the early, medieval, and modern period developed a fruitful contextualized discipleship model. Moreover, I will look at the role of contextualization in discipleship and then provide a process to develop a contextualized discipleship system. In this proposal, I am not attempting to present a perfect formula for a successful discipleship model; rather, I offer a new way of looking at our Christian history, a way that claims discipleship regardless of the context of the local church. My approach to discipleship is distinctive not only for providing a research component but also for including biblical and historical grounds, principles, resources, practical ideas, and a clear methodology of development for disciple-making to take place in any context. Contextualized discipleship may be an alternative to any church who longs to make disciples in its own context.

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Introduction

It was in my first appointment as a pastor in the U.S. that I opened a drawer in my new office and found something that surprised me. In this drawer, there were dozens of discipleship video tapes and DVDs that the church had bought to disciple its members back in 2001. After watching some of those videos, I found out that the content of most of them was no longer contextualized to the kind of church this congregation was becoming and to its needs. I wondered if the content of those videos was even contextualized to this church when they were bought. The reality is that some churches, in their need to disciple their people, look for the newest discipleship model in the Christian industry or the latest discipleship material that a well-known Christian leader has written. It appears that discipleship in the U.S. has turned into a marketing offer, more than a contextual endeavor in the local church.

But why do we need to pay attention to contextualization when we talk about discipleship in the local church? One of the main reasons is because our churches are located within the U.S. region and, in general, they are experiencing an alarming reality. According to the 2019 Pew Research Center Study,¹ 65% of American adults identified themselves as Christians; this percentage went down compared to 78% in 2009. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated category went up to 26%, experiencing a 17% growth in the last decade. Overall, the truth for the mainline church in the U.S. is that congregations are declining in attendance. Local churches are being closed every year, and Christians are decreasing their discipleship practices more than before.² The Pew Research Report released in October of 2019 explains that the nation's overall

¹ "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," Pew Research Center, last modified October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

² "Religious Landscape Study," Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/mainline-protestant/>.

rate of religious attendance is declining not because Christians are attending church less often, but because there are now fewer Christians as a share of the population.³ The discouraging fact is not church attendance, but disciple-making. The frequency of participation in prayer, scripture study or religious education groups among Christians in the U.S. is 32% once a week.⁴ Among mainline protestants, it is 19% once a week.⁵ Christianity in the U.S. is facing a declining reality in the number of disciples affiliated with the Christian church. Because there are fewer disciples in the Christian church, attendance declines, and eventually churches close. Our context in the U.S. requires an alternative to this problem, a contextualized discipleship approach.

Indeed, a lack of contextualized discipleship in the church would lead to a lack of disciple-making, and therefore to fewer Christians. No disciples, no Christian church in a particular demographic area. The reality is that all churches are placed in different geographic locations, and each one of them may be facing different local needs, challenges, and realities that request a particular discipleship model. Even when we might think that our context is the reason for our struggles, the truth is that our context could also mean discipleship growth.

Consequently, churches, instead of looking at their contexts as the reason to close or struggle, should look at them as the many or different opportunities they have to make disciples. To reclaim this work, one may need to understand the way certain faith communities in the early, medieval, and modern period thrived in contextualized discipleship. Many of these faith communities catechized their current disciples, and made new disciples in their own context.

³ "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," Pew Research Center, last modified October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/10/Trends-in-Religious-Identity-and-Attendance-FOR-WEB-1.pdf>.

⁴ "Religious Landscape Study," Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/Christians/Christian/>.

⁵ "Religious Landscape Study," Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/mainline-protestant/>.

Clearly, these faith communities did not have to wait on the latest discipleship curriculum or buy the most expensive discipleship material; rather, out of their own context discipleship took place. In other words, every discipleship model studied in this proposal dealt with the needs, challenges, and realities of its own context. However, the context did not lead the faith community to ignore the need for discipleship. The context provided the reason for a contextualized discipleship with relevant discipleship catalysts. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word *catalyst* comes from the chemistry field, but in the last few decades the term has been used in a figurative sense for someone or something that rapidly causes change or action. Hence, I will refer to discipleship catalysts as the particular activities that I argue accelerate disciple-making in a specific discipleship model. Moreover, I will present in every discipleship model the traits that were expected to be demonstrated in each disciple or the criteria that was expected for anyone who became a disciple of the Way.

Historical and Modern Models of Discipleship		
The Church in Acts Early Church Period	The Catechumenate Early Church Period	Monasticism Medieval Church Period
Context Discipleship Model Traits/Criteria Catalysts	Context Discipleship Model Traits/Criteria Catalysts	Context Discipleship Model Traits/Criteria Catalysts
Methodism Reformation Church Period	The Rite of Christian Initiation Modern Church Period	Route 180 Modern Church Period
Context Discipleship Model Traits/Criteria Catalysts	Context Discipleship Model Traits/Criteria Catalysts	Context Discipleship Model Traits/Criteria Catalysts

In this endeavor, I will attempt to demonstrate that there was a discipleship model with specific discipleship catalysts that emerged from the context of the faith community, so that the faith community could minister to the needs, challenges, and realities of its own context. This work may lead the Christian church to catechize current disciples and, also, to make new ones.

Therefore, I argue that the Christian church in the U.S. can experience a new growth in disciple-making in the following two areas: 1) being, meaning catechizing and developing current disciples, and 2) producing, referring to forming and making new disciples.

The Gospel of Matthew in chapter four explains that when Jesus found Peter, Jesus did not find him making disciples; no, Peter was fishing. Jesus said to him: “Come, follow me”.⁶ Making disciples begins with Jesus encountering the individuals and with their response to his historical statement: “Come, follow me”. Nevertheless, one must grow in his or her journey as a disciple before arriving at the second historical discipleship statement Jesus pronounced to the disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples...”⁷ In order to “go” and make disciples, one must grow in one’s identity as a disciple. Jesus’s two historical words in discipleship, “come” and “go” may be two of the most difficult words for the Christian church today. *Come* refers to the formative life of the disciple, while *go* refers to the demonstration of such formation. Therefore, making disciples is a journey, one which begins with *coming* to Jesus, and then being developed through a contextualized discipleship system until the person grows in his or her disciple identity and responds to what it means to *go*. These two historical words will continue to be relevant in any context and for any discipleship model.

Discipleship is a journey in which one learns to live (*peripateo*)⁸ the way of Jesus. Therefore, when the church understands its context, and retrieves the *necessary* discipleship elements from certain discipleship models, and integrates them in a contextualized discipleship system, the journey to disciple-making can take place. Clearly, more than ever context is

⁶ Matthew 4:19.

⁷ Matthew 28:19-20.

⁸ From the Greek word περιπατέω to walk, live, conduct, behave, or lead one’s life. The Apostle Paul refers to this word in Romans 6:4; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 2:10, 4:1, 5:8; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 4:1.

essential in disciple making. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, context refers to the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs: environment, setting. In other words, a context involves the socio-cultural conditions in which a community exists. In the task of contextualization, the church is aware of those environments and settings that may exist in its backyard. In many states or cities in the U.S., the context is not the same it was in previous decades. In 2018, there were 151 U.S. counties where Hispanics, blacks or two much smaller racial and ethnic groups – American Indians and Alaska Natives – made up a majority of the population, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.⁹ That meant an increase from 110 such counties in 2000. But there are other trends that will play an important role when we talk about the context in the U.S.¹⁰

The main issue with discipleship in contemporary churches is not that it does not exist, but that is not contextualized and organized. The question is: Do churches have an effective discipleship approach? And how is discipleship contextualized?¹¹ When we talk about contextualization, it is essential to be clear about the comparison of cultural assumptions that may affect our discipleship.

Table 1. Comparison of Cultural Assumptions That Affect Discipleship¹²

⁹ “In a rising number of U.S. counties, Hispanic and black Americans are the majority,” Pew Research Center, last modified November 20, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/11/20/in-a-rising-number-of-u-s-counties-hispanic-and-black-americans-are-the-majority/>.

¹⁰ “6 demographic trends shaping the U.S. and the world in 2019,” Pew Research Center, last modified April 11, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/11/6-demographic-trends-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world-in-2019/>.

¹¹ Ermias G. Mamo, *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship and Mission* (Cumbria, UK: Langham, 2017), Kindle edition, Chapter 3.

¹² W. Jay Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017), Kindle edition, Chapter 1.

Western Culture	Majority World Culture
Print learning preference	Oral learning preference
Individual identity	Collective identity
Justice (guilt) orientation	Honor (shame) orientation
Cognitive focus	Emotive focus
Material/scientific reality	Spirit-power reality
Redemption theology	Creation theology
Assembly-line production	Handcrafted production

Source: Data from W. Jay Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation*.

Our local context may belong to one culture or the other, or both. If churches are not able to understand their context, they may be discipling people from a non-contextualized approach and, therefore, discipleship will not be effective in making disciples. Ermias G. Mamo explains in his book, *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship and Mission*, that the issue is that in many churches the teaching materials for discipleship are not contextually prepared. He states that in many cases they are copied from other contexts and lack relevance in the given context.¹³ For instance, some communities may respond effectively to Western discipleship materials about topics like the existence of God, while in other communities, such as the African or Latin American, this topic would be more relational than cognitive.

I argue that lack of attention to the context will lead to the decline in attendance and, then, to a lack of thriving for the local church. If we do not implement a contextualized discipleship approach, not only will the percentage of church attendance continue to decline, but the number of churches closing will increase, and overall, the amount of people identified as Christians will decrease. Therefore, I propose that in the task of making disciples churches learn their context by engaging in the needs, challenges, and realities of the local church and its

¹³ Ermias G. Mamo, *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship and Mission* (Cumbria, UK: Langham, 2017), Kindle edition, Chapter 3.

community. While at the same time they provide a discipleship system that connects people with the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that is relevant to their socio-cultural neighbors and members so that faithful disciples are made. Perhaps, the contextualized discipleship approach could be one alternative to solve this reality that the church in the XXI Century in the United States is facing.

The methodology to deal with this historical ecclesiological problem will include the use of the following fields: Church History, Sociology, and empirical data to demonstrate church growth under a historical period. Through these fields, I will attempt to disclose the context of the faith community to be studied, and to demonstrate the catalysts that were part of those communities in their discipleship model. This methodology will describe how disciple-making increased in those faith communities even when their context in many occasions presented needs, challenges, and realities which were not favorable to the essential work of discipleship.

Moreover, the methodology for the contemporary church will utilize the following fields: demographic studies, discipleship surveys, and research in discipleship assessments that will reveal the current reality of the problem to be studied and the state of discipleship in a given context. The purpose of this stage of the work plan is to create a compelling case for the solution to take place. Then, a process of implementation will bring together the needs and realities according to its context, and the development of the contextualized discipleship system will proceed. As part of the development process, any discipleship model and/or discipleship catalysts from the models that were studied will be integrated in the discipleship system.

Chapter 1 discloses the discipleship models of two Christians communities of the early church period: the church in Acts and the catechumenate. Chapter 2 introduces one discipleship model of the medieval church period: the Monastic. Chapter 3 presents three discipleship models

from the Reformation and modern church period: Methodism, the Rite of Christian initiation of adults, and Route 180. This methodology in the first three chapters will remain as a prototype when the contemporary Christian church arrives at the implementation stage in chapter 4. At the end, there will be a contextualized discipleship system that will attempt to be an alternative solution to disciple-making in the U.S.

Chapter 1 Early Church Period

1.1 The Church in Acts Model

The Context

Rarely do we hear a sermon on discipleship from the book of Acts. Perhaps it is because we use the book of Acts to talk about church planting, multi-ethnic ministry, or mission ministry. However, if the story of the Christian church began in the book of Acts, I argue this book has some important hints regarding the discipleship catalysts that appeared in the early church. Let us begin by describing the context in which the church in Acts appeared. Luke undertook the task of writing under the Roman Empire's dominion. The Romans dominated the Mediterranean region and maintained order through a strong military structure and a hierarchical system of government.¹⁴ This occupation was violent militarily, economically, and religiously; and Rome's armies were notorious for their brutality, as they did not hesitate to make examples of anyone who might be seen as arousing a revolt against its absolute rule (Luke 23:37).¹⁵ The discontent and social disintegration that resulted from the oppressive structures imposed by the Romans and the exploitative political-economic practices of the multiple layers of rulers—Roman, Herodian, and high priestly—provided the conditions for periodic protests, renewal, and even massive popular revolts.¹⁶ The Romans were experts in torturing practices. An example of their atrocity was the crucifixion of people. This brutal method placed the one who rebelled against them on stakes or crosses along the roads. This demonstration was a reminder of what would happen to

¹⁴ Reta Halteman Finger, *Of Widows and Meals* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 100.

¹⁵ Carol Newsom, Sharon Ringe, and Jacqueline Lapsley, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3rd Ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 537.

¹⁶ Wes Howard-Brook and Sharon Ringe, *The New Testament: Introducing the Way of Discipleship* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 5.

those who rebelled against them. The people of Jerusalem and other regions of the Mediterranean world were under the dominion and oppression of the Roman Empire. Hence, the members of the new movement of the Way were subjugated to the Roman order.

However, not all the blame fell on the Romans. According to Acts, the religious Jews of those years instigated the persecutions against the Christians (8:1). The religious Jewish authorities were allies with the Romans in keeping the city in order, politically speaking. Because the faith of Christians meant a threat to the Jewish community, in many occasions, they initiated the persecutions against the early Christians. Due to their influence with the Roman government, there were minor and major persecutions against some Christian groups in the book of Acts, and part of the effect of that persecution was martyrdom (7:54-60). These persecutions in Jerusalem led Christians to scatter throughout Judea, Samaria, and later to further Gentile regions. Many would have believed that these persecutions would have killed the church. The Roman imperial order thus pervaded the economic and religious fabric of life in Greek cities through the closely linked networks of patronage relationships.¹⁷ The patron owned slaves, and the slaves were “protected” as long as they had their owner.¹⁸ By the time of Acts, there were two classes within the Greco-Roman world: the wealthy and the poor. In those years, there was no such thing as a middle class. Wealthy people were a small percentage and they belonged to the elite, but the poor were the majority.¹⁹ As a result of this system, slavery was an important business and protection model.

¹⁷ Wes Howard-Brook and Sharon Ringe, *The New Testament: Introducing the Way of Discipleship* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 12.

¹⁸ Some of the people to whom the gospel was preached in the book of Acts had their own patron.

¹⁹ Most of the people to whom the gospel was preached belonged to the poor sector of society.

Christianity did not only create a religious conflict for the Jews, but it also became a political threat to the Roman emperor.

The elite of the Greek cities built the emperor cult directly into and upon the established “civil religion” of the city. They installed statues of the emperor into the temples of their gods...They constructed new temples to the emperor at various points around the perimeter...In proclamations, public performances, and inscriptions prominent in public places the emperor was acclaimed as the “Lord” of the world, as the “Savior” who had brought “peace and security to the world (e.g., 1 Thess. 5:13). The appropriate response of the people, of course, was to declare their loyalty and faith.²⁰

In fact, when the emperor walked the city, people would greet him by shouting “the emperor is Lord.”²¹ The emperor was not seen as just another person in the city, but as god. In the realm of political religion, it was propagated that Caesar of Rome was *divi filius*, son of god, and thus himself a god.²² Religion then should respect and honor the emperor. This was not a problem for Christians, as long as they were not asked to worship him.

Another aspect to consider in the context in which the church in Acts emerged was the spiritual condition of the people. Not everyone came from a religious and spiritual background like the Jews. The church in Acts began to appear in Gentile regions. In those regions the flesh, sin, corruption, idolatry, and earthly desires drove people’s heart. The ministry of the church in Acts is described as universal. It all began with Acts 1 when the instruction was to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Then in Acts 2:6-11, as the gospel was preached in tongues to other cultures, and in the subsequent chapters, we find the expansion of the gospel to Gentile regions. As people came to follow the Way, they arrived at a point of repentance and eventually embraced the new way of living, or not.

²⁰ Brook and Ringe, *The New Testament: Introducing the Way of Discipleship*, 11.

²¹ And therefore, New Testament and early Christian use of the word “Lord” for Jesus Christ was, among other things, a defiant political statement. Mark Stamm, “Ecclesiologies of Discipleship,” (class lecture presented at Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, TX, July 1, 2019).

²² Newsom, Ringe, and Lapsley, eds., *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 537.

By the time the church in Acts was formed people were already called disciples. The term “disciple” (6:1-2, 9:10, 26; 11:26; 15:10; 16:1) is used for believers in Christ, and it is also employed as a synonym for Christian (11:26; 26:28), for saint (9:13, 32, 41), and for Nazarene (24:5).²³ I agree with Dennis M. Sweetland who states that these “disciples” in the post-resurrection period according to Acts, first were called to follow the risen Christ, but their journey continued as they were baptized, served others, lived a life in community, and preached the good news.²⁴ These concepts that Sweetland points out appear throughout the book of Acts. I summarize this period as a time when the socio-political and religious domination of the Roman and Jewish authorities appeared. It was a period when the needs and realities of this context involved poverty, ethnic inclusiveness, sin, lack of social support, corruption, oppression, and a hope for all people in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Discipleship Claim

Indeed, the context of the church in Acts claimed for a discipleship model that could: 1) foster community between the people of the new movement; 2) instruct Christian formation through the apostle’s teaching; 3) introduce a pre-requisite for joining the movement; 4) engage the people for a call to social action; 5) take the gospel to Jews and Gentiles; 6) set a new way of living; and 7) raise Christian leaders.

The Discipleship Model

²³ Fernando Segovia, ed., *Discipleship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 62.

²⁴ Dennis M. Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990), 108-109.

The reality in the book of Acts is that there was more than one community in the early church. Discipleship in the church in Acts differed somewhat from the Jerusalem community to the other communities such as Antioch and Ephesus. Even when there were more Christian communities in Acts, I argue these three communities reflected particular discipleship characteristics from the other.

Discipleship in the Community of Jerusalem

Jerusalem was the center where not only part of the ministry of Jesus took place, but where the disciples were gathered in hope to receive the Holy Spirit. Jerusalem was the first Christian community formed within the Jewish tradition. Therefore, the members of this community were Jews who did not believe they were creating a new religion.²⁵ Actually, they were Jews who observed the Law, attended the temple, and lived in peace with the Jewish religious authorities.²⁶ The disciples of this community were active in prayer, observing the Law, learning from the apostle's teaching, breaking bread together, experiencing the Holy Spirit, sharing possessions, taking leadership roles, and serving. These members began to practice fasting as part of their custom.²⁷ However, this community was somewhat hermetic in who could be part of them. Within this community, a religious council was created and the *twelve*, counting Mathias, were the founders and leaders of the community and council. With the coming of Jesus, these Jewish Christians were being witnesses of the anticipated messianic time. Discipleship in

²⁵ Justo L. González, *Historia del Cristianismo* [The Story of Christianity], vol. 1, *Desde la era de los mártires hasta la era de los sueños frustrados* (Florida: Editorial Unilit, 1994), 37.

²⁶ Williston Walker, Richard A. Norris, David W. Lotz, and Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th Ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 23.

²⁷ González, *Historia del Cristianismo* [The Story of Christianity], 37.

the community of Jerusalem focused on Christian formation, community, a new way of living, generosity, Holy Spirit, and service.

Discipleship in the Community of Antioch

Antioch was a growing multicultural urban city. This community was formed by Christians from many different regions across the ancient world who preached the gospel not only to Jews but also to Gentiles in this city. Even though Jews lived in Antioch, because it was predominately Gentile and pagan, the work to be done was to be different from the Jerusalem community. The context of Antioch was not the same as Jerusalem and therefore required a different discipleship approach. In fact, Acts 11 appears as a reproduction of Acts 2, when the gospel was preached to Gentiles and other cultures. The methodology used to spread the word was through house church meetings.²⁸ The gospel was well received in Antioch, hence conversions in large number took place in this community.²⁹ This seemed to have been good news, however, it brought a challenge to the community in Antioch: discipleship. Two leaders, Barnabas and Saul, undertook this work by dedicating one year to teaching the people in Antioch.³⁰ These leaders proclaimed the gospel and taught people with the purpose of raising them up as leaders. It was in Antioch where Paul and Barnabas eventually began raising up leaders and then appointing them as elders. This community was served by prophets and teachers, and was also known by its missionary effort.³¹ Christians in Antioch did not limit their

²⁸ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Introduction and 1:1-2:47* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 1838.

²⁹ Acts 11:21, 24

³⁰ Acts 11:26

³¹ Acts 13:1-5

generosity to the locals, but they looked outwardly and supported their fellow Christians in Judea.³² Even when Antioch was a multicultural city and socio-economic classes divided the city, when their residents embraced the gospel, the new Christian community managed this socio-economic and cultural issue in such a way that unity was distinctive in it. According to Acts chapter 11 and 13, the Holy Spirit empowered and guided the Antioch Christian community in their work. Discipleship was now performed not only for Jews but for Gentiles who represented a multicultural group of Christians. Discipleship in the community of Antioch focused on the calling, community, Christian formation, preaching, generosity, a new way of living, Holy Spirit, leadership development, and service.

Discipleship in the Community of Ephesus

This Roman city was known for being the headquarters for the imperial cult of the emperor and for worshipping the goddess Artemis.³³ It was a commercial city and a place for Jews and Gentiles. This was another Christian community recorded in the book of Acts and to whom Luke assures the Gentile audience that Christianity was not a danger to the Roman Empire.³⁴ Like Antioch, the community of Ephesus had its own elders. The difference in this community was that the elders were appointed to feed the church of the Lord (20:28). As they cared for the church, they were told to be especially alert to dangers both from within the city and within the community (20:29-30) and not to be greedy for material gain (20:33-35).³⁵

³² Acts 11:29

³³ Bonnie Thurston, *Spiritual Life in the Early Church: The Witness of Acts and Ephesians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 68.

³⁴ Thurston, *Spiritual Life in the Early Church: The Witness of Acts and Ephesians*, 73.

³⁵ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Acts*, 167.

Moreover, the Christian community in Ephesus was to learn the new way of living within their household. The members of this community, Jews and Gentiles, were encouraged to live and walk together. The emphasis Luke gives is that the leaders were to feed, protect this community from fierce wolves, and to help the weak. Discipleship in this community had to do with a particular spiritual concern and protection towards its members. Therefore, its members were expected to be fed, cared for, protected, united, and to adopt a new way of life. Discipleship in the community of Ephesus focused on leadership, unity, community, Christian formation, and a new way of living.

The Discipleship Traits or Criteria

Even when we cannot be assured that there was a defined discipleship model in the church in Acts, I argue that there were certain discipleship traits that were forming the life of the disciple. These traits that appeared in the life of the early Christians were faithfulness to the gospel, *metanoia*, being active in spiritual practices, community, witnessing, generosity, serving, and preaching. In a time where there was no point of reference in relation to the meaning of the church, Acts discloses that the new disciple had to be faithful to the gospel even if his or her life was at risk. No one could become a disciple unless there was a change, *metanoia*. However, repentance was not the end of the spiritual journey of the new disciple. He or she would need to enter certain individual spiritual and communal practices such as gathering, breaking bread, and community building. In addition to these individual and communal spiritual practices, the disciple would witness through words and deeds, and would practice generosity as part of the new life style.

The Discipleship Catalysts

Again, we cannot be assured that there was a defined discipleship model in the communities of the church in Acts; however, I argue that there were certain discipleship catalysts that emerged from the context of the church in Acts. These discipleship catalysts accelerated the disciple-making in the early church. These discipleship catalysts revolved around calling, baptism, service, community, preaching, Holy Spirit, a new way of living, and leadership development.

Calling

The apostles and disciples functioned as missionaries in Acts as they were sent to preach repentance and forgiveness to all nations. According to Acts, discipleship is a missiological universal calling. Now that Jesus Christ is no longer on earth, the apostles and disciples were in charge of calling and inviting people to come and follow the risen Christ. However, there is a distinction in the way the term *follow* is used in Acts.

Discipleship is not expressed in Acts explicitly in terms of following Jesus. One notices that in Acts *ἀκολουθέω* (to follow) does not occur as frequently as in the Gospel of Luke and is not used to indicate discipleship. Since *ἀκολουθέω* can also be understood literally as “to accompany, go after, or go along with a person in time and place.” In the post-resurrection period one cannot follow the earthly Jesus to Jerusalem. One can continue to speak of discipleship as a journey, however, because the ultimate goal of Jesus’s journey is God, not Jerusalem. The element of intimacy associated with following Jesus is now associated with receiving the Spirit.³⁶

For these people in the book of Acts the call to follow Jesus meant to detach from their sinful way of living and to adopt a new way of life. In fact, it was in Acts that these followers called themselves followers of the Way.³⁷ Whether because Jesus in John 14:6 said that he was

³⁶ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Acts*, 24-25.

³⁷ Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.

the way or because by following Jesus Christ they were adopting a new way of life, the fact of the matter is that these men and women distinguished themselves by their way of living, which was set by Jesus's way. As the person was invited "to come," he or she had a second decision to make, "following" or not. Discipleship in Acts points to the initial element in the Christian journey of the individual, the calling. Luke made clear the point that there was no journey without the calling. The use of the term "call" suggests that there was both a caller and a recipient of the call.³⁸ Discipleship in Acts began with the calling. But this calling involved repentance and forgiveness.

Baptism

As the person in Acts accepted the call after repentance, the disciple had to be baptized. Luke understood baptism as an indispensable, outward indication of the existence of faith.³⁹ Through baptism there was a new relationship between Jesus and the individual which ultimately made the family of God.

One Jewish use of baptism in antiquity was an act of conversion (as part of the process of conversion), although Jewish people traditionally applied this function of immersion only to Gentiles. But in Acts Peter here demands a conversion no less radical, but from members of his own people who must likewise turn to Israel's God and the divinely appointed king, Jesus.⁴⁰

Hence, baptism for the communities in Acts was seen as a conversion step, the open door to the family of God, and to God's mission for the world. There is much debate about the place the Holy Spirit takes in baptism, but one must not limit baptism to the place the Holy Spirit has

³⁸ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 124.

³⁹ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 51.

⁴⁰ Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Introduction and 1:1-2:47*, 972.

in it. The biblical text in Acts affirms that besides the Holy Spirit there were other themes related to baptism such as faith, repentance, prayer, forgiveness of sins, and rejoicing.⁴¹ In Acts, baptism was part of the discipleship journey of the individual. Now, this journey that someone undertook and affirmed through baptism did not end for him or her in baptism, but it was extended to their families.⁴² The Christian journey one took in Acts involved baptism, but at the same time the family was called to discipleship through his or her baptism. Henceforth, Christian discipleship initiates with one and then is extended to the rest of the family through baptism.

Service

To talk about service in the book of Acts as another discipleship catalyst, one should consider Luke's quotation in Acts 8:34 and in his Gospel (Lk. 22:37) from Isaiah 53, the Servant Songs. Luke's view of servanthood is linked to Isaiah and serves in Acts and in his Gospel to help understand that Jesus sets the example of the true servant. These passages from Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30 referred to Jesus as the Servant of God.⁴³ As people who followed Jesus's example, the disciples in Acts also served. They were concerned and served the poor, the imprisoned, the blind, the widows, the Gentiles, and the oppressed.⁴⁴ In this new way of living, they were called to serve through social action. Throughout the book of Acts, discipleship involved service. Therefore, the disciple who learned from the master, eventually served in his or her discipleship journey.

⁴¹ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 123, 124.

⁴² Acts 10:24-48; 16:15, 33.

⁴³ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 99.

⁴⁴ Richard Longenecker, ed., *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand rapids, Michigan: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 72.

Community

Discipleship in the book of Acts was not individual but communal. Yan Chai in his theses, “The spirit-empowered discipleship in Acts,” states that the church was seen as that community where all supported, helped and cared for each other.⁴⁵ He argues that being a disciple meant being in community (2:43). Because in those years the church faced persecution, insecurity, and difficulties the only place and people to receive support from was the same church.⁴⁶ The communal dimensions of the Christian *way* in Acts spoke of the unity of the disciples (2:42; 4:32).⁴⁷ The communal discipleship involved certain activities such as breaking bread, prayer, sharing their possessions/generosity, meeting in houses, and gathering in the temple. The members of the early Christian community strove to be united and to function as one community helping each other.⁴⁸ The sense of unity in the post-resurrection period was demonstrated when the disciples gathered for breaking bread together. Sharing meals was not uncommon for them; in fact, part of the culture of the Ancient Near East involved table-fellowships. Meals were expressions of peace, trust, and community.⁴⁹ It was through sharing the table that any social, economic or spiritual boundary disappeared.⁵⁰ According to the Greco-

⁴⁵ Yan Chai, “The Spirit-Empowered Discipleship in Acts,” (D. Min., Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 123, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2288&context=doctoral>.

⁴⁶ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 144-145.

⁴⁷ Segovia, *Discipleship in the New Testament*, 72.

⁴⁸ Acts 1:14

⁴⁹ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 176.

⁵⁰ Dale T. Irving and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, vol. 1, *Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 24.

Roman world, sharing meals opened the moment to invoke the divine.⁵¹ Whether in Acts every shared meal was considered Eucharistic or not, the place that food and table had in the Christian community strengthened it and helped it to remain united as they remembered the risen Christ.⁵² But not only did the church in Acts developed a sense of community through breaking bread together but also through prayer. Clearly some of these disciples were Jews and therefore in their custom and practice they followed the Jewish times and forms of prayer.⁵³ In addition to fulfilling the Jewish practice of prayer, now prayer was a way to bring the disciples into community. The community gathered to pray for their own times of tribulations, needs, and trials.⁵⁴ Also, they prayed in moments of joy.⁵⁵ In Acts, Luke's concern about the proper relationship between Christian discipleship and wealth was widely recognized.⁵⁶ Hence, the early Christian community demonstrated its unity by sharing wealth and possessions with the unfortunate.⁵⁷ Later in the book of Acts, there are accounts of almsgiving and community leaders supporting others.⁵⁸ Living in community also meant generosity. Community was an essential feature of the context in the book of Acts. Community was intrinsically part of the way to discipleship from the moment someone began the Christian journey.

⁵¹ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 181.

⁵² Thurston, *Spiritual Life in the Early Church: The Witness of Acts and Ephesians*, 25.

⁵³ Thurston, *Spiritual Life in the Early Church: The Witness of Acts and Ephesians*, 27.

⁵⁴ Acts 2:42; 12:5; 13:18; 14:32; and 21:5

⁵⁵ Acts 8:39; 16:34; 13:48

⁵⁶ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 186.

⁵⁷ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 138-139.

⁵⁸ Acts 9:36; 10:2; 20:34-35.

Preaching

Preaching (proclaiming the good news) and witnessing appear interrelated in the book of Acts. For the disciples to serve as effective witnesses they had to testify publicly, both in word and deed.⁵⁹ One of the reasons why the speeches in Acts were important is not only because of the amount of space devoted to them, about one fifth of the book, but because of their association with the theological motif of witness, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ Witnessing and preaching, speeches and deeds were interrelated in Acts. Since Jesus Christ was no longer on earth, in Acts the disciples “preached” about the risen Christ through words or deeds; this was a way of witnessing the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles. Preaching and witnessing then was expected for those who joined the new movement and became discipleship catalysts for the early church in Acts.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

In addition to the calling, baptism, service, community, and preaching, one should not ignore the fact that discipleship in the book of Acts spoke to the need of the Spirit in the lives of the disciples. To them, more than any other, Acts described the importance of being empowered by the Spirit to carry out the mission of Christ.⁶¹ If the early church desired to survive and to extend the gospel in a peaceful way under the Roman domination, they needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit in the disciple was what made the disciple ready for ministry and for the mission. Evidently, Luke, throughout the book, prepared the readers to

⁵⁹ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 52.

⁶⁰ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 52.

⁶¹ Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 521.

capture the place the Holy Spirit had in this new community. If the new community persisted to exist, the work and power of the Holy Spirit in their discipleship path had to be integrated.

A New Way of Life

As it was mentioned earlier, when someone was called in the book of Acts, that person was called to a new way of life. Acts demonstrated the communal dimension of discipleship in *the way* one was called to walk, and in the mission, he or she was commissioned to fulfill.⁶²

Christian discipleship was demonstrated as the identification of oneself with the master's way of life and destiny in an intimate, personal following him.⁶³

In Luke-Acts, discipleship cannot be reduced to mission: it also involves formation. But neither can it be reduced to formation: it involves mission. It is neither formation nor mission in Luke-Acts; it is both/and.⁶⁴

In the first place, one walked *the way* of a disciple of Jesus only if he or she was called by Jesus (Acts 9, 22, 26).⁶⁵ One can argue that the new way of living in Acts was seen as the disciple is being formed by tradition; that is, the words, teachings, and example of Jesus and the observance of The Law (this is for the Jewish Christians). But in addition to tradition, this new way of life could not be initiated without having a *metanoia* experience (call of repentance to a changed behavior), which would change their conduct through repentance. This new way took the person to a new direction and to a new mission. Therefore, to remain faithful to this new walk and to the mission, the disciple was exposed to experiences. In Luke-Acts, one fulfilled the

⁶² Segovia, *Discipleship in the New Testament*, 71-72.

⁶³ Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*, 54.

⁶⁴ Segovia, *Discipleship in the New Testament*, 73.

⁶⁵ Segovia, *Discipleship in the New Testament*, 68.

mission only as one was empowered, guided, and protected through an ongoing experience whether through the Holy Spirit, conversion, visions, people, or angel's interventions.⁶⁶ In the new way of living, life was not isolated but communal. The role that community had in the new way of life was pivotal for the church in Acts to be strengthened, disciplined, united, and expanded into other places.

Discipleship not only involves a way to walk and a mission to fulfill, but it consists of being modeled by a tradition, being empowered by an experience, and being a participant in a community.⁶⁷

Henceforth, a new way of living, in addition to involving *metanoia*, contained Christian formation through traditions, teachings, and even through the community itself.

Leadership

Lastly, leadership in Acts was seen by the work of the apostles, who were considered the group of twelve and who oversaw and directed the work in the early Christian communities in the book of Acts. They formed the early leadership of the Christian church that would make decisions from Jerusalem. Among the leadership in Acts, there were some lay leaders who were not apostles but Jews and Gentiles. The integration of Gentiles and women in the leadership of the Christian movement, according to Acts, proved the universality and diversity of leadership in the Christian church. In fact, Acts described the integration of Gentile leaders in chapter six and the need to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. The raise of Gentiles within the church in Acts was a distinction that Luke presented in writing. In addition, Luke began in chapter one including women as part of those who received the Holy Spirit. Later these women became

⁶⁶ Segovia, *Discipleship in the New Testament*, 69.

⁶⁷ Segovia, *Discipleship in the New Testament*, 62.

witnesses of the gospel. Through Acts, women carried the Spirit, some were business people, others offered their own house for prayer, some taught the gospel, and others prophesied.⁶⁸

Margaret Aymer explains that there is archeological evidence to suggest women in leadership from northern Africa to southern Europe, and therefore, one must see in Luke's work the presence and leadership of women in crowds, towns, and synagogues.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The call to discipleship in the church in Acts meant the call to a new life and to a mission; that was witnessing for Jesus. The church in Acts was not only for Jews, but also for Gentiles because God does not show partiality. In the quest of discipleship in the book Acts, one should not ignore the question that was asked to the apostles: "Brothers, what should we do?" (2:37). Whether there was a defined discipleship model for all the communities in the church of Acts, what we find is a discipleship approach which dealt with the needs and realities of its context: poverty, ethnic inclusiveness, sin, lack of social support, corruption, oppression, and a hope for all people in the person of Jesus Christ. The discipleship "model" according to the context of the church in Acts could: 1) foster community between the people of the new movement; 2) instruct Christian formation through the apostle's teaching; 3) introduce a prerequisite for joining the movement; 4) engage the people for a call to social action; 5) take the gospel to Jews and Gentiles; 6) set a new way of living; and 7) develop Christian leaders. The result of utilizing a contextualized discipleship approach led the Christian communities in Acts to expand in the endeavor of disciple-making.

⁶⁸ Acts 1:14; 2:4, 17-18; 8:3; 9:2, 36-41; 12:12-13; 16:40; 21:19; 22:4;

⁶⁹ Newsom, Ringe, and Lapsley, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary*, 539.

Table 2. Summary of the Church in Acts Model

Summary The Church in Acts Model										
Period	Early Church – First Century									
Context, Needs and Realities	Roman domination was seen in the military, economic, and political arena. Jews protected the Jewish tradition from any potential religious threat. Christianity, as a new movement went under persecution. Expansion of the gospel to Gentile regions. There was significant poverty, sin, and corruption among the people to whom the gospel was taken. Early Christian communities appeared, such as Jerusalem, Antioch, and Ephesus, among others. The Jews and Gentiles needed some guidance on their faith inquiry. There was not yet a defined discipleship model to guide new believers to the new life in Christ. The needs and realities of this context involved poverty, ethnic inclusiveness, sin, lack of social support, corruption, oppression and a hope for all people in the person of Jesus Christ.									
The Discipleship Claim	The context of the church in Acts claimed for a discipleship model that could: 1) foster community between the people of the new movement; 2) instruct Christian formation through the apostle’s teaching; 3) introduce a pre-requisite for joining the movement; 4) engage the people for a call to social action; 5) take the gospel to Jews and Gentiles; 6) set a new way of living; and 7) raise Christian leaders.									
Discipleship Model	<p>The discipleship model that I propose that appeared in those early Christian communities who were receiving new believers is the following:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Calling</td> <td>Repentance, forgiveness, following Christ and nothing else</td> <td rowspan="4" style="vertical-align: top;"> Spiritual practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • Scripture • Breaking bread • Gathering • Community • Generosity • Service • Preaching/Witnessing (social action) </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Baptism</td> <td>Pre-requisite to join the family of God</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Formation</td> <td>Tradition, experiences, and teachings</td> </tr> <tr> <td>New way of living</td> <td>This is set by Jesus’s way and by certain practices</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Calling	Repentance, forgiveness, following Christ and nothing else	Spiritual practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • Scripture • Breaking bread • Gathering • Community • Generosity • Service • Preaching/Witnessing (social action) 	Baptism	Pre-requisite to join the family of God	Formation	Tradition, experiences, and teachings	New way of living	This is set by Jesus’s way and by certain practices
Calling	Repentance, forgiveness, following Christ and nothing else	Spiritual practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • Scripture • Breaking bread • Gathering • Community • Generosity • Service • Preaching/Witnessing (social action) 								
Baptism	Pre-requisite to join the family of God									
Formation	Tradition, experiences, and teachings									
New way of living	This is set by Jesus’s way and by certain practices									
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	Faithfulness to the Gospel, <i>metanoia</i> , active in spiritual practices, gathering, community, witnessing in word and deed, generosity, and serving.									
Discipleship Catalysts	Calling, baptism, service, community, preaching, Holy Spirit, a new way of living, and leadership development.									

Source: Data adapted from authors cited in this chapter.

1.2 The Catechumenate Model

The Context

By the second century, the Roman Empire had expanded to other regions. The Christian church was under persecution, and the Greco-Roman world embraced pluralistic and pagan religions. However, during this period of persecution and pagan religion, the church expanded into other regions. It was clear by this century that Christianity went beyond Jerusalem, reaching Judea, Samaria, and extending to the ends of the earth.⁷⁰ But soon, Christianity faced the realities of the third century. It was between 300 CE and 312 CE that the rebuilding of pagan temples and the revival of pagan cults happened. In these years, the pagan groups pressured Christianity not only in doctrine but in freedom, burning Christian documents. According to the record, the martyrs (their ministry and deaths) occurred during this period in North Africa, Palestine, and Egypt.

An important event took place in the third century, the “conversion” of the Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312 CE.⁷¹ Later in his regime, Constantinople, founded by Constantine, became a Christian city and the symbol of a new vision for an empire and for Christianity. With this political shift in the Roman Empire, a new cycle had begun for Christianity.⁷² The epicenter not only of the empire but now of the church was the emperor. Eventually, persecution ended when Galerius issued the Edict of Toleration in 311 CE and

⁷⁰ Acts 1:8 “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (NRSV).

⁷¹ It is believed that prior to a critical battle, Constantine experienced a vision of the cross in the sky. Many have debated about when this happened and what he saw. Nevertheless, his allegiance to Christ affirmed and enabled him to become the emperor of the empire as he won the battle and took possession of the office in the West. Rebecca Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, vol. 6, *The New Church’s Teaching Series* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 88.

⁷² Robert Bruce Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 55.

Constantine and Licinius issued the Edict Milan in 313 CE. However, it was at the end of the fourth century, with the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 CE that the Roman emperors Gratian, Theodosius I, and the western co-regent Valentinian II declared Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. Even when Christianity was no longer illegal after 311/313, it did not become the official religion of the Empire until 380 under Emperor Theodosius.

This political shift moved Christianity to a new place, religiously speaking. Christians began to enjoy the privileges of being the religion of the state. Finally, the Roman Empire made its presence in the life of the church. This change in the context of the Christian church caused the conversion of the upper class, and people sought Christianity with a true desire, while others did it just to receive the benefits of the state.

At the end of the second century Christians were a small minority of the population of the Roman Empire, but starting in the middle of the third century crowds were entering the Christian church. Before the close of the fifth century the overwhelming majority of the citizens of the Roman Empire were Christians.⁷³

St. Augustine (ca. 354-430) explained the context of the church in this time as follows:⁷⁴

1. Christians ceased to be a persecuted minority and began to enjoy a new privileged status; the motivation for conversion became more checkered.
2. A flood of new converters; becoming Christian became socially more acceptable.
3. The church became embattled over several doctrinal controversies.
4. A series of great Christian thinkers, most served as bishops and made teaching of catechumens one of their routine pastoral duties.

Besides the religious, social, and political conflicts the Christian church faced, during these first centuries doctrinal conflicts also took place. By the fourth century, doctrinal conflicts

⁷³ Kenneth Scoot Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1500* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1975), 221.

⁷⁴ Tory K. Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church and Its Recovery for Today* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 37.

began to arise because of the expansion of Christianity into other regions where their beliefs contradicted the Christian faith. Some of the conflicts in these centuries involved:

- 1) The Greek philosophy and philosophers.
- 2) The Gnostics in first and second century.
- 3) The Donatists in the third century, and
- 4) Arianism in the fourth century.

The result of this political and religious shift was that, in the fourth century, non-Christian beliefs began to infiltrate into the empire and church and hence influenced, to some extent, both.

Evidently, the gospel reached Gentile territories in the early church period. However, not every person in those cities came from a Christian community or shared the Christian faith. The question was, what is the path for Gentiles and pagans to come into the Christian faith? Those led toward baptism were pagans who lacked the experience of “education in Christ”, who lived in a polity that either placed a Christian life in extraordinary temptation or even (in the time of the state-church) made it difficult to obtain an assurance about their motives—almost inevitably mixed.⁷⁵ I summarize this period as a time where the needs and realities of this context involved a community for those who were under persecution, a path to introduce people in full connection into the church, and catechetical formation.

⁷⁵ Johannes Wagner, ed., *Adult Baptism and the Catechumenate*, vol. 22, *Temporal and Supra-Temporal in the History of the Catechumenate and Baptism*, trans. Alois Stenzel, S. J. (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 33-34.

The Discipleship Claim

The context of the second to fourth century in the Christian church claimed for a model that could: a) create Christian community, b) offer a process for full inclusion in the church, and c) provide Christian formation.

The Discipleship Model

I argue that in the early centuries the catechumenate became the discipleship model that arose from the context of the Christian church, and it became the model that solved the needs of its context. As the Christian faith expanded to reach gentile regions, the catechumenate became that place for people to begin their Christian formation. It was, in a way, a place for new converts to join a learning community. Since the second century, the social and religious context of the catechumenate was non-Christian. Non-Christians who pursued the Christian faith needed a path, and the way for them to be initiated into the Christian church was through baptism and first Eucharist. Catechumen is the term given to all those who are being prepared for baptism and Eucharist, for a full inclusion in the church.⁷⁶ Certainly, during this period there was a need for the existence of a catechetical process. Tory Baucum, in his book *Evangelical Hospitality*, states:

Tradition believes that the catechumenate had its origins early in the second century. The early second century church manual known as the *Didache* suggests that inquirers were first to be subjected to an ethical regimen under the rubric of “Two Ways” (reminiscent of Jesus’s “antithesis” in the Sermon on the Mount). After this instruction, the author immediately proceeds to discuss baptism. The order and context suggest this manual had a catechetical function, ordering the assimilation phase of Christian initiation.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Tory K. Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church and Its Recovery for Today* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 144.

⁷⁷ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 33.

Even when the catechumenate began in the second century, the *Didache* was a catechetical document used for Christian formation early in this century. Hence, to understand the catechumenate, a brief reference must be made about the *Didache*. For this document introduced something that the catechumenate later would deal with, Christian formation.⁷⁸ According to the *Didache*, special emphasis was made on communal standards of behavior and belonging. The *Didache* devoted the first six chapters to Christian conduct and life through the *Two Ways*: the way of life and the way of death.⁷⁹ These chapters laid out the ground for Christian formation and behavior. Moreover, chapters seven and nine provided instructions for baptism and Eucharist that early Christian groups integrated in the religious order and practice.⁸⁰ Professor Mark Stamm affirms that the focus in the *Didache* is on what people do, the instruction; hence, to become Christian is to do—the catechumenal formation; it is more like a learning path, learning in the doing, an apprenticeship.⁸¹ One cannot ignore that there was a certain degree of influence in the catechumenate from the *Didache*. The way of living, the role of baptism, and Eucharist were at least some components that appeared in the catechumenate.

Eventually for those non-Christians of the second century, the catechumenate became that place that would welcome them. It was a place for their questions, spiritual concerns, and a

⁷⁸ The instructions of the catechumens were more practical than doctrinal. Lawrence D. Folkemer, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, vol. 11, *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1993), 244.

⁷⁹ Canon Spence, *The Teaching of The Twelve Apostles: A Translation with Notes; and Excursus (I. TO IX.) illustrative of the "teaching,"* 2nd ed. (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1888), 8-20, <http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/didache.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Canon Spence, *The Teaching of The Twelve Apostles: A Translation with Notes; and Excursus (I. TO IX.) illustrative of the "teaching,"* 2nd ed. (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1888), 21-22, 26-28, <http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/didache.pdf>.

⁸¹ Mark Stamm, "Ecclesiologies of Discipleship," (class lecture presented at Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, TX, June 11, 2019).

place to be sought with a faith desire. The catechumenate clearly functioned from the second through the fifth centuries of the church's mission as a process of enculturation for inquirers.⁸²

The catechumenate was the ancient systemic process that introduced people to the church, through faith steps and rituals, which prepared the person for baptism and first Eucharist. The third-century document *The Apostolic Tradition*, described this process as an “organized method” of Christian formation and instruction, which was marked by “liturgical rites”.⁸³

The Catholic Encyclopedia describes the ancient catechumenate as:

A process by which catechumens, whether adults or children of catechetical age, are prepared for baptism according to an organized method, which includes liturgical rites as well as instruction...the origins of the catechumenate can perhaps be found in Judaism, for instruction was required before an adult gentile was admitted to circumcision and proselyte baptism, and similarly before the initiatory washing practice by the Qumran community. Mention of the catechumen (*katechoumenos*) and the catechist (*katechon*) occurs already in Paul (Gal. 6:6). In the Christian Church, Acts contains several examples of instruction given immediately before baptism (e.g. Acts 8:35). . . . However, there is no evidence for a catechumenate spread over a period of time before the second half of the second century.⁸⁴

The catechumenate was a process that would provide the path for doctrine, behavior–*metanoia*– and community. The catechumenate was a (1) processive method of initial spiritual emancipation and formation, (2) marked by ritual progression, (3) which was comprehensive in nature.⁸⁵ Depending on the context, the requirements of the church community and/or the needs of the convert, the catechumenate included two, three, or four stages lasting anywhere from one to three years.⁸⁶ However, the fact that all came in the beginning to hear the word did not mean

⁸² Tory K. Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church and Its Recovery for Today* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 4.

⁸³ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 34.

⁸⁴ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 32.

⁸⁵ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 38.

⁸⁶ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 4, 35.

that all would enter the catechumenate, for the catechumen was to be examined by his or her conduct in order to enter and continue in the process.⁸⁷

Therefore, the catechumenate was never intended to be a defined process in terms of time. Rather, there were certain expectations to be fulfilled in each stage, and the catechumenate, as it was mentioned, could be prolonged based on the needs of the person and the needs of the community.

In the third century, because there had been few catechumens they were closely evaluated regarding attendance, progress, and lifestyles, but by the fourth century this could not happen as in previous centuries.⁸⁸ It was during the end of the second century, to the third century, and part of the fourth century that the catechumenate thrived, but soon that would change. Beginning in the fourth century and on, after Christianity arose, the focus shifted to infant baptism instead of adult catechumen because parents decided to initiate their children in the church.⁸⁹ Even when the focus changed, the catechumenate continued in the following centuries in various forms among different communities in the East and in the West.

⁸⁷ Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, eds. Harold W. Attridge and Paul Bradshaw (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002), 83-93.

⁸⁸ William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 58.

⁸⁹ Lawrence D. Folkemer, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, vol. 11, *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1993), 244. The decline in the catechumenate, began in the fourth and fifth centuries, proceeded rapidly in the sixth century and beyond. Candidates for baptism were now presumed to be infants brought to the Church by their parents. An emphasis on Original Sin also began to take hold, and led to the celebration of baptism as soon as possible after birth because of the high rate of infant mortality. No longer did Christian initiation bring together the elements of liturgy and catechesis, ritual and faith experience, and most importantly, the idea of communal belonging. "History of RCIA," Holy Spirit Catholic Church, <https://holyspiritcatholic.com/history-of-rcia>.

The catechumenate process and framework

The four stages of the ancient catechumenate were: 1) evangelization, 2) catechumenate, 3) lent, and 4) mystagogy.

This journey began when the person inquired about the Christian faith and community. Here the candidate decided to join the Christian faith. This decision meant to choose a faithful Christian who would act as his or her sponsor. The sponsor was responsible for the conduct and process of the candidate.

When newcomers came to the church, Hippolytus insisted that they be interviewed, along with those who brought them, later called sponsors. Sponsors would be questioned whether their guests were “capable of hearing the word.”⁹⁰

During the initial inquiry, the teacher guided the candidate to enquire concerning the reason why they had turned to the faith and about their state of life.⁹¹ Besides asking the sponsor, if the candidate was a slave or servant, the master was asked as well to report for him or her.⁹² For Hippolytus, it was not about the quantity of people in his congregation, but the quality of Christian life he or she pursued. For St. Augustine, it was more about the motives that led the person to inquire about the Christian faith. But not everyone was welcome to enter the catechumenate. According to the *Apostolic Tradition*, in the early centuries there were some prohibited occupations that would not allow the person to join the catechumenate.⁹³ However, by

⁹⁰ Hippolytus: *A Text for Students*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey J. Cuming (Bramcote: Grove Books Limited, 1987), 15.

⁹¹ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 34.

⁹² Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, eds. Harold W. Attridge and Paul Bradshaw (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002), 82.

⁹³ Brothel keeper, fornicators, soldiers, astrologers, magicians, concubine, or someone who's concubine, prostitutes, drunkards, maker of idols, teachers of children, gladiator, pagan follower or priest, hunting. The ethical, moral and social concerns of these occupations were that they what did not allow the person to enter the catechumenate if there was no *metanoia*. Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 93-94.

St. Augustine's time, the church in North Africa worked to enable all kinds of people to enter the catechumenate. Eventually, a decision was made whether the candidate was ready or not to hear the word, the first step of the process called evangelization.

1) *Evangelization*. This stage was not a full and long program, rather a small, cohesive and systematic *kerygma*.⁹⁴ Evangelization was offered in a one-day session. This stage provided an introduction and overview for the candidate. In this case, the introduction began with the candidate reflecting on the reason and motives that led him or her to inquiry about the faith. Taking their response as a point of reference, the catechist began to proclaim the good news of salvation.

Evangelical catechesis demanded an improvisational touch—attuned to the mood of the moment and to the experience and education of the inquirer. It also demanded respecting the face to face dynamic... Moreover, evangelical catechesis involved more than methods or message; it also—and perhaps ultimately—involved forming a relationship.⁹⁵

For St. Augustine, this stage was only an introduction of the motives of their inquiry and an overture of the message: love of God and love of neighbor. During the next stage, the catechumenate, the catechumens would have enough time to define clearly the motives, embrace the message, and begin to demonstrate through their behavior a new way of life. In the question, “Who fulfills the conditions for admission to baptism?” Acts 8:26-40 demands nothing more than faith, in response to the *kerygma*.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 109.

⁹⁵ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 153.

⁹⁶ Johannes Wagner, ed., *Adult Baptism and the Catechumenate*, vol. 22, *Temporal and Supra-Temporal in the History of the Catechumenate and Baptism*, trans. Alois Stenzel, S. J. (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 32.

2) *Catechumenate*. In this stage, the catechists were concerned to impart to their candidates an orthodox teaching. Augustine used his sermons, linking books of the Bible per month during the liturgy of the Word as the catechetical resource to instruct, form, and encourage the catechumens. For him, this stage was more than instructing the catechumens through systematic theology. He used the Scripture to teach by including certain theological doctrines if needed. It was during the liturgy of the Word where the catechumens received most of the instruction.⁹⁷ Catechumens were welcome only to the liturgy of the Word. When a person became a catechumen, the sign of the cross was made on the forehead. This rite was inclusive and meant the call to conversion. This stage was a designated time to learn about the Gospel, the Church, and the Christian life.⁹⁸ This stage could last up to three years. The catechumens were not judged for their time in the process but for their conduct.⁹⁹

For Hippolytus, in the early third century, this step of the process brought catechumens and their sponsors to be re-examined, again with attention primarily to lifestyle: “Have they honored the widows? Have they visited the sick? Have they done every good work?”¹⁰⁰

The catechumens received instruction conducive to the conversion process several times a week. The teaching seemed to have concentrated on a reshaping of the convert’s *behavior*. When a candidate’s behavior was adjudged to have changed sufficiently, he or she was admitted to stage three—enlightenment—which concentrated on *belief*.¹⁰¹ In the enlightenment stage the

⁹⁷ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 56.

⁹⁸ Learning in the catechumenate context refers to an embodied learning, it is learning in the doing.

⁹⁹ Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 96.

¹⁰⁰ *Hippolytus: A Text for Students*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey J. Cuming (Bramcote: Grove Books Limited, 1987), 17.

¹⁰¹ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 34.

catechumens were welcome to the liturgy of the Word but it was prohibited for them to stay for the liturgy of the table. They would be dismissed after the sermon and be accompanied by their sponsors to honor the mystery of the Eucharist.¹⁰² It was at the end of this stage, that those catechumens who were ready would offer their names for baptism. This meant entrance to the Lenten stage.

3) *Lent*. Lent was the season when the period of formation was fulfilled as the person was ready for baptism. Once the catechumens were approved by the bishop, this stage became the countdown for the catechumen. William Harmless describes this stage as: 1) asceticism, 2) instruction, and 3) exorcism.¹⁰³ Lawrence D. Folkemer in the book *Studies in Early Christianity* divides this stage as: 1) doctrinal and moral, 2) ascetical, and 3) liturgical.

It was in this stage that the catechumen was carefully scrutinized, indoctrinated, and disciplined. The period of time was shorter but the preparation was more intense and specialized. It was necessary that he learn the specific doctrines of the Church, measure up to rigid moral and ascetic requirements, and undergo a series of liturgical purifications.¹⁰⁴

Forty days before Easter, which is the day when the catechumen would be baptized, the catechumen entered an intensive time of instruction, formation, liturgies, and spiritual practices such as prayers, generosity toward the poor, and fasting (no meat, no eating, no drinking five days a week during daylight, no bathing, and no intercourse).¹⁰⁵ There is evidence that during

¹⁰² Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 90.

¹⁰³ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 63.

¹⁰⁴ Folkemer, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, 249.

¹⁰⁵ Part of the reason for no bathing, in addition to cause physical discomfort, was to avoid one of the social Greco-Roman places: the public baths. Normally public baths could create in the candidate certain distractions that were not necessary during Lent.

this period, the Church evaluated the lifestyle of the candidate by questioning the sponsor and neighbors of the candidate. When someone was prepared to be baptized, he or she was to make an examination of his or her style of life.¹⁰⁶ For Augustine, this was a time for doctrinal instruction and moral formation. Ambrose, the fourth century bishop, described Lent as a period for moral education, which in order to learn this way of life, the *Competentes* needed two things: (1) appropriate models to imitate, and (2) “basic moral principles.”¹⁰⁷ Eastern sources typically refer to the former as *photizomenoi* (“those being illuminated”), Western sources preferred to call them *competentes* (“petitioners”), while Rome had the unique custom of calling them *electi* (“chosen ones”).¹⁰⁸ Later, Augustine considered Lent as a period of “boot camp or Olympic training” “to purge the poisons out of one’s system, to root out slovenly habits, and to sober up with others who sought recovery from an addiction to the world.”¹⁰⁹ During the season of Lent, the catechumens were being prepared for baptism through a series of instructions and exercises called “scrutinies.”¹¹⁰

Usually at the first scrutiny their names were registered and they were examined on what they had learned or assimilated during the first stage of their catechumenate. At the second scrutiny, the *Competentes* received instruction in Christian doctrine along with the daily expositions of choice passages in the Old and New Testaments. Various articles of faith are expounded and the Apostle’s Creed is presented to them for the first time with complete explanation. Such subjects as Faith, the Unity of God, the Sovereignty of God, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Exaltation of Christ, Second Coming, The Last Judgement, the Holy Ghost, the Catholic Church, and Life Everlasting, are taught to the candidates. The third of the scrutinies during Lent was a time of learning the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer. Doctrinal instruction also had its moral

¹⁰⁶ Have they honored the widows, visited the sick, and done good works? Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 104-105.

¹⁰⁷ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 95.

¹⁰⁸ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 62-63.

¹⁰⁹ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 380.

¹¹⁰ Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 106-109.

implications. The acceptance of Christ in the Creed meant also the rejection of the devil. Honest repentance, self-denial, examination of motives, self-renunciation, are necessary to the one who would be a member of the community of the faithful. The candidates were carefully examined and scrutinized concerning their moral life. In addition to the candidates being exposed to doctrinal and moral instruction, they entered an ascetic praxis which also prepared them for their exorcism. In the early centuries, as in later times, the usual form of exorcism was a simple and authoritative adjuration addressed to the demon within the person in the name of God and particularly in the name of Christ crucified.¹¹¹

It was during the Easter weekend when the catechumens would participate in the ritual bathing on Holy Thursday and would fast for the next two days. On Saturday, they would all be in a vigil watch as preparation and expectation of the climax of the process, which was baptism and first Eucharist. At the appointed time, the catechumens were brought together accompanied by their sponsors. Men were sent to one room and women to another. As the catechumens entered the room with a pool, they stripped off their clothing, stepped into the waters and the bishop submerged the person.¹¹² As they came out of the waters, the bishop anointed the person with oil and he or she was dressed with new white linen robes.¹¹³ In fact, by the fourth century postbaptismal ceremonies appeared and eventually were included as part of the process.¹¹⁴ The only time when baptisms occurred were during the Easter Vigil. After this rite, the new members were taken into a place where they would receive the Eucharist for the first time.

¹¹¹ Folkemer, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, 249-251, 254.

¹¹² Candidates were baptized in the nude, and in a more private setting.

¹¹³ Three anointings occurred: before immersion, after immersion, and lastly in the gathering with the entire assembly.

¹¹⁴ Ceremonies such as hand-laying prayer in some traditions were associated with the commitment of the new birth through baptism and the “filling with the Spirit.” Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 118-119, 132-133.

4) *Mystagogy*. There were two traditions regarding the timing in the mystagogy stage. One, John Chrysostom, (347-407 CE) and Theodore of Mopsuestia, (350-428 CE) believed that it was necessary to explain the elements of the rite of baptism prior to the Easter vigil. This approach would allow the catechumens to be prepared and to anticipate the event.¹¹⁵ Two, St. Cyril, (315-386 CE) believed that the mysteries of baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist were to be explained only after initiation.¹¹⁶ Being exposed to nakedness, then being dunked, and anointed became a marvelous catechetical exposure. Only after the rite, the now neophytes would enter a time of instruction for such mystery.

Following St. Cyril's timing, mystagogy was the period that followed baptism. This was sort of a follow up period; for the next seven days, the new converts would reflect and learn of the mystery of baptism and Eucharist. Hippolytus suggested that the newly baptized would need further teaching in a private setting. Even when the newly baptized partook of the Eucharist on the night of his or her baptism, now this period opened the beginning for the new Christian to regularly partake of the holy meal with the whole assembly. This stage was a moment to remind the people of the importance to secure what they received and to continue growing in the new life.

It was understood that "being in constant *metanoia*" was a post-baptismal description of the Christian as such. Baptismal therefore called *sphragis*, *sigillum*, a sealing, a dedication to *metanoia*. The formula was created as a command, valid for life" "Preserve the seal of baptism."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 70.

¹¹⁶ Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 69.

¹¹⁷ Wagner, *Adult Baptism and the Catechumenate*, 40.

The Discipleship Traits or Criteria

Implicitly, the catechumenate at least required the catechumen certain expected criteria as part of his or her commitment. These seemed to be the expected criteria in the catechumenate model: godly personal testimony, attend worship, be in community, learn the word, be active in service, and be generous. In other words, the person through the catechumenate had to experience and demonstrate a personal testimony as a result of a dedication to *metanoia*. However, he or she had to continue attending worship and partaking of the Eucharist. The person learned to live as one among the community of the faithful. He or she not only heard the word but had to act on it, and be involved in acts of service and of generosity.

The Discipleship Catalysts

Tory K. Baucum explained four components that appeared in the ancient catechumenate. I argue these four components became the discipleship catalysts that accelerated the disciple-making through the catechumenate. These discipleship catalysts according to Tory K. Baucum were: 1) relationships, 2) rituals, 3) rhetoric, and 4) roles.

Relationships

These created a safe place for seekers to strengthen their bonds with other Christians and to get acquainted with the new faith. For St. Augustine, relationships were friendships that become “a bond between souls that cleave to each other through love ‘poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.’”¹¹⁸ That is, relationships are a gift through which our faith grows toward each other and toward God. Hence, in this stage, relationships were both human

¹¹⁸ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 173.

and divine. Relationships were pivotal during the conversion process in the catechumenate. These relationships not only involved the other catechumens but also sponsors, catechists, and the faithful local community. Through relationships the catechumen learned to walk in community. This is a distinction in the Christian faith from the beginning of the process for a new convert. The community was the group that cared, formed, and supported the individual throughout the process. Indeed, the catechumenate became a relational process.

Rituals

The catechumenate also became a ritual process. Rituals served not only for the catechumen to experience the divine but also for the Christian community (bishop, sponsor, catechist, and the assembly of the faithful) to make its presence in the service. Some of the rituals involved exorcisms, making the sign of the cross, acts of self-denial, baptism, and the Eucharist. It is worth mentioning that words and actions were important in each rite, and each ritual was part of the conversion process and preparation. Rituals were more than simple steps in the liturgy, rather they were opportunities where community happened, the divine was experienced, and the catechumen was marked. Rituals should be no disvalued or ignored, for they played an important role in the catechumenate process.

Rhetoric

The role of rhetoric involved the preaching and teaching of the church. While the catechumens were under catechetical instruction, they were judged and scrutinized regarding their moral life.¹¹⁹ The catechist's work was formational instead of merely informational,

¹¹⁹ Folkemer, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, 250.

however, the catechist in his or her work had to empathize with the audience and love them. There were four categories of materials that the catechist used: 1) narratives, 2) controlling images, 3) the “new law” of Jesus—the Sermon on the Mount and the opening beatitudes—and 4) practical teaching.¹²⁰ The Sermon on the Mount was considered the text for ethical behavior and belonging. For Augustine, the beatitudes invoked a new way of living and invited people to it.¹²¹ It was in the catechumenate that the inquirer first engaged deeply in a biblical text. The catechetical teaching/preaching provided highly doctrinal, yet receptor-oriented instruction, where two extremes were connected—the Scripture and the seeker.¹²² There was no need to introduce the whole Scripture, laws, and ritual practices. The purpose was not to give all in one stage, but just enough for the catechumen to be introduced to the new path in which there would be more to be discovered.

The roles

The roles described the responsibilities of the clergy, catechumen, sponsors, catechists, and assembly of the faithful that were to be done in each stage of the process. In this case, the clergy—bishop or priest, had the responsibility to take part in each stage of the process and to officiate the rituals; the catechumen, after the rite of initiation, had the responsibility to remain in the catechumenate. The catechumen spent from one to three years of preparation, in which the person had to be committed and was responsible for each step of the process. The sponsor accompanied the inquirer through all the stages of the catechumenate.¹²³ The sponsor became a

¹²⁰ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 109.

¹²¹ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church.*, 113.

¹²² Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 107.

¹²³ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 145.

witness in each stage of the process to the honesty and commitment of the catechumen. In some cases, the sponsor was questioned about the motives, character, changes, and growth of the catechumen. The “threshold” role of the sponsor was encouraging, counseling, and correcting. The sponsor may also have participated in certain rituals during the process. The sponsor became someone who would trust the candidate’s motives and who would be accountable for his or her process. The catechist, in the New Testament–Galatians 6:6, catechist or instructor–was a teacher of the Christian faith. The catechists were those who instructed and taught the inquirers. The principal role of the catechist within the catechumenate was to create an environment conducive to faith, in which the catechist nurtured, protected, and joined people in their quest for faith.¹²⁴

Conclusion

I summarize this period as a time where the main needs and realities of this context involved a community for those who were under persecution until the early fourth century, doctrine formation, and a path for new converters. Indeed, the context of the Christian church in the fourth century changed significantly when Christianity became legal, and with this the need to have a path for new converts was essential. With all these dynamics, the church provided the catechumenate as a process for adult formation.¹²⁵ Without a doubt, the catechumenate model under the context of the second to fourth century was able to: a) create a Christian community, b) offer a process for full inclusion in the church, and c) provide Christian formation. Disciple-

¹²⁴ Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church*, 146, 147.

¹²⁵ As early as the end of the second century the increasing number of Christian candidates rendered it necessary to systematize this preparation, to lay down definite rules for its performance, and to determine the period of probation. Hence arose the discipline of the catechumenate. Folkemer, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, 244.

making happened because of the contextualized discipleship approach that the Christian church undertook during this period.

Table 3. Summary of the Catechumenate Model

Summary The Catechumenate Model													
Period	Early Church – Second to Fourth Century												
Context, Needs and Realities	The Christian church under persecution until the early fourth century. Pluralistic and pagan religions appeared. Expansion of the Gospel. Doctrinal conflicts inside and outside the church. Christianity became the religion of the state. Not every person came from a Christian community or shared the Christian faith. There was a need to provide a path for Gentiles and pagans to come into the Christian faith. The main needs and realities of this context involved community for those who were under persecution, doctrinal formation and a path for new converters.												
Discipleship Claim	The context of the second to fourth century in the Christian church claimed for a model that could: a) create Christian community, b) offer a process for full inclusion in the church, and c) provide Christian formation.												
Discipleship Model	<p>The catechumenate was a systematic process conformed by faith steps and rituals that prepared the person for baptism and first Eucharist. It was the path through which the person was initiated into the Church. The four stages of the catechumenate were:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">Evangelization (Hearers)</td> <td style="width: 50%;">The person entered self-inquiry and heard the good news.</td> <td style="width: 25%;">One-day session</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Catechumenate (Kneelers or catechumens)</td> <td>The catechumen learned about the Gospel, the Church, and the Christian life.</td> <td>One to three years</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lent (Competentes)</td> <td>The catechumen entered an intensive time of instruction, formation, liturgies, and spiritual practices.</td> <td>Forty days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mystagogy (neophytes)</td> <td>Following St. Cyril's approach, the new converts reflected and learned of the mystery of baptism and Eucharist following his or her baptism.</td> <td>Seven days</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The concepts that were involved in this model were doctrine, behavior–<i>metanoia</i>, conversion, formation, rituals, and community. The catechumen was not alone throughout the process, but his or her sponsor walked alongside him or her to give support, supervision, and an example of Christian life. The catechumenate lasted from one to three years.</p>	Evangelization (Hearers)	The person entered self-inquiry and heard the good news.	One-day session	Catechumenate (Kneelers or catechumens)	The catechumen learned about the Gospel, the Church, and the Christian life.	One to three years	Lent (Competentes)	The catechumen entered an intensive time of instruction, formation, liturgies, and spiritual practices.	Forty days	Mystagogy (neophytes)	Following St. Cyril's approach, the new converts reflected and learned of the mystery of baptism and Eucharist following his or her baptism.	Seven days
Evangelization (Hearers)	The person entered self-inquiry and heard the good news.	One-day session											
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Mystagogy (neophytes)	Following St. Cyril's approach, the new converts reflected and learned of the mystery of baptism and Eucharist following his or her baptism.	Seven days											
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	Godly personal testimony, attend worship, be in community, learn the word, active in service, and be generous.												
Discipleship Catalysts	Relationships, rituals, rhetoric, and roles.												

Source: Data adapted from authors cited in this chapter.

Chapter 2 Medieval Church Period

2.1 The Monastic Model

The first three centuries involved persecution and martyrdom for the Christian church, but by the end of the fourth century Christianity entered a new cycle. Even though the work Constantine did around the Edict of Milan in 313 CE gave the Christian church religious toleration within the Roman Empire, it was not until Constantine embraced Christianity and became the emperor of both empires, West and East, that the church entered a time of peace and growth. In one way, his conversion benefited the Christian church, but in another way, it created certain passivity and worldliness among Christians. Because of that, a new movement appeared in the Christian church, the monastic movement.

The Context

Rebecca Lyman in her book, *Early Christian Traditions* states: “The change that occurred in the Roman imperial religion in the fourth century brought into the church new opportunities and challenges.”¹²⁶ After professing Christianity as his religion and becoming the emperor of the entire empire, West and East, Constantine brought new opportunities to the church as he continued to support her by relieving the poor, pouring massive amounts into the church, creating a food system for churches to provide benevolent assistance, authorizing Sunday as a day of rest, and building many large church buildings. However, not everything that happened in the Christian church during this period meant opportunities, there were also certain challenges, such as the state taking part in the decision making of the church, the emperor granting bishops legal status as magistrates, the church buildings being filled with luxury and

¹²⁶ Rebecca Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, vol. 6, *The New Church's Teaching Series* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 105.

ostentation, bishops entering into fights over positions, exempting clergy and church properties from tax policies, and the wealthy and powerful dominating the life of the church.¹²⁷ The challenge for some Christians was seeing their church being contaminated and unfaithful to the Gospel.

To be a Christian was no longer a detriment in the empire but rather an advantage. To profess Christianity opened doors to a career in the administration of the empire. Enterprising towns could win better charters by proclaiming that they had become Christian. To profess Christianity now became for some not simply a path for doing good but for doing well. Certainly, insincere conversions began to be reported.¹²⁸

By the end of the fourth century, Christianity had been adopting a Roman identity. Christianity was not any longer a way to live Christ-like, but a transition to an office, power, and wealth. People became Christians because of a worldly motive or to please the emperor. Eusebius, the ‘father of church history’ and biographer of the first Christian emperor, commented in his *Life of Constantine* on the “hypocrisy of people who crept into the church with an eye to the emperor’s favour.”¹²⁹ Some Christians made a religious and political shift from placing their eyes on the cross to the emperor. Christians were conformed to the new religious life, and crowds made the decision to become Christian for personal political benefits without having proper catechetical formation.

The narrow door that Jesus referred to became wide open that crowds of people were entering through it—many only in search of possessions and privileges, without truly understanding the meaning of baptism or of the Christian faith.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Robert Bruce Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 55.

¹²⁸ Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity*, 59.

¹²⁹ Robert Markus, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 62.

¹³⁰ The catechetical formation that was shaping Christian lives during the second and third century had not the same impact by the end of the fourth century. Justo L. González, *Historia del Cristianismo* [The Story of

The worldly success of the church in the fourth century, the openness to earthy motives in the heart of the Christian, the lack of spirituality of the church, and the sin that was appearing in the religious offices directed some Christians not to the church, but to the desert. As the church was being formed by devoted Christians, it also was being made by corrupted people. The distinction of Christian faithfulness in the previous centuries had suffered a change. It was under this religious, social and political context that some Christians decided to take a different approach, monasticism.

But, why did people become monks and nuns? Why did monasticism appear? There were some reasons, but it appears that one of the main motives was to flee from a world that was wicked to live a holy life, states B. K. Kuiper in his book *The Church in History*.¹³¹ Monasticism appeared as a reaction to the religious, political, and social realities of its time. For some Christians, monasticism was due to the lack of holiness of the state church or to the effort to reclaim the ultimate commitment of martyrdom, which was no longer possible.¹³² While the church was being filled with thousands of people asking for baptism, there were thousands who through an exodus were seeking true holiness.¹³³ As the emperor attempted to stabilize the empire socially, religiously, and politically, and as the spiritual life of the church reached low places, many Christians had the need for spiritual quest not in the city, villages or towns, but in

Christianity], vol. 1, *Desde la era de los mártires hasta la era de los sueños frustrados* (Florida: Editorial Unilit, 1994), 151.

¹³¹ B. K. Kuiper, *The Church in History* (Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1964), 46.

¹³² In the fourth century, the monk kept the spirit of self-sacrifice when martyrdom came to an end. Rebecca Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, vol. 6, *The New Church's Teaching Series* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 92.

¹³³ Justo L. González, *Historia del Cristianismo* [The Story of Christianity], vol. 1, *Desde la era de los mártires hasta la era de los sueños frustrados* (Florida: Editorial Unilit, 1994), 152.

solitary places such as the desert. It was the desert where they found their place to encounter God and to pursue a holy life. Monasticism became the way to be faithful to the gospel in a Christian era that was facing a crossroads: unfaithfulness and faithfulness.

The practice of seeking seclusion from the world to better practice ascetic ideals was not unknown in the third century but it was not until the conversion of Constantine that it became general. By the beginning of the fourth century a new expression of the ascetical life was introduced to the Church in two forms –eremitical and *cenobitic* monasticism. The religious practice of renouncing worldly pursuits to fully devote one’s life to spiritual work, also describes monasticism (from Greek: *Monachos* — solitary, alone).¹³⁴

But going into the desert was not only intended to detach from the world, rather it was for spiritual and moral purposes. As these Christians embarked into the desert, they undertook ascetic practices that would assist them with their holy quest.

Asceticism (from Greek: *askesis* – practice, training or exercise) describes a system of spiritual practices designed to encourage interior vigilance so as to combat vices and develop virtues by means of self-discipline and self-knowledge in the context of seeking God.¹³⁵

In praxis, ascetics not only exercised themselves through spiritual practices such as prayer, scripture, and meditation. They also adopted the practice of subjugating the body by denying themselves comforts, passions, and pleasures. Qualities of humility, charity, and repentance were seen in the ascetic person.¹³⁶ Early monasticism meant a personal decision of following Christ in the desert and was possible through ascetic holiness. Because of the way these Christians exercised their spiritual life, they were considered spiritual athletes.

¹³⁴ Trevor Miller, “Asceticism and Monasticism,” Northumbria Community, <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/articles/asceticism-and-monasticism/>

¹³⁵ Trevor Miller, “Asceticism and Monasticism.”

¹³⁶ The monk or nun displayed and/or developed certain virtues that would represent someone who is being with God. Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, 93.

Ultimately, the Christian church entered the 5th century, mostly known as the medieval period. This was a time of agreements and of disagreements in the Christian church. To begin with, the Western Church maintained the status and powers of the successors of St. Peter; however, the primacy of the Pope was rejected by the Eastern Church, which had a distinct hierarchy, theology and liturgy.¹³⁷ Then, worldwide councils became more regular than in the early Church as a way to settle doctrinal disputes.¹³⁸ The outcome of each council reverberated in the Christian church in both East and West. Indeed, this period was a time of doctrinal, theological, and ecclesial formation for the church. At the same time, the conflicts that were appearing in the Western and the Eastern Church during the Middle Ages began to shake and divide Christianity. In the West, some of the major conflicts the church faced during the Middle Ages were feudalism, simony, papal political power, lay investiture, clerical marriage and celibacy.¹³⁹

The institutional Church in this period can be divided into two unequal parts: the larger of the two was the secular church, and the other was the *regular* church, so called because its members followed a monastic rule (*regula*, in Latin). The *regular* church, by contrast, consisted of men and women who had sworn vows of obedience, celibacy and poverty.

¹³⁷ Alixe Bovey, "The Medieval Church: From dedication to dissent," British Library, last modified April 30, 2015, <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/church-in-the-middle-ages-from-dedication-to-dissent>.

¹³⁸ First Council of Nicaea in 325, refuted the heresy of Arius.
 First Council of Constantinople in 381, rejected the Apollinarism belief and affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity.
 Council of Ephesus in 431, refused the Nestorians heresy; it declared Mary to be the *Theotokos*, and negated Pelagianism.
 Council of Chalcedon in 451 attacked Monophysitism and clarified Christ was one person, but had two natures.
 Third Council of Constantinople in 680 rejected the heresy of Monothelitism which held that Christ had one will.
 Second Council of Nicaea II in 787 approved the veneration and property of icons.
 Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 helped launch a new crusade, embraced the doctrine that there is no salvation outside the church and approved the use of the term transubstantiation.

¹³⁹ Andrea Toven, "Corruption and Controversy: Simony, lay investiture, and clerical marriage and celibacy in the Catholic Church during the eleventh and twelfth centuries," Medievalists.net, <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/01/corruption-and-controversy-simony-lay-investiture-and-clerical-marriage-and-celibacy-in-the-catholic-church-during-the-eleventh-and-twelfth-centuries/>.

Most of these people by the 600s lived in communities governed by a 'rule', a book of instructions.¹⁴⁰

In medieval times the Western Church continued to deal with doctrinal, theological and ecclesial conflicts. These conflicts began to influence the movement that was seeking faithfulness and holiness in previous centuries. In some instances, and places, the influence appeared and monasticism became corrupted.

Even when the monasteries played an important role in the medieval time, during this same period they became pools of energized people seeking a change for the papacy, and for the Church in general. But the monasteries were in dire need of reform, too. Since there was always a strong connection between the bishops and the monasteries in the Western Church, some monasteries became puppets of corrupt bishops, who used them for personal gain. Abbots, who presided over the various monasteries, sometimes secured their positions, not by virtuous living, but by purchasing their seats, or even through homicide.¹⁴¹

The cycles of monastic renewal, decay, and renewal again came to define cycles of general revival and decline in the church—overall in the ninth and tenth centuries, states Mark A. Noll.¹⁴² What initiated as a holy action, monasticism, later became an action of pride and arrogance in some communities. An important note in monasticism is that from the sixth century onward, most of the monasteries in the West were of the Benedictine Order, founded by Benedict of Nursia (480-547 CE),¹⁴³ but the institutionalization of the monastic movement by the eleventh century led to easing the principles of poverty, chastity and obedience. In the East, some of the major conflicts the church faced during the Middle Ages were doctrinal as well as

¹⁴⁰ Alixe Bovey, “The Medieval Church: From dedication to dissent,” British Library, last modified April 30, 2015, <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/church-in-the-middle-ages-from-dedication-to-dissent>.

¹⁴¹ Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The early Church to the Down of the Reformation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984), 277.

¹⁴² Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 95.

¹⁴³ St. Benedict wrote his *Rule* in the first part of the sixth century in order to guide monks to holiness and correct the monastic abuses of his day. His *Rule* came to reform monasticism in the West. His *Regula* influenced monasticism in the East, Europe and it served as an inspiration for the Friars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

theological, but also others such as the integration of Muslims and Jews in Christianity, the iconoclastic controversy, superstition in the Christian life, and persecution over non-Chalcedonian Christians.

It would be a mistake to see the history of the medieval church as the simple assentation of authority by the hierarchy, restrained only by resistance of lay powers whose customary position was threatened. It was the vocation of the monks to live the apostolic life in community, and therefore to pursue a radical alternative to the normal way of life of the laity and secular clergy. The new orders of the twelfth century represented this alternative in a much sharper form than the older monasticism.¹⁴⁴

Even when the unification of the state and the church along with theological disputes, wealth, and politics came to divide Christianity between the East and West in 1054 in what was known as the Great Schism, new monastic orders emerged to sustain and lead the church. As always, during or after a religious crisis there was always a monastic group seeking faithfulness to the gospel and pursuing holiness.¹⁴⁵ The main needs and realities of the context in this period involved sin, corruption, holiness and mission work.

The Discipleship Claim

The context by the Middle Ages and during the medieval period claimed for a model that could: a) embrace a holy living life, b) develop ascetic spiritual practices, 3) engage in evangelistic and missionary/social efforts, 4) set discipleship expectations (*regula*), and 4) reform and sustain the church.

¹⁴⁴ Colin Morris, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 210.

¹⁴⁵ After the Great Schism. monastic groups such as the Friars in the orders of Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, and then the Cistercians, Carthusians and other reforming orders appeared to continue the cycle of renewal, decay, renewal.

The Discipleship Model

To understand monasticism, one must identify the two types of monastic models that existed during this period: the *anchorite* and *cenobite* model.

Initially, there were some communities that separated themselves from society and people, the hermits or *anchorites*. It is recorded that in the third century there were already Egyptians who were dwelling alone in solicitude in the desert and who had become *anchorites* or ascetics. Anchorite did not mean to live in the desert, but to find a lonely place—perhaps an oasis, a valley between inhabited mountains, or an old cemetery—to live far from the rest of the world.¹⁴⁶ The *anchorites* did not strive for a luxurious life, rather they lived a simple life limiting the amount of food they ate, praying, and spending time in contemplation.¹⁴⁷ As they cultivated and weaved baskets and mats to sell them for bread and oil, the *anchorite* prayed, recited a Psalm, or memorized a passage from the Scripture while doing this labor. Discipleship in early hermit monasticism was limited simply to a personal discipleship. However, others saw in their testimony an example to follow and to pursue wisdom.

Because of their decision to leave everything to move into an ascetic life, people began to seek them. Eventually, their isolation was accompanied by those who were interested in their life style and eventually shared their spiritual insights.¹⁴⁸

Even when the *anchorite* was someone who in the beginning desired to be alone, later others sought opportunities to join them. But often the relationship between the *anchorite* and

¹⁴⁶ González, *Historia del Cristianismo*, 154.

¹⁴⁷ For them even the possession of books was an opportunity to be led to pride. To avoid this, they would teach each other the book of the Bible they knew by memory, the Psalms and books of the New Testament were the most common books they knew by memory. Also, they shared stories among them about those admired anchorites for edification. González, *Historia del Cristianismo*, 156.

¹⁴⁸ Dale T. Irving and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, vol. I, *Earliest Christianity to 1453* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 210.

others was limited. However, this was not the case for the other kind of monasticism, the communal or *cenobite*.

In the communal or better called *cenobitism*, monks lived together in a common community under a common rule.¹⁴⁹ *Cenobite*, meaning common life, was the type of monasticism that allowed monks to live in a community or monastery, governed by a head monk and by rules.¹⁵⁰ Monks did not live eremitically as a rule; they lived as *cenobites* —from the Latin word for “cell.” In other words, members from the *cenobite* community included both men and women and lived in separate quarters, often three to a room. The members supported themselves by weaving cloth, making baskets, or engaging in other forms of production. In Egypt, monks and nuns who lived according to Pachomius’s¹⁵¹ rule ate regular meals together, abstaining only from meat and wine. Meals were conducted in silence, and twice a week everyone fasted. Members of this community were required to gather several times each day for prayer and the reading of the Psalms.¹⁵² It was presupposed chastity and poverty, but later obedience to the abbot was included as part of the expectation for the cenobite community. Early records of cenobite monasticism in Egypt contain the stipulation that would-be novices memorized twenty psalms, two epistles, or a biblical passage of comparable length as a requirement to enter the monastery.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity*, 55.

¹⁵⁰ Kenneth Scoot Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1500* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1975), 227.

¹⁵¹ Pachomius is considered one of the founders of cenobitic monasticism.

¹⁵² Dale T. Irving and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, vol. I, *Earliest Christianity to 1453* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 210, 212.

¹⁵³ Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 83-84.

These fathers and mothers of the desert, whether *anchorite* or *cenobite*, focused their energy, devotion, and time on self-discipline, prayer, simple life, community, service, and dealing with demons. By the fourth and fifth centuries monasticism grew in the East, notably in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Syria.¹⁵⁴

The influence of Egyptian monasticism also spread rapidly in the Latin-speaking West in the fourth and fifth centuries. By the fourth century, every major Latin theologian had become converted to the ideals of monasticism.¹⁵⁵

The monastic reaction was not seen positively for the bishops. In fact, it was seen as a rebellious act. How can a Christian live alone and not actively participate of the Eucharist? However, by the end of the fifth century monasticism had spread and became characteristic of the Christian church.¹⁵⁶

There are accounts that in the fourth century Christians from the West, such as Melania of Rome, Jerome, Rufinus, Basil the Great, and others came to visit the Egyptian desert to learn from the Pachomius community.¹⁵⁷ In the sixth century, Benedict of Nursia would do the same. Unexpectedly, leaders began to adopt and follow a rule, or *regula*, as a set of instructions to function, lead, and maintain the discipline within the monastery. What Basil's rule was for Eastern monachism, St. Benedict's was for early Western monasticism.¹⁵⁸ Hence, as the empire was represented by the East and West, monasticism was not the exception.

In Egypt, Turkey, and the eastern end of the Mediterranean, monastic life remained largely unregulated, with simple rules of life. Hermits and holy people lived in seclusion. In the west, monasticism was increasingly regulated by specific rules, and there were fewer solitaries. The chaos of the west during the barbarian invasions encouraged solitaries to live in community for protection.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 228.

¹⁵⁵ Irving and Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, 212-213.

¹⁵⁶ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 222.

¹⁵⁷ Irving and Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, 212.

¹⁵⁸ "Monasticism," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/Monasticism>.

¹⁵⁹ Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, 96.

It is worth mentioning that monasticism in the Middle Ages also added another discipleship element to the movement, spreading the gospel. By the sixth century, monasticism acquired a new evangelistic mission.¹⁶⁰ Most of the expansion of the gospel in the north, west, and east between the 500s to the 1000s was due to the monastic movement. Different kinds of monks and nuns undertook the task to spread Christianity beyond the monasteries. Indeed, the proclamation of the gospel in the Middle Ages was done by monks and friars. Monasticism took a discipleship shift in the Middle Ages, they went from learning inside the monastery to then utilizing the monastery to extend the gospel and to engage through service with the immediate neighborhood, just as Christ did. The missionary expansion of Christianity in Eastern Europe came about in the ninth century through the monks Cyril and Methodius, brothers by blood as well as in their vows.¹⁶¹

For a monastery to be established in a pagan area allowed the local population to see the application of Christianity to daily existence, as monks tilled the soil, welcomed visitors, and carried out the offices of study and daily prayer. In the second half of the Middle Ages, much of the itinerant preaching that won nominally Christian Europeans to firmer Christian conviction came from the new orders of mendicant friars (monks on the road, so to speak).¹⁶²

People were trained as missionaries in monasteries; the monasteries provided schools and libraries for educational purposes; the rules of life became standards of Christian living, and their pioneering character as landlords and organizers of economic wealth should not be overlooked.¹⁶³ The monasteries functioned as a place which preserved, reproduced, studied, and memorized the Scriptures and other Christian literature throughout the Middle Ages. It was also

¹⁶⁰ Irving and Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, 218.

¹⁶¹ Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 92.

¹⁶² Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 92.

¹⁶³ Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 110.

a place where art was created. The monastic life in this period consisted of prayer, reading, learning, and manual labor. The monastic life which regarded isolation for a contemplative type of spiritual life transitioned to a communal and incarnational identity. Certainly, monasticism was vital to the development of Christianity and to the impact of the Christian church in society between the 700-1050.

Distinctions were made between monasticism in the East and West; for instance, the monastic movement in the East had no consolidated orders, as those that appeared in the West during the tenth and eleventh centuries. In fact, the monastery in the West became a self-governing entity, under the direction of its own abbot. In the East, the monk was more often the solitary rather than the cenobite.¹⁶⁴ The monasteries in the East played an important role during the medieval time for they produced the icons, images, and the Christian art. In the West, charitable work was intrinsically part of the movement, whereas in the East it was not considered to be the main purpose of monasticism.

In the East, even when they were assigned to social work, the main task of the monk or nun was prayer, holiness, spiritual guidance, and to watch over the doxology and liturgy of the Church. The way they served society was not so much by what they do or by what they are, but by their single-minded pursuit of perfection. This is what the Byzantine expected from the monasteries: not, overall, learning, evangelism, or organized charity, but holiness.¹⁶⁵

Most orthodox monks were not priests but lay people, working with their hands on agriculture or some form of craftsmanship.¹⁶⁶ Monasticism under the Middle Ages context provided a way for personal discipleship (*anchorite*) and later communal discipleship

¹⁶⁴ In the West, there were also anchorites dwelling in a hut or a cave, the forest, the desert, or sometimes close to a monastery. Kallistos Ware, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 131.

¹⁶⁵ Ware, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, 135, 137.

¹⁶⁶ Ware, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, 134.

(*cenobitism*). At the end, the monastic discipleship approach embraced social witnessing in their immediate communities.

The Eastern Christian monasticism never developed into structured orders in which all observed the same rule, rather monasteries were governed by two documents: a founder's *typikon* and a liturgical *typikon*. These *typika* governed the day to day life of the community and the liturgical life of the monastery.¹⁶⁷

Certainly, in the East and West, monasteries served as refuge places for the traveler and as hospitals for the sick. They even were placed in pagan villages or at the edge of the city so that they could witness to their neighbors about the gospel not only through knowledge but through service. Over the years, monasteries became learning centers as well, and one of those movements that embraced women as leaders. Definitely, monasteries were a place for spiritual quest and work, and a place where the monks or nuns would work to provide for their own needs, and even for the needs of their communities. Throughout the centuries, monasticism took different forms, from living separately from people and cities to living in community, from being concerned for one's spiritual life to being concerned for the world, from building monasteries for only spiritual use to utilizing monasteries for missional purposes.

The Discipleship Traits or Criteria

Between the monastic models that were represented by the anchorite and cenobite group, there were certain criteria and specific discipleship traits that were expected in the life of the individual. The discipleship criteria and traits between these monastic models revolved around holiness, self-discipline, obedience, celibacy, community, and charity. Christians departed from the city to isolated places to embrace a holy life. However, embracing holiness did not occur

¹⁶⁷ Greg Peters, *The Story of Monasticism: Retrieving an Ancient Tradition for Contemporary Spirituality* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015), 97.

only by rejecting sin and corruption, rather by embarking into ascetic spiritual practices that could happen as a result of self-discipline. Actually, the use of the *regula* or rule, was a way for self-discipline. Even when the monk or nun was an anchorite or cenobite, eventually he or she had to accept and practice the vow of obedience. This vow required the monk or nun to be obedient to the leader and the local bishop, but overall to God. The other vow that was required for people to become monks and nuns was celibate. Eventually, monasticism created community building through monasteries. In the monastery, community happened between the residents and between them and the immediate neighborhood. Definitively, monks and nuns were active agents of charitable work and became the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. In monastic communities, leadership took place. The person who became the leader of the monastery was the administrator and supervisor of the monastery and who, in some instances, would report to a main leader. The abbot or abbes also made sure the residents followed the *regula*. The leader became the role model for the rest of the monks or nuns. These criteria and traits were part of the expectation and formation of the monk and nun.

The Discipleship Catalysts

Certainly, the growth in disciple-making during the Middle Ages was due to the monastic movement. I argue that within this model, the following discipleship catalysts accelerated the fruit that monasticism was producing in its disciple-making effort: personal ascetic practices, *regula*, community, spreading the Gospel, and community center.

Personal ascetic practices

Monks and nuns were very disciplined to practice personal spiritual exercises such as a prayer, scripture, and meditation (self-knowledge in their quest to seek God). Having a personal spiritual moment was distinctive in the monastic model. Even when they were busy in their daily labor they would work and pray, recite a Psalm, or memorize words from the Scripture. Ascetic practices were part of the life of the monk and nun. One way for the monk or nun to be active in these practices was through the ascetic practices stipulated in the *regula*. Ascetic practices appear in the rule of Basil (16-23), rule of Augustine (2-4), and rule of Benedict (chap. 4, 5, 6-7, 8-20, 23-25, 28, 30, 33, 39-45, 49, 50, and 68-71).¹⁶⁸

Regula

Monasteries, through time, adopted a *Regula* or Rule for monks and nuns to be accountable to their holiness, Christian living, and commitment to the monastery's responsibilities. Monks and nuns understood that they had to follow the guidelines and expectations set by the monastery through the *regula*. In addition, monks and nuns were encouraged to create their own personal rule of life to be accountable to their personal commitment. The *regula* was used for communal and personal purposes. One example is the Rule of St. Benedict. However, by the sixth century some of the rules that appeared are: the rule of Macarius, the rule of Basil, rule of Augustine, Rule of the Master, and rule of Benedict.¹⁶⁹

Community

¹⁶⁸ Greg Peters, *The Story of Monasticism: Retrieving an Ancient Tradition for Contemporary Spirituality* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015), 55, 57, 75.

¹⁶⁹ Peters, *The Story of Monasticism*, 54, 56, 59, 75.

Overall in the cenobite model, members of this community supported each other through their labor, production, eating together, and for communal prayer and Scripture. Even when the monastic model provided a way for personal discipleship (*anchorite*), it also became a way for communal discipleship (*cenobitism*). The presence of monasteries developed community among the monks and nuns. Community was learned and fomented through spiritual, religious, or missionary practices, and through fellowship and labor.

Spreading the gospel

Initially the monks and nuns remained in the monastery for holiness purposes, but later they undertook a new movement, spreading the gospel. For the monks and nuns spreading the gospel was demonstrated through deeds and words. As it was mentioned earlier, the monks and nuns shared the gospel by evangelizing people and also by doing charitable work through the monasteries.¹⁷⁰ Because of this effort, evangelization and charitable work began to be a part of spreading the gospel through the work of the monastic movement.

Community center

The monastery, besides becoming a place of spiritual and religious formation, also became a hospital for the sick, a refuge place for the traveler, learning centers, and community centers where people came to received help. In fact, monasteries were placed in pagan villages or at the margins of the city so that they could engage with their neighbors through missionary work. The monastery became a place that provided not only for the needs of the monks, but also

¹⁷⁰ Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 92.

for the needs of their neighbors. The monastery expanded its purpose from only spiritual to missional.

Conclusion

Evidently the monastic approach dealt with the main needs and realities of its context: sin, corruption, holiness, and mission ministry. I argue that if it had not been for the work of the monastic movement during the Middle Ages, the future of the Christian church would have been at stake. Indeed, the influence of the monastic movement during these centuries provided renewal when the church decayed in holiness and mission. This contextualized discipleship approach always provided an alternative to the Christian church every time it went through a crisis. The context of the Christian church in the medieval period allowed the monastic model to: a) embrace a holy living life, b) develop ascetic spiritual practices, 3) engage in evangelistic and missionary/social efforts, 4) set discipleship expectations (*regula*), and 4) reform and sustain the church. Without a doubt, monasticism was one of those contextualized discipleship models that offered during the Middle Ages a model that shaped the life of the individual and influenced the context of the Christian church. Because of monasticism, the Christian church experienced a growth in disciple-making during this period.

Table 4. Summary of the Monastic Model

Summary The Monastic Model					
Period	Medieval Church – Fourth to Twelfth Century				
Context, Needs and Realities	The “conversion” of the Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity and his regime in both empires, West and East. The church entered time of peace, growth, passivity and worldliness. For some, Christianity was not any longer a way to live Christ-like, but a transition to an office, power, and wealth. Certain people became Christians because of a worldly motive or to please the emperor. As the church was being formed by devoted Christians, it was also being made by corrupted people. It was under this religious, social, and political context that some Christians decided to take monasticism. The cycle of renewal, decay, and renewal in the church would continue during the Middle Ages. For it was in the Middle Ages when theological, doctrinal, ecclesial, and political issues brought to the church a time of agreements and disagreements so much so that in 1054 occurred what was being expected, the Great Schism. The main needs and realities of this context included sin, corruption, holiness, and mission ministry.				
The Discipleship Claim	The context during the medieval period claimed for a model that could: a) embrace a holy living life, b) develop ascetic spiritual practices, 3) engage in evangelistic and missionary/social efforts, 4) set discipleship expectations (<i>regula</i>), and 4) reform and sustain the church.				
Discipleship Model	The monastic model is represented in two, the <i>anchorite</i> and the <i>cenobite</i> . Here is a summary of both communities.				
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">The <i>anchorite</i> monasticism</th> <th style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">The <i>cenobite</i> monasticism</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The anchorite chose to find an isolated place to be by himself or herself. Active in the ascetic practices such as prayer, scripture, and meditation. Subjugating the body was practiced by denying themselves comforts, passions, and pleasures. He or she would have a spirit of self-sacrifice. Possesses the virtues of humility, charity, and repentance. The anchorite would undertake certain jobs to provide for himself or herself. He or she would use the time invested in doing the tasks to pray or memorize a passage from the Scripture. Even when others would seek the anchorite for guidance, the anchorite would limit the time to others to then go back to his or her personal discipleship.</td> <td>This type of monasticism allowed monks to live in a community or monastery, governed by a head monk and by a <i>regula</i>. The community included both men and women that lived in separate quarters, often three to a room. The members supported themselves by weaving cloth, making baskets, or engaging in other forms of production. The <i>regula</i> included a schedule of individual and communal spiritual practices throughout the day. Chastity and poverty were expected and, later, obedience was included. Their monasteries became community centers to alleviate social needs that existed in the local neighborhood.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	The <i>anchorite</i> monasticism	The <i>cenobite</i> monasticism	The anchorite chose to find an isolated place to be by himself or herself. Active in the ascetic practices such as prayer, scripture, and meditation. Subjugating the body was practiced by denying themselves comforts, passions, and pleasures. He or she would have a spirit of self-sacrifice. Possesses the virtues of humility, charity, and repentance. The anchorite would undertake certain jobs to provide for himself or herself. He or she would use the time invested in doing the tasks to pray or memorize a passage from the Scripture. Even when others would seek the anchorite for guidance, the anchorite would limit the time to others to then go back to his or her personal discipleship.	This type of monasticism allowed monks to live in a community or monastery, governed by a head monk and by a <i>regula</i> . The community included both men and women that lived in separate quarters, often three to a room. The members supported themselves by weaving cloth, making baskets, or engaging in other forms of production. The <i>regula</i> included a schedule of individual and communal spiritual practices throughout the day. Chastity and poverty were expected and, later, obedience was included. Their monasteries became community centers to alleviate social needs that existed in the local neighborhood.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Similarities in the monastic life in the East and West</p>					
In addition to the anchorite and cenobite monastic groups, we have these monastic groups representing two geographic areas: The East and West. Both monastic groups focused their energy, devotion, and time on self-discipline, holiness, faithfulness to the gospel, prayer, simple life, and community. Eventually, they would include in their work evangelism, missionary and charitable work. The monastic identity which regarded isolation for a contemplative type of spiritual life transitioned to a communal and incarnational identity. Then, monasteries functioned as a place which preserved, reproduced, studied and memorized the Scriptures and other Christian literature throughout the Middle Ages. The monasteries in the East played an important role during the medieval time for they produced the icons, images, and the Christian art. In the West, charitable work was intrinsically part of the movement, while in the East it was not considered to be the main purpose of monasticism. In the East, even when they were assigned to social work, the main task of the monk or nun was to pray, to watch over the doxology and liturgy of the Church. In the East and West, monasteries served as refuge places for the traveler, hospitals for the sick, and became learning centers as well.					
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	Holiness, self-discipline, obedience celibacy, community, and charity.				
Discipleship Catalysts	Personal ascetic practices, <i>regula</i> , community, spreading the gospel, and community center.				

Source: Data adapted from authors cited in this chapter.

Chapter 3 Reformation & Modern Church Period

3.1 The Methodist Model

After the Middle Ages, another period appeared in the history of the Christian church, the Reformation. Certainly, the Reformation impacted many regions in the sixteenth century. One of that was impacted in the sixteenth century was England. Hence, the effects of the Reformation in terms of discipleship influenced a new movement in England in the eighteenth century. Instead of focusing on this period, a strong attention will be given to the Methodist Model of the Modern Period because of the effects of the Reformation in it.

The Context

None of the work that the early Methodists accomplished would have been possible without the kind of environment that existed in England in the eighteenth century. Social, political, economic, and even religious dynamics caused the early Methodists to emerge for a call to action. Therefore, to understand the work of early Methodism one must be introduced to the context of England in the eighteenth century. There were at least three factors that altered the life of England in the eighteenth century: population, agriculture, and the manufacturing industry.

- **Population:** Part of the reason for the population growth was due to immigration and to people moving from the countryside to the cities in search of work. In order to survive, people had to move to the city to have a job.
- **Agriculture:** In those years, England was one of the regions that established the feudal system. The humble family who possessed a piece of land now had to work for somebody else. As the population grew, agriculture did also. Due to the industrial change, agriculture went from local supply to large quantities.

- Industrial: England in the eighteenth century was suffering the effects of the industrialization of machines, where the rich became richer and the poor, poorer. The creation of machines not only brought advantages to the nation, but also problems. The fact that a machine replaced the work of ten people, for example, brought unemployment with it. The industrial revolution altered the economic and social order.

By the eighteenth century, the population, agriculture, and industry grew, but alongside social problems such as poverty, social classes, people in debt, and misery increased alarmingly in the English nation. Because of this reality, there was not much security in jobs, and housing was very expensive and inadequate. Alcohol, violence, prostitution, and gambling helped many people cope with despair and abandonment. The immediate needs of the people of England were clothing, health, education, nutrition, and human affection. Evidently, the gospel needed to be taken to the poor, the sick, the incarcerated, the miners and those who had been forgotten by the Anglican Church and the state.

In the religious field, the population identified itself—at least in name—with the Anglican Church, which was the church of the state. The truth was that the church did little to improve the condition of the poor and to fight labor injustice. It was in this England where John Wesley was born, grew up, and led his ministry.

Unfortunately, the church did not seem to be a source of help. By and large, the state-sponsored Church of England was not connecting with the common people. There was very little spiritual passion in the clergy or the people.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Steve Cordle, *The Church in Many Houses: Reaching Your Community through Cell-Based Ministry*, eds. Tom Bandy and Bill Easum (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2005), 46.

The moral and spiritual conditions of the Anglican Church of the eighteenth century were truly tragic.¹⁷² The Church of England was declining in its role in personal holiness and in witnessing to the world. The whole nation and church was divided between the wealthy and the poor. Marginalized groups began to appear in large numbers around the nation. Some of the Anglican leaders were leading the church to be indifferent towards the unfortunate, but concerned for the upper class. While other Anglican leaders, such as the Wesleys, were taking the church to the forgotten ones.

In addition to dealing with the spiritual state of the Anglican Church, John Wesley faced another issue: doctrinal conflict. The doctrinal issues of faith and works, grace and nature, divine sovereignty and free will, came to cause tension between Wesley and the Anglican Church and Calvinism. This doctrinal conflict regarding justification was clarified by John Wesley's own sermon.¹⁷³ When the person after responding to God's prevenient grace comes to justifying grace, his or her relationship changes towards God. Therefore, he or she is in a better position to experience sanctifying grace.

He affirmed that justification was by faith alone, through the merits of Christ, and that good works could only follow this faith, not precede it. At the same time, he affirmed that the necessary consequence of justification was the doing of good works. Instead of linking these necessary works with the doctrine of justification per se, however, he assigned them to the inseparable but quite distinct process of sanctification, an outward holiness which sprang from an inward holiness of heart.¹⁷⁴

John Wesley saw that adopting the holy living tradition eventually would bring justice to the poor and hungry and revival to the church. His mission was to spread social holiness to the

¹⁷² Federico Melendez, *Etica y Economia: Un legado de Juan Wesley a la iglesia en America Latina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairos, 2006), 35.

¹⁷³ John Wesley, Sermon 5, "Justification by Faith" Wesley Center Online, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/>.

¹⁷⁴ David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1985), 52.

land and the church. The work, in terms of discipleship, that John Wesley developed through his ministry was entirely related to the needs of England and the Anglican Church. But John Wesley did not necessarily have to create a new discipleship model; instead, rather, he contextualized an extended ministry that the Anglican Church had: the societies. Initially, the society meetings were held on Saturday evenings in order to prepare for the Lord's Day, and membership was restricted to no more than twelve.¹⁷⁵ In case the society grew to more than thirty or forty people, two members were assigned as leaders to start a new society. The societies were led by lay members. It was in fact in 1742, when a group of Methodists were trying to figure out how to pay a building debt in Bristol, England, that a member of the society suggested that the Bristol society be divided into groups of twelve people. One person in each group would be designated the leader and would be responsible for visiting everyone in the group every week in order to collect one penny from each of them.¹⁷⁶ The whole society was divided into "little companies, or classes—about twelve in each class," with one person, styled as the leader, to collect the weekly contributions.¹⁷⁷ The purpose of this strategy was to pay off the debt.¹⁷⁸ Even when there were people who would not be able to pay their contribution, the member who suggested this strategy would agree to pay the contributions for them. This example was imitated by other members of the society who were more affluent. John Wesley saw the need to use these classes as part of the

¹⁷⁵ David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 25.

¹⁷⁶ Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Tennessee: Seedbed Publishing, 2014), 22.

¹⁷⁷ David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 37.

John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF

¹⁷⁸ Up to this point, the strategy in forming these "little companies or classes" was not necessarily discipleship or spiritual formation, rather fundraising.

method to deal with discipleship and to bring back the General Rules. Because there was not any kind of spiritual supervision, the members of the societies were not living godly lives.¹⁷⁹ Even when members attended their weekly reunions, many were falling back to their old habits and needed a spiritual change.¹⁸⁰

After his Aldersgate experience in 1738, John Wesley undertook a new spiritual quest. A set of rules, the General Rules, were created in 1738 by John Wesley for the societies to make clear the connection between the saving faith and Christian behavior, and to indicate what was expected of persons as they became members of the Methodist Societies.¹⁸¹ The role of the General Rules in Methodism shaped the life of the individuals or made them quit.

In addition to the General Rules in early Methodism, there was another component that was essential in the life of the individual, the means of grace.¹⁸² The minutes of the 1744 Conference urged Methodist preachers to use them all, “instituted” and “prudential,” and to “enforce the use of them on all persons.”¹⁸³ The instituted means of grace were listed as prayer (private, family, and public), searching the scripture, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, fasting,

¹⁷⁹ John Wesley anticipated among those people to embrace the holy living tradition in which he was born and raised. This tradition was common and well accepted in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Tory K. Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church and Its Recovery for Today* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 43.

¹⁸⁰ John Wesley understood that because of the tendency toward sin and to the desires for the things of the world, humanity was in need of salvation and restoration of the image of God. For Wesley, the issue of the world resides within the person. Hence, to conquer sin and for a personal change to happen, people needed to be aware that they cannot save themselves and therefore, they must respond to God’s grace. John Wesley, Sermon 1, “Salvation by Faith,” Wesley Center Online, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-1-salvation-by-faith/>.

¹⁸¹ “Glossary: General Rules, the” The United Methodist Church, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/glossary-general-rules-the>

¹⁸² John Wesley, Sermon 16, “The Means of Grace,” Wesley Center Online, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-16-the-means-of-grace/>

¹⁸³ David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship* (Nashville: Discipleship Ministries, 1985), 34. John Wesley, “The Large Minutes” The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 355.

and Christian Conferencing—what today we would call serious conversation about the faith.¹⁸⁴

The prudential means of grace had the purpose of assisting the individual in his or her discipleship through personal disciplines and forms of fellowship such as class meetings or bands.¹⁸⁵

Table 5. A Wesleyan process of discipleship

Prevenient Grace	Justifying Grace	Sanctifying Grace
The member realizes he or she wants to flee from the wrath to come and from sin. However, the person could be drawn to God by practicing certain means of grace. ¹⁸⁶	In the class meetings, there was the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, in which the inviting grace of God brought the sinner to forgiveness and reconciliation, a new birth. ¹⁸⁷ In 1745, the doctrine of justification was defined in terms of an accountable discipleship. ¹⁸⁸	Classes, Societies, and bands. General Rules. Means of Grace (works piety and works of mercy). Demonstration of their salvation.

Source: Data adapted from John Wesley’s understanding of grace.

The main needs and realities of the context in eighteenth century England included poverty, religious seclusion, spiritual apathy, lack of lay leaders, doctrine formation, and character transformation.

¹⁸⁴ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 34.

¹⁸⁵ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 34.

John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 264-275.

¹⁸⁶ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 31.

¹⁸⁷ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 32.

The Discipleship Claim

John Wesley knew that people needed a different discipleship approach, a model that could lead them to live a Christian life in their own contexts.¹⁸⁹ The context of England claimed for a model that could: 1) bring church revival and reform; 2) call people to social action; 3) hold people accountable to discipleship; 4) raise lay leadership; 5) integrate doctrine in discipleship life; and 6) provide a system for people to deal with bad habits or wrong behaviors.

The Discipleship Model

I argue that in England the Methodist approach in the eighteenth century became the discipleship model that appeared within the needs of its church, and it became the model that provided for the needs of its context. The Methodist model in the eighteenth century was designed for at least five groups of people. D. Michael Henderson in his book *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* describes these groups as follows:¹⁹⁰

- Societies: The cognitive mode.
- Classes: The behavioral mode.
- Bands: The affective mode.
- The select society: The training mode.
- Penitent bands: The rehabilitative mode.

Regardless of where they were in their Christian path, this discipleship model offered different groups to all kinds of people. The people who joined a group received mutual support and were held accountable to their discipleship. The requirement to be part of these groups was to have a desire to flee from the wrath of God and sin.

¹⁸⁹ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 29.

¹⁹⁰ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, eds. D. Michael Henderson and Jeremiah K. Garret (Wilmore, Kentucky: Rafiki Books, 2016), Kindle edition, Chapter 3.

Societies: The cognitive mode (learning). People in this group had to be a member of a class. The main desire of the attendees was to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins.¹⁹¹ They were to follow the General Rules of the societies: doing no harm, by avoiding evil; doing good, by every kind; and attending upon all the ordinances of God.¹⁹² In fact, the evidence of their discipleship was to live the General Rules.¹⁹³ Each society had a leader, and the format of the reunion was sort of an Anglican service: singing, prayer, preaching, and exhorting. In these meetings, there were no opportunities for discussion or sharing. Because the societies were a ministry formed for the Anglican Church, Wesley used these societies as a link between the Methodist classes and the Anglican Church (*ecclesiola* within *ecclesia*).¹⁹⁴ The difference in the societies from previous years, was that Wesley reinforced the discipleship element to those weekly reunions. These societies provided opportunities for spiritual growth and Christian conferencing. However, the main purpose was instructional teaching. The objective of the teaching was to educate members in doctrine and beliefs through a Discourse that called for practical Christian duty.

A method that was used to keep the Discourse of the members under practical Christian duty was the use of certain set of questions offered to them. Each member was to be asked about the nature of a particular Christian duty each week—how they were to

¹⁹¹ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 90.

John Wesley, "Rules of the United Societies," The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 288.

¹⁹² Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 205-206.

John Wesley, "Rules of the United Societies," The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF.

¹⁹³ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 35.

¹⁹⁴ The social and spiritual reform that John Wesley desired for the Church of England was due to the relation of *ecclesiola* within *ecclesia*. The intensive work, renewal, and revival within the meetings created eventually a reformation in the *ecclesia*. This reformation would not have been possible if John Wesley separated the *ecclesiola* from the *ecclesia*. Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 20-21.

practice it, the discouragements they experienced in it, and their motives for undertaking it.¹⁹⁵

Through the society, members were encouraged to practice Christian duty and to promote holiness of life.¹⁹⁶ The societies held usually at least 50 members each. People were seated in rows, next to each other even if they belonged to a different social class, but women and men were seated separately. Men and women could attend the same society.

Classes: The behavioral mode (changing behavior). The class meeting was a weekly gathering, a sub-division of the society, at which members were required to give an account to one another of their discipleship, and thereby to sustain each other in their witness.¹⁹⁷ For those who desired to get closer to God, the classes became their place because of the pattern of spiritual nurture and accountable discipleship.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, people who were new in the Christian faith found in the classes a place to learn a new way of life by practice, a learning on the go. This group was formed by about twelve people who normally met at a private house in the evening and were guided by a leader. It was the job of the leader to create an environment of trust, sharing, and respect. The meeting lasted one to two hours.¹⁹⁹ They met once a week to contribute generously, to enquire about the state of their souls, and to receive advice, reproof, or encouragement.²⁰⁰ The

¹⁹⁵ Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London, &c., and of their Endeavours of the Reformation of Manners*, 1st ed., 1698. 5th edition. (London: J. Downing, 1724), 136-140.

¹⁹⁶ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 69.

¹⁹⁷ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 13.

¹⁹⁸ Before the individual became a member of the class, he or she was only a “listener.”

¹⁹⁹ Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience*, 24.

²⁰⁰ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 94.

John Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People called Methodists*, The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 268.

classes were formed with the purpose of watching closely the spiritual life and the salvation of each member of the societies. The aim of those meetings was to cause behavioral change.²⁰¹

Class meetings provided community, the development of class relationship, and spiritual accountability for those struggling with habitual issues.²⁰²

The classes were divided pragmatically according to where the members and the leader lived. Men and women, young and old, married and single, all belonged to the class closest to where they lived.²⁰³

The agenda involved a time of singing, prayer, and mutual confession where they would share their joys, sorrows, desires, hopes, fears, and conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Based on what was shared, the leader would pronounce the appropriate words to the one who spoke.²⁰⁴ The leader would keep a record of the state of the soul of each member.²⁰⁵ They were accountable to their discipleship by practicing the General Rules as well. The role of the leader during the class meeting and during the week toward each member was pivotal for their spiritual development. Even when they made the effort to watch each other, there were some who went back to their old ways. An innovative method of accountability and removal that John Wesley brought to the classes was the ticket. Quarterly, the members were given a ticket if they had not missed more than three class meetings during the previous quarter. This method would reveal those who did not qualify to attend the society and therefore were in need of exhortation or removal. Some of those members instead of benefiting the class were corrupting the members

²⁰¹ Steve Cordle, *The Church in Many Houses: Reaching Your Community through Cell-Based Ministry*, eds. Tom Bandy and Bill Easum (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2005), 47.

²⁰² Mark A. Maddix, "John Wesley's Small Groups: Models of Christian Community," *Holiness Today*, <http://www.holinesstoday.org/john-wesley-small-groups-Christian-community>

²⁰³ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 37.

²⁰⁴ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 96.

²⁰⁵ This journal had the structure of an attendance list in which each individual, every week, was graded based on the state of his or her soul. The leader used this list to report to his or her minister.

with their life style. The classes were vital to shape the spiritual life of those ungodly members or eventually to expel them from their reunions. Wesley said, “Those who will not meet in class cannot stay with us.”²⁰⁶

Every week the class meeting seems to have focused on three things. First, it held people accountable to keeping the General Rules. Second, it was a place where they were encouraged to give weekly to the relief of the poor. Third, and most central to the time spent in the weekly meeting, it was a place where every member answered the question, “how is it with your soul?”²⁰⁷

The class meeting was not a group where doctrine, theology or Bible was taught. It was a place of sharing the personal experience. If the questioning and answering became monotonous, Wesley advised class leaders to vary the pattern of their questions, and to pursue individual spiritual progress of the members as a means of discerning how God was at work in their lives. What began as a capital campaign strategy within the society, later became a new model of discipleship through the classes. The classes developed what was missing in the societies: accountable discipleship.

Bands: The affective mode (changing emotions and motives). The band could be formed as soon as the leader gathered four people. The band was a homogeneous grouping, not only by sex, but also by age and marital status.²⁰⁸ Membership was for people who wanted to grow in the purity of their intentions. It could be said, metaphorically, that the band aimed for the heart.²⁰⁹ Those

²⁰⁶ John Wesley, “The Letters of John Wesley: To Zachariah Yewdall, vol. 7.,” Wesley Center Online, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1782b/>

²⁰⁷ Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience*, 25.

²⁰⁸ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, eds. D. Michael Henderson and Jeremiah K. Garret (Wilmore, Kentucky: Rafiki Books, 2016), Kindle edition, 100.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

who attended desired a more intimate fellowship and wanted to grow in holiness, love, and purity of intention.²¹⁰

The members of these groups shared and examined their motives and impressions of their hearts with total honesty. So, their meetings were closed, and they received into membership only people known, recommended, and interrogated by the members.²¹¹

Members were to abstain from evil *carefully*, to maintain good works *zealously*, and to attend on all the ordinances of the church *constantly*.²¹² There was an agenda and a leader. The difference between the leader of the class and the leader of the band was that the latter just started the conversation, and then, immediately, the members would participate actively. Through an honest sharing and the use of questions, the members experienced mutual confession and guidance, which helped them continue seeking Christian perfection.

A central function of the band was what Wesley termed 'close conversation.' By this term he meant soul-searching examination, not so much of behavior and ideas, but of motive and heartfelt impressions.²¹³

Bands' rules were very searching, and enjoined the members to speak "freely and plainly" the true state of their souls, telling of the faults they had committed "in thought, word, or deed," and the temptations they had felt since their last meeting.²¹⁴ These meetings were a place

²¹⁰ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, Kindle edition, 100.

²¹¹ Róbert Hargitai, "John Wesley's Groups," Hivo.hu, http://www.hivo.hu/wcsoport_e.html

²¹² Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 117.
John Wesley, "Rules of the United Societies," The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 290-293.

²¹³ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, Kindle edition, 100.

²¹⁴ Watson, *Accountable Discipleship*, 28.

of honesty, self-awareness, vulnerability, and closeness. The following questions were asked when someone decided to join a band:²¹⁵

- Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
- Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
- Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?
- Do you desire to be told of your faults?
- Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
- Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
- What temptations have you met?
- How were you delivered?
- What have you thought, said, or done of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?

Select Society: The training mode (development). These were more restricted groups, in which the doctrine of Christian perfection was more evident and practiced.²¹⁶ There was no agenda or leader; the members spoke freely and established conversations regarding the policies of the Methodist movement.²¹⁷ Differently from the bands, age and gender was removed in this group. They were an example to everyone of what it was to demonstrate a pattern of love, holiness, and good works.²¹⁸ It is believed that John Wesley dedicated this group for his leaders and for himself. He saw this group as “a selected company, to whom I might unbosom myself on all occasions, without reserve.”²¹⁹

It was a “select” company of men and women whom Wesley had hand-picked from among the most faithful Methodists. The purpose of this group was to model or

²¹⁵ John Wesley, “Rules of the Band-Societies,” The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 290-291.

²¹⁶ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 120.

²¹⁷ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, Kindle edition, 110.

²¹⁸ John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 277.

²¹⁹ Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists.”

exemplify the perfecting of the human spirit, and it was to provide a training experience in the doctrines and methods of Methodism. They were considered the standard-bearers of the movement. Membership was not allowed to be considered as a prize for the attainment of “perfection,” but an intensive association to facilitate further striving for growth and Christian service. All the members of this group were listed elsewhere as leaders of bands, leaders of classes, or local preachers. Everything said was in absolute confidence.²²⁰

Penitent bands: The rehabilitative mode (restoration). One can see the purpose of the penitent bands as a rehabilitation and restoration of those who had fallen away from their commitment and desired to be restored. Some who once were active in the faith, later fell into sins of omission, by yielding to heart-sins, or by not watching unto prayer.²²¹ For Wesley, those members lacked will of power or discipline and could not live up to the behavioral standards of the class meeting. Hence, the penitents were to be separated from the society to receive the proper attention before the members were restored back to their society.²²² Penitent bands were organized as the regular bands, by sex, age, and marital status. The minister in charge met with the penitent on Saturday evenings and the hymns, exhortations and prayers were adapted to their current state: restoration.²²³ Through intense accountability, fellowship and strict discipline the penitent would be restored back to the class meeting.

By applying both the threats and promises of God to these real, not nominal, penitents, and by crying to God in their behalf, we endeavored to bring them back to the great “Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.”²²⁴

²²⁰ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, Kindle edition, 108-109.

²²¹ John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 276.

²²² Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 121.

²²³ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, Kindle edition, 113.

The ultimate goal of Wesley's model was mutual support and accountability. Even when the Methodist Model involved certain elements such as evangelism, nurturing, faith development, Scripture, fellowship, or prayer, the main purpose was mutual support and accountability. One resource the early Methodists adopted from the Puritans, which affirmed their accountability, was personal covenants. This was a written covenant in which the person covenanted with God through a commitment to discipleship.²²⁵ People would renew their covenant from time to time, this was a way to prevent the person from leaving the faith. The covenant was a symbol of maturity and commitment, but it was also a way to keep the person in his or her journey. The vocabulary used in these covenants went from an eloquent and detailed expression to a brief and simple vocabulary. The most important action was not the vocabulary used in the covenant but the personal commitment.

The Discipleship Traits or Criteria

The Methodist model expected certain discipleship criteria in the life of the individuals. The expected criteria were: involvement in social holiness, being active in the means of grace and the General Rules, practice confession, and participate with their generosity. In this regard, the Methodists in England intervened in social needs, overall in caring for the poor.²²⁶ The individuals were exhorted to be active in the means of grace and they were accountable to integrate them in their life. The methodology in the meetings led the people to be vulnerable and

²²⁴ John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," The Ages Digital Library Collected Works, http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-11/V6F-Z/WES_WW08.PDF, 276.

²²⁵ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 37.

²²⁶ In fact, by practicing discipleship through the works of mercy one was active in alleviating the social needs of its surroundings.

comfortable with each other by confessing the state of their soul. The Methodists were people who developed generosity as part of their discipleship and used it to alleviate the needs of others.

The Discipleship Catalysts

The growth of Methodism in the eighteenth century was not fortuitous. It was a combination of what I called, discipleship catalysts. These discipleship catalysts are what I propose and argue that accelerated the disciple-making among the Methodists of the eighteenth century. The discipleship catalysts revolve around accountable discipleship, leadership development, monitoring, social holiness, self-examination, and a growth process.

Accountable discipleship

Accountable discipleship is the type of model John Wesley developed in his ministry. The main purpose of Wesley's model was mutual support and accountability. This model was personal but collective at the same time. Methodists took their commitment with sufficient seriousness to sustain one another in their discipleship, and they found that the most effective way to do this was to meet once a week to be accountable to one another.²²⁷

Leadership development

Most of Wesley's leaders were not Anglican clergy, but lay people. Wesley chose leaders in a meticulous way. They were selected by their disciplinary and spiritual discernment, and then they were trained. The three basic steps that John Wesley considered in preparing the laity were: 1) carefully selecting lay people for a ministry task; 2) being clear in advance about what he

²²⁷ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 2.

wanted to see in the lay person (before inviting the person to serve, he hoped to see some evidence of his or her soul before handing a ministry task to him or her); and 3) intentionality in training the lay person for ministry. These lay people received authority through Wesley to not only lead the class, but to provide pastoral care and to make interventions.²²⁸

Monitoring

The leaders monitored the members of their classes by tracking their spiritual state through an attendance roster and by visiting them. Also, the class leader met with the preacher assigned by Wesley as minister of their society both to report on their members and to receive advice or instruction for themselves. In other words, the leaders were monitored as well by their preacher. Monitoring one another developed accountability among all people involved.

Definitely, this element was essential to the outcome of the Methodist movement.

Social holiness

Since its beginning, the Methodists in the eighteenth century responded to the social needs of England. For Wesley, discipleship was being involved in responding to social needs. The works of mercy which are part of the means of grace moved the Methodists to do good works, such as visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, giving generously to the needs of others, seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination, and addressing the needs of the poor. For Wesley, discipleship is demonstrated through our works, and our social works affirm our discipleship.

²²⁸ Besides meeting with the people of the class, the leader had to be accountable to his or her own discipleship through the *General Rules*. The leaders also had to meet with the designated preacher/minister of their society for disclosing a report about his or her class, and to receive from the preacher advice and instruction.

Self-examination

Self-examination opened the space for awareness and evaluation. Members of each class were asked to share the state of their soul. Their sharing would not come without self-examination. Another method that would allow the early Methodists to self-examination was writing their personal covenant. At least, privately and in community, the early Methodists had a space to go deep into their real motives to then commit to grow in love toward God and one another. Self-examinations helped the individual to grow in sanctifying grace.

Growth process

Wesley laid out a growth process for the early Methodists to grow in grace as they began attending their class meeting as listeners and then becoming members. Eventually they were approved to attend their society. If there was someone who would look to grow in holiness, love, and purity the band or select society was his or her next place to be. However, if that person fell back from his or her commitment, he or she was restored by attending the penitent band. From the beginning of the discipleship process the individual had a growth process through the different classes, bands, and societies.

Conclusion

One of the quotes attributed to John Wesley is: “The Church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples.”²²⁹ John Wesley, through his contextualized discipleship model, shows that the emphasis was not on people joining the church or professing that faith in the Anglican church. Rather, his effort and work were on making the people called

²²⁹ Doug Morrell, “John Wesley: 3-strand discipleship process,” Core Discipleship, <https://www.ngumc.org/files/fileslibrary/boardoflaity/port.pdf>.

Methodists, disciples. This Methodist discipleship model dealt with the main needs and realities of its context: poverty, religious seclusion, spiritual apathy, lack of lay leaders, doctrine formation, and character transformation. The Methodist model under the context of England in the eighteenth century was able to: 1) bring church revival and reform; 2) call people to social action; 3) hold Methodists accountable to discipleship; 4) raise lay leadership; 5) integrate doctrine in discipleship life; and 6) provide a system for people to deal with bad habits or wrong behaviors. The contextualized discipleship model that John Wesley introduced to England in the eighteenth century caused a spiritual and social revival. In the process, there was an accelerated growth in disciple-making that arrived at every town of England.

Table 6. Summary of the Methodist Model

Summary The Methodist Model																
Period	Modern Church – Eighteenth Century															
Context, Needs and Realities	Social problems such as discrimination, people in debt, and misery increased alarmingly. Alcohol, violence, prostitution, and gambling helped many people cope with despair and abandonment. Economic issues such as lack of job opportunities and expensive housing increased poverty. Other needs were clothing, health, education, nutrition, and human affection. The poor, the sick, the incarcerated, and the miners were forgotten by the church. Doctrinal conflicts around justification within the Anglican Church and Calvinist appeared. The main needs and realities of this context included poverty, religious seclusion, spiritual apathy, lack of lay leaders, doctrine formation, and character transformation.															
The Discipleship Claim	The context of England claimed for a discipleship model that could: 1) bring church revival and reform; 2) call people to social action; 3) hold people accountable to discipleship; 4) raise lay leadership; 5) integrate doctrine in discipleship life; and 6) provide a system for people to deal with bad habits or wrong behaviors.															
Discipleship Model	This model revolved around accountable discipleship. It was personal but collective at the same time. Through this model, they sustained one another in their discipleship. The most effective way to do this was meeting together once a week to be accountable to one another. Members had to desire to flee from the wrath of God and sin. There were different groups based on the person's needs and desires.															
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Societies</td> <td>The method of cognition (learning).</td> <td>Had to be a member of a class. Each society had a leader. The reunion was sort of an Anglican service. The purpose was instructional teaching. Members were encouraged to practice Christian duty. Men and women could attend the same society but seated separately.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Classes</td> <td>The method of changing behavior.</td> <td>A sub-division of the society. Members were required to give an account to one another of their discipleship and to sustain each other. There was no teaching. Behavioral change and personal experience was expected. Meeting once a week to 1) contribute generously, 2) to enquire about the state of their souls, and 3) to receive advice, reproof, or encouragement. Men and women could attend.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bands</td> <td>The method of changing emotions and motives.</td> <td>Consisted of 4 to 6 people of the same sex, marital status, and of similar age. Focus on growing inside, and in the purity of their intentions. Members were expected to have "close conversation"—soul searching examination. Members were to abstain from evil <i>carefully</i>, maintain good works <i>zealously</i>, and attend on all the ordinances of the church <i>constantly</i>. Members spoke "freely and plainly." Members experienced mutual confession and guidance. A place for honesty, self-awareness, vulnerability, and closeness.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The select society</td> <td>The method of training.</td> <td>Doctrine of Christian perfection was more evident and practiced. Members were agents of maturity. Age and gender were removed in this group. Members demonstrated a pattern of love, holiness, and good works.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Penitent bands</td> <td>The method of rehabilitation.</td> <td>Members of this group were not allowed to attend the society until they were restored. They were organized by sex, age, and marital status. Made up of 4 to 6 people with intense accountability.</td> </tr> </table>	Societies	The method of cognition (learning).	Had to be a member of a class. Each society had a leader. The reunion was sort of an Anglican service. The purpose was instructional teaching. Members were encouraged to practice Christian duty. Men and women could attend the same society but seated separately.	Classes	The method of changing behavior.	A sub-division of the society. Members were required to give an account to one another of their discipleship and to sustain each other. There was no teaching. Behavioral change and personal experience was expected. Meeting once a week to 1) contribute generously, 2) to enquire about the state of their souls, and 3) to receive advice, reproof, or encouragement. Men and women could attend.	Bands	The method of changing emotions and motives.	Consisted of 4 to 6 people of the same sex, marital status, and of similar age. Focus on growing inside, and in the purity of their intentions. Members were expected to have "close conversation"—soul searching examination. Members were to abstain from evil <i>carefully</i> , maintain good works <i>zealously</i> , and attend on all the ordinances of the church <i>constantly</i> . Members spoke "freely and plainly." Members experienced mutual confession and guidance. A place for honesty, self-awareness, vulnerability, and closeness.	The select society	The method of training.	Doctrine of Christian perfection was more evident and practiced. Members were agents of maturity. Age and gender were removed in this group. Members demonstrated a pattern of love, holiness, and good works.	Penitent bands	The method of rehabilitation.	Members of this group were not allowed to attend the society until they were restored. They were organized by sex, age, and marital status. Made up of 4 to 6 people with intense accountability.
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The use of the written personal covenant and the quarterly tickets were other methods to develop accountability in the class meetings. This seemed to be the discipleship framework that ruled early Methodism:																
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	Involvement in social holiness, active in the means of grace and General Rules, practice confession, and participate with their generosity.															
Discipleship Catalysts	Accountable discipleship, leadership development, monitoring, social holiness, self-examination, and a growth process.															

Source: Data adapted from authors cited in this chapter.

3.2 The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

The Context

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* had its origins in the catechumenate which appeared in the early centuries of the Christian church. The catechumenate is a catechetical process that is marked by ritual progression which is comprehensive in nature.²³⁰ From the fourth to the sixth century this process reached its summit. However, after the sixth century the catechumenate would experience a decline and a lack of intentionality.

The decline stemmed from a number of factors, such as the increasing practice of infant baptism, bishops reserving the right to confirm and not allowing priests to confirm, theological disputes over similarities and differences between baptism and confirmation as well as socio-political developments. After the sixth century, the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) were celebrated together, but for a variety of geographic, demographic, and theological reasons, they gradually began to be celebrated separately thereafter. By the middle ages, the rite of initiation merely entailed a local priest asking applicants a few questions, baptizing them, and then declaring Catholics.²³¹

In 1988, the official policy of The National Status for the *RCIA* in the United States was created. David R. Mines and Michael J. McCallion state that the assumption of this policy is that those adults who hope to join the Catholic church were not connected or had a slight relationship with the local Catholic church and lacked a sense of community.²³²

Even when by the seventeenth century, the Catholic church and state experienced separation in different parts of the world, in the nineteenth century the relationship between the Catholic church and state was inseparable in other regions, to an extent that churches and other

²³⁰ Tory K. Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church and Its Recovery for Today* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 38.

²³¹ David R. Mines and Michael J. McCallion, *Transforming Catholicism: Liturgical Change in the Vatican II Church* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2007), 84.

²³² Mines and McCallion, *Transforming Catholicism: Liturgical Change in the Vatican II Church*, 85.

church property were declared the possession of the state.²³³ Besides this relationship between church and state, the modern era of the nineteenth century brought its scientific concepts and historical criticism which became a threat to Catholicism. Amid all the political and scientific influences of this era, Catholicism remained strong. Even though in the global arena there were political issues taking place, Catholicism, at least in Europe and Africa, was increasing in its missionary work.²³⁴ In the United States, Catholicism grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because of the immigration effect and missionary work. An important event that took place in this period was The Second Vatican Council (also known as Vatican II) in 1962. This event, which met in four separate sessions from October of 1962 to December of 1965, introduced Catholicism to a new place.²³⁵ One issue discussed in this meeting was the place for catechism in the Catholic Church.

By the early 1940s, the re-emergence of the catechumenate in Africa and in France fueled the desire for a radical review of the adult initiation rites, which would make them more capable of sustaining and would better articulate the psychological and spiritual journey of the individual into membership of the Church.²³⁶ It was evident that by the twentieth century the catechumenate was lost in some places and in distinct ways in the Roman Catholic Church. The

²³³ Williston Walker, Richard A. Norris, David W. Lotz, and Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th Ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 673.

²³⁴ Monks, nuns and clergy were increasing in serving as missionaries. Among those missionaries were the orders and societies such as Jesuits, the Oblates, Holy Spirit Fathers, Lazarists, Marists, Dominicans, Franciscans, Capuchins, and White Fathers. People participated in the missionary work by presence, prayer or contribution. An important highlight of the missionary work in this time was the presence of women. Williston Walker, Richard A. Norris, David W. Lotz, and Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th Ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 672-673.

²³⁵ Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 290.

²³⁶ Peter McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 51.

main problem in the American context was having baptized but uncatechized adults, including both Catholics preparing for confirmation and Eucharist, and baptized Christians preparing to enter full communion with the Church.²³⁷ Because there was not a process such as the catechumenate, the involvement of the assembly of the faithful was lacking. Because of the historical research during the 1940s in Europe and Africa, the Church discerned bringing back the ancient catechumenal process of baptismal preparation for adults.²³⁸ That step was finally taken by the churches of Europe, as an immediate prod to the reforms of Vatican II.²³⁹ The Second Vatican Council in 1965 was authorized to restore the catechumenate for adults using the ancient model, a process marked by steps, rites, doctrine, and formation of the Christian life. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* promulgated on January 6, 1972 was a recovery of ancient tradition, a late twentieth-century restoration of the classical processes of adult initiation.²⁴⁰ Even when the *RCIA* was approved decades ago, the American Roman Catholic Church continued declining in its disciple-making endeavor.²⁴¹ The main needs and realities for the American Roman Catholic Church involved Christian initiation, community involvement, rites, and pastoral formation.

²³⁷ William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 1.

²³⁸ Peter McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 71.

²³⁹ James B. Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA* (New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc, 1981), 18.

²⁴⁰ McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*, 117.

²⁴¹ “Frequently Requested Church Statistics” Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

The Discipleship Claim

The context of the American Roman Catholic Church claimed for a discipleship model that could: 1) prepare the individual for confirmation, Eucharist, and full communion with the Church; 2) recover the ancient process for catechetical formation; 3) recover the ancient process for liturgical formation; and 4) recover the ancient process for pastoral formation (clergy, catechists, sponsors, and the assembly of the faithful).

The Discipleship Model

I argue that the *RCIA* model in the twentieth century became the discipleship model that appeared because of the needs of the American Catholic Church and its context. The *RCIA* describes the initiation of adults as “a spiritual journey,” one that, throughout its length and breadth, “bears a markedly paschal character.”²⁴² The process is initiated and culminated in a religious cycle around the season Lent-Easter. The *RCIA* is a process that involves periods, steps, and rites for use in the dioceses of the United States of America for the Christian formation of adults and children in the Roman Catholic Church. The process serves as a spiritual pathway for individuals to begin, continue, and complete the process for acceptance in the church. It is through the church that the individual is introduced, guided, supported, and encouraged. Hence, it is the role of the church through the work of the bishops, priests, catechists, and the faithful, to oversee, guide, encourage, and even care for those people. In the process, the church uses liturgical rites and provides the space through which the individual grows in his or her paschal mystery.

²⁴² Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 2.

The primary metaphor of the *RCIA* is that of a journey, with stages representing points of passage along its course and the destination being a new Catholic who is able to experience the presence of Christ in the spiritual community.²⁴³

The process helps individuals in making the church part of their lives through meditation on the gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing works of charity.²⁴⁴ The purpose is to help the individual to walk in newness of life.

The sacraments of baptism and Eucharist lead and sustain the Christian formation of the individual. In other words, the process of Christian initiation revolves around these two sacraments. But there are also rites that include prayers and intercessions led by the minister, sponsors, or members. These affirm the work of God in the life of the person. In fact, other rites involve anointing the person, laying on hands, and doing the forehead cross which are conducted by the minister. However, not all the action and speaking is the responsibility of the minister. The individual also speaks and acts through the rite of renunciation of sin, exorcism, and affirmation of faith. In addition to these rites, there is a rite that asks the individual to spend time on self-searching and repentance through a moment of spiritual reflection.

The rite of Christian initiation is for those adults who after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully.²⁴⁵

The new rite is a gradual process in which their journey is not to be walked alone but alongside the assembly of the faithful. Therefore, the community of the faithful is itself an agent within the initiatory process and is clearly expressed on the liturgical assembly.²⁴⁶ Every step of

²⁴³ Maines and McCallion, *Transforming Catholicism: Liturgical Change in the Vatican II Church*, 86.

²⁴⁴ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 151.

²⁴⁵ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 2.

²⁴⁶ McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*, 135.

the process possesses specific expectations and a certain degree of commitment and decision, which discloses the progress of the catechumens and prepares them for the next step.

The liturgical celebration of every step along the way into the Church, therefore, renders it an event of the Church as the Body of Christ, and the catechumen is initiated into membership of the Body through the liturgical action of the Body. At the same time, each individual member of the assembly is engaged in making active the worshipping dimension of the common priesthood's prophetic function when they evangelise and catechise.²⁴⁷

However, something to be aware of is that the curriculum used throughout the process is not quite detailed. Even when there is a guide, educators have to ask: what are we to teach? What specific experiences should catechumens have of God and of community? What do they need to know, feel, taste, and do? What stories, beliefs, or practices? What order should these things be given in? And, in what depth?²⁴⁸ Hence, the catechists have to be well trained and equipped people to be able to conduct this work.

James B. Dunning describes in table 7 the priorities based on the relationship between catechesis and liturgy in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*.²⁴⁹

Table 7. Priorities of the RCIA

More centered on:	Than on:
Conversion	Knowledge
Personal change	Changes in the church
Heart	Head
Growth community	Growth in private
Journey	Arrival
Adults	Children
Faith	"The" Faith
Imagination	Logic
Right hemisphere of brain	Left hemisphere
Appreciation	Information
Mystery	Fact

²⁴⁷ McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*, 136.

²⁴⁸ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 18.

²⁴⁹ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 37.

Values Gift Immanence to transcendence	Laws Problem “Top down” to “Bottom up”
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Source: Data from James B. Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*.

Table 8. Basic structure of the rite.²⁵⁰

Period 1	Step 1	Period 2	Step 2	Period 3	Step 3	Period 4
Period of evangelization or precatechumenate	Rite for Making Catechumens or Rite of Entry into the Catechumenate	Catechumenate	Rite of Election or Inscription of names	Lent: immediate preparation	Celebration of the three sacraments of initiation	Eastertide: Mystagogy

Source: Data from Peter McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*.

Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults

Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

The precatechumenate is a time of evangelization. This is a time of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.²⁵¹ It is to be a time for hearing the gospel of “the living God” and “Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all.”²⁵² This period is meant to be a time for hearing the first preaching of the gospel and to be exposed to some Old Testament stories. Also, it is a time for sharing the personal story of the inquirer so it can be put in dialogue with the story of Jesus.²⁵³ It is a time where the inquirer brings his or her own questions. People join this period as a result of the hospitality and outreach/marketing work, as a fruit of the personal testimonies given during

²⁵⁰ McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*, 123.

²⁵¹ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 14.

²⁵² Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 3.

²⁵³ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 40.

the Sunday homilies of the Paschal Season, as every Catholic shares his or her testimony with others, or after people knowing that a particular parish offers the process for them to become Catholic.²⁵⁴ In this period the inquirer initiates his or her conversion by renouncing sin, seeking God, initiating his or her conversion, and devoutness to the Lord.²⁵⁵ It is also in this period that the person decides to truly follow the Lord and seek baptism. The priest, deacons, catechist, and other lay persons are to give the candidates a suitable explanation of the gospel.²⁵⁶ The purpose of this period is for the inquirer to reflect on the Paschal mystery, in other words, the meaning for the inquirer of the dying and rising of Jesus.²⁵⁷ The catechesis becomes a discernment moment for the inquirer which comes at some point to a decision: conversion. This period ends with the acceptance into the order of catechumens.

First Step: acceptance into the order of catechumens. This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ.²⁵⁸ This rite, besides welcoming the person into the catechumenate is an opportunity for public commitment where the candidate and the Church commits to this journey. During this rite, candidates are then signed with the cross, first on the forehead, then on the ears, eyes, lips,

²⁵⁴ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 41.

²⁵⁵ The experience of the gospel should be strong enough that causes the person to walk away from sin and seek God's new life.

²⁵⁶ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 15.

²⁵⁷ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 50

²⁵⁸ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 14.

heart, shoulders, hands, and feet.²⁵⁹ The assembly invites the candidates to the liturgy of the Word, but after the Word and before the Eucharist, they are prayed for and dismissed. There must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelization and this first faith is to be judged by sponsors, catechists, deacons, and parish priests (pastors).²⁶⁰

Period of the catechumenate. Once having a certain degree of faith, the inquirer becomes a catechumen and is ready for a thorough catechesis and to participate in the rites of this period. This is the time—in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual—for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens’ faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process.²⁶¹ The catechumenate is a period and a process that guides the catechumens and candidates “to open their hearts to understand the gospel” and are expected to witness to the gospel and to engage in meaningful prayer.²⁶² During this part of the process the inquirers, now catechumens, are still *searchers*, and they may bring the questions they asked in the previous period. The difference is that they do not ask the questions from outside the community but from within, gaining a new depth of understating.²⁶³ This period should not be short, hurried, or even to specify any length of time since the conversion process cannot be placed on a timetable.²⁶⁴ In fact, this period is more than teaching doctrine, but where learning the new

²⁵⁹ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 4.

²⁶⁰ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 17.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁶² Shawn Madigan, *Liturgical Spirituality and The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1997), 27.

²⁶³ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 56.

²⁶⁴ Madigan, *Liturgical Spirituality and The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 27.

way of life happens. As Vatican II describes it, it is an “apprenticeship” in Christian living. It is during this period that the catechumen continues attending the Sunday liturgy every week and receives catechesis regarding the mystery of salvation, prayer, moral life, and Christian life.²⁶⁵ There is a time for answering or guiding the questions the catechumen may have. The goal and measure of the catechesis should be not only changed minds, but changed hearts and changed lives.²⁶⁶ It is worth mentioning that the sponsors have a duty in their process. Sponsors modeled the gospel to the catechumens and testify on behalf of the catechumen before the assembly of the faithful. This period brings with it a progressive change of outlook and conduct. It should become manifest by means of its social consequences, and it should develop gradually during the period of the catechumenate.²⁶⁷ During this period, the catechumen should keep the Lord’s Day by attending the Sunday celebration every week for here that prayers, blessings, prayers of exorcism, and anointing occur for the catechumen. This period may last for several years, and it comes to an end on the day of election or enrolment of names.

Second step: election or enrolment of names. In this step, the Church solicits the public testimony of sponsors and catechist before adding the name of the catechumen for baptism. This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens’ readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express the will to receive these sacraments.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 5.

²⁶⁶ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 5.

²⁶⁷ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 37.

²⁶⁸ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 14.

Period of purification and enlightenment. In this rite, the Church solicits the public testimony of sponsors and catechists—much as it did in the early church.²⁶⁹ Then, the names of the catechumen are enrolled in the Book of the Elect. This period is a time of purification and enlightenment to which the catechumen, now called “elect,” is submitted. The purpose of this period is to introduce the elect to a more intense time to be prepared for the sacraments. Therefore, the energies, prayer, penance, fasting, the vision, and concern of the entire parish are mobilized to surround these new Christians as they journey toward the climax of their pilgrimage.²⁷⁰ This is the time immediately preceding the elects’ initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil. It is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.²⁷¹ The scrutinies are rites of self-searching and repentance. These scrutinies are: first, the mystery of sin; second, their spirit is filled with Christ the Redeemer (gospel of the Samaritan woman in the first scrutiny, the light of the world in the second scrutiny, and the resurrection and the life in the third scrutiny). In addition to the scrutinies, the catechumen participates in the rite of exorcism. Conversion is about repentance, but for this, the catechumen must learn to desire self-searching and to repent from any covered sin. The intent is to purify the minds and hearts. They receive the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. On Holy Saturday, the catechumens are retreated for reflection, prayer, and fasting.

²⁶⁹ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 6.

²⁷⁰ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 75-76.

²⁷¹ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 14.

Third step: celebration of the sacraments of initiation. This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the elect is initiated through baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist.²⁷² Before the elect is baptized there is the rite of renunciation of sin and profession of faith. The *RCIA* sets out full immersion as the preferred form of baptism.²⁷³ The newly baptized is anointed. Then he or she is clothed with the baptismal garment, and lastly there is the presentation of a lighted candle. After that, the newly baptized participates for the first time in the Eucharist. The elect must be fourteen years or older.

Period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. This is the time—usually the Easter season—following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of both pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration.²⁷⁴ This postbaptismal catechesis period goes from Easter to Pentecost. It is during this period that the newly baptized (now known as “neophytes”) receive a form of catechesis widely used in the ancient Church, but almost unknown in the present: *mystagogy*; that is, a “teaching of the mysteries,” a series of explorations which probe the rites of initiation—the gestures, the symbols, the words—in terms of their biblical resonances and their import for Christian life.²⁷⁵ During this period the new Christian deepens the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.²⁷⁶ The community and neophytes move forward together, meditating on

²⁷² *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition*, 14.

²⁷³ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 8.

²⁷⁴ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 14.

²⁷⁵ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 9.

²⁷⁶ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 4.

the gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and performing works of charity.²⁷⁷ On Pentecost Sunday, it the newest members of the community are encouraged to share with the assembly how they are beginning to use their gifts to transform the world.²⁷⁸ On the anniversary of their baptism, the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with another their spiritual experiences, and to renew their commitment.²⁷⁹

The *RCIA*, in addition to resurrecting ancient rituals, practices, and stages, also attempts to retrieve an ancient and quite radical vision of the Church—one which places conversion at the heart of things, which reshapes community roles, redefines the meaning of catechesis, and sees baptism as the taproot and catalyst for life-long transformation.²⁸⁰ Therefore, *RCIA* could last several years. The process should not be shortened or hurried. The person will finish based on his or her rhythm. It is the role of the local parish to find within its community the opportunity to introduce people into this process.

Even when the *RCIA* should not be shortened or hurried, Father John Costanzo shares an example of a nine-month process of the *RCIA* as follows:²⁸¹

Precatechumate: Informal meetings with the newly initiated after Easter to hear their conversion stories; social gatherings with parishioners during the summer months; introduction to parish leaders; personal interviews. Formal sessions go from September through November.

Decision Time: December

Catechumenate: January of one year to January of the next year; sessions four times each month, with one session a month in the summer.

Decision Time: January

Illumination: First Sunday of Lent until Holy Week

Mystagogia: Easter to Pentecost

²⁷⁷ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 90.

²⁷⁸ Madigan, *Liturgical Spirituality and The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 69.

²⁷⁹ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 152.

²⁸⁰ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 9.

²⁸¹ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 72-73.

The Discipleship Traits or Criteria

The *RCIA* expects certain discipleship criteria in the individual. These would shape the type of person he or she will become as a result of the process. The discipleship criteria are: the Word, service, worship, and community (building relationships). The individual will be introduced to the Word; from the Period of Evangelization, or Precatechumenate, to even after the Period of Mystagogy the candidate will learn about the Gospel. The individual will join in service opportunities as an element that is part of the formation of the process. Worship is required for the individual throughout the process. It is in worship where the person not only nurtures faith but engages in the rite that is part of the process. The process develops in the individual the understanding that the new life is not an isolated journey; rather, there are companions through it. The individual learns to build relationships and to walk this faith journey in community.

The Discipleship Catalysts

The impact that the *RCIA* could produce in the disciple is due to its discipleship catalysts. I argue that these discipleship catalysts can accelerate the work that the American Roman Catholic Church could do in its disciple-making attempt. The discipleship catalysts are conversion, transformation, rites and sacraments, the role of the community, the role of the individual, and self-reflection.

Conversion

This is not one step, but the *RCIA* makes clear the fact that conversion happens step by step and through community.²⁸² The community of the local church, in addition to becoming an initiatory agent for people, becomes essential in the whole salvific process of the person.²⁸³ Part of the purpose of this process is for people to be introduced, guided, supported, and encouraged in their way of salvation. Hence, conversion is not limited to one event but to a personal and communal journey.

Transformation

Authentic conversion involves more than some sudden moment of illumination. It means nothing else than a radical transformation of the whole person.²⁸⁴ Hence, through the process, the catechesis involves changing minds, changing hearts, and changing lives. Eventually, the process helps the individual to be transformed and to walk in newness of life. Therefore, as the individual moves in the process the minister, sponsors, or members affirm through rites the work of God in the life of the person. From the beginning and through the process the individual begins to see glimpses of transformation in his or her life.

The rites and sacraments

Rites are an intrinsic part of the entire catechetical process. The *RCIA* is a conversion guide that can lead catechumens and candidates into this liturgical spirituality.²⁸⁵ Each rite is part

²⁸² However, the catechists must pay attention to the way this is to be raised and demonstrated. It is essential to monitor how conversion is to be manifested in the life of the individual and what evidence he or she will reveal.

²⁸³ McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*, 135.

²⁸⁴ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 15.

²⁸⁵ Madigan, *Liturgical Spirituality and The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 2.

of a longer conversion journey that spans the time before, during and after a particular rite.²⁸⁶ Hence, the church uses liturgical rites and sacraments as part of this spiritual pathway. The same is to be said about the role of the sacraments. Baptism and the Eucharist are the means through which the person not only is accepted into the church, but through which the person continues being nurtured. Giving the sacraments a place that connects the whole pathway in and out strengthens the understanding of the meaning of the initiation in the *RCIA*.²⁸⁷ Note that catechesis and liturgy are intimately connected as we move through the catechesis of the periods (which are also marked by frequent liturgies).²⁸⁸

The role of the community

The process requires a community to be involved in the person's faith journey. This includes the bishop or priest who represent the clergy of the church and who officiates the rites and sacraments. However, the process also requires the laity to take roles such as sponsors and catechists. Providing the person with a mentor or sponsor throughout the process encourages and supports his or her journey. The companionship of the sponsor serves to: a) model faith, b) guide the catechumen and c) answer questions the person may have. The catechists are as well part of the community of the faithful and play an important role in the process. The catechists possess characteristics and qualities that forms community among the candidates. The type of community the catechists form is described as:²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Madigan, *Liturgical Spirituality and The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 2.

²⁸⁷ For the candidate and catechumen to truly embrace the meaning of each rite and sacrament, preparation and explanation must be shared with all of them through the process. Madigan, *Liturgical Spirituality and The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 3.

²⁸⁸ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 39.

²⁸⁹ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 62-63.

A community of hospitality, friendship, and communion;
 A community in a process of ongoing conversion;
 A community in search of meaning;
 A community that is attentive to sharing God's Word;
 A community that witnesses in the world and shares in the pastoral, prophetic, and
 priestly ministry of the Church; and
 A community where all members are partners in ministry.

The community of the faithful walks alongside the individual. Involving the congregation in some responsive prayers or words, indeed encourages the catechumen and nurtures the congregation. All these people through their companionship and roles are to oversee, guide, encourage, and even care for the people that are moving through the process. The commitment of the *RCIA* involves a community walking alongside the candidate.²⁹⁰

The role of the individual

There is a space where the new believer responds in every period and step of the process. Each decision is an opportunity for him or her to affirm their commitment to the ultimate goal: joining the Church. For this reason, it is not the responsibility of the church, or sponsor, or catechist to move the individual to the next period or step. Rather, there is a high degree of initiative and responsibility on the individual to move forward and to respond every rite of the process. As the Holy Spirit opens his or her heart, the individual moves freely and consciously in the process.

Spiritual reflection

²⁹⁰ All these people mentioned become "inner companions," specially Jesus, in the spiritual journey of the catechumen. Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 55-56.

There is a time for spiritual reflection as part of the RCIA process. A time for the new believer to reflect on self-searching and repentance cannot be skipped.²⁹¹ Indeed, a time for self-searching through spiritual reflection will benefit the new believer in making sense of what he or she is learning, and in overcoming sins from which he or she needs to repent. Conversion is about repentance, but for this, the catechumen must learn to desire self-searching and to repent from any covered sin. The spiritual reflection opens a door for the new believer to desire the gospel more than before.

Conclusion

If there was something that this context brought to the Catholic Church it was the recovery of the catechumenate through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*. As Ralph Keifer described it, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was meant to begin a reform and renewal of the most radical sort.²⁹² However, even when reform and renewal could take place, the main purpose of the *RCIA* “is to initiate by catechesis, exorcism, prayer, example, and sacrament those who are coming to faith lived in the church.”²⁹³ The impulses that generated the creation of the *RCIA* were missiological.²⁹⁴ In addition to the missiological reason for the *RCIA*, there was also a need to recover something valuable in the church: the rites, the liturgy and the role of the assembly of the faithful in the initiation process. The main needs and realities for the

²⁹¹ According to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, there is a stage where the individual enters a time of self-searching for repentance.

²⁹² Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 1.

²⁹³ Harmless, *St. Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 11.

²⁹⁴ McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*, 190.

American Roman Catholic Church involved Christian initiation, community involvement, rites, and pastoral formation.

The American Roman Catholic Church provided a discipleship model that: 1) prepared the individual for confirmation, Eucharist and full communion with the Church; 2) recovered the ancient process for catechetical formation; 3) recovered the ancient process for liturgical formation; and 4) recovered the ancient process for pastoral formation (clergy, catechists, sponsors, and the assembly of the faithful). Disciple-making is represented through the contextualized discipleship model of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Table 9. Summary of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Summary The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults						
Period	Modern Church – Twentieth Century					
Context, Needs and Realities	The process of initiation became almost a private process between the priest and the candidate. There was an assumption that adults who wanted to become Catholic had a slight relationship with the local Catholic church. In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church was active in missionary work and immigrants arrived at the colonies. The church was baptizing uncatechized adults, including both Catholics preparing for confirmation and Eucharist and baptized Christians preparing to enter full communion with the Church. With the Second Vatican Council in 1962 the RCIA was approved. However, the American Roman Catholic Church continued declining in its disciple-making endeavor. The main needs and realities for the American Roman Catholic Church involved Christian initiation, community involvement, rites, and pastoral formation.					
Discipleship Claim	The context claimed for a discipleship model that could: 1) prepare the individual for confirmation, Eucharist and full communion with the Church; 2) recover the ancient process for catechetical formation; 3) recover the ancient process for liturgical formation; and 4) recover the ancient process for pastoral formation (clergy, catechists, sponsors, and the assembly of the faithful).					
Discipleship Model	The RCIA is a process of periods, steps, and rites for use in the dioceses of the United States of America for the Christian formation of adults and children in the Roman Catholic Church. The process serves as a spiritual pathway for individuals to begin, continue, and complete the process for acceptance in the church.					
The following table provides the overview of the rite of Christian initiation according to James B. Dunning. ²⁹⁵						
1st Period	1st Stage	2nd Period	2nd Stage	3rd Period	3rd Stage	4th Period
Precatechumate Inquiry	Entrance into catechumenate	Catechumenate	Call and selection	Illumination	Sacraments of initiation	Mystagogia
Unlimited		One to a few years		Lent		Paschal time
Personal story Questions of meaning Evangelization Initial conversion	First welcome into the church	Deepen faith in living community and through church tradition	Admission to those elected for initiation	Spiritual direction Purification Preparation for sacraments	Full initiation into church	Deepening of sacramental life and choice of service or ministries
“Inquirers”		“Catechumen”		“Elect”		“Neophytes”
Awakening of faith		Deepening of faith through community		Discernment of faith and levels of conversion		Celebration of faith and sharing faith in ministries
No specific rite Prayers suggested	Rite of becoming a catechumen	Celebrations of Word; Minor exorcisms; Blessings (Optional: Presentations of creeds, Lord’s Prayer, prayer over ears, mouth, anointing)	Rite of election	Scrutinies Presentations of creed, Lord’s Prayer, Pre-Vigil Rites	Baptism Confirmation Eucharist	Sunday Eucharists celebrations; Eucharist with bishop; Anniversary celebration
Traits/Criteria	Learn the Word, active in service, attend worship, and building relationships through community.					
Discipleship Catalysts	Conversion, transformation, rites and sacraments, the role of the community, the role of the individual and self-reflection.					

Source: Data adapted from authors cited in this chapter.

²⁹⁵ Dunning, *New Wine: New Wineskins, Exploring the RCIA*, 13.

3.3 The Route 180 Model

Thus far, I have argued how historical Christian communities used their context to create discipleship. However, in a more contemporary approach, Route 180 is an illustration of a contemporary discipleship model. A model that emerged from its own context to offer discipleship growth to a particular Christian community.

The Context

Casa Linda United Methodist Church was a middle-class Anglo congregation founded in the 1950s. Despite the Spanish name, derived from the neighborhood, the members of the church were English speakers. For roughly fifty years, Casa Linda (Pretty House in Spanish) reflected the demographics of its founding congregation and did ministry in a very particular way.²⁹⁶ There would be nothing wrong with this church if we were still in the 1950s. The painful reality was that the church was in a declining mode. There were no new people, and there was no diversity, despite significant demographic change in the surrounding neighborhood. The Casa Linda neighborhood, located in the northeast of Dallas represents a low-income community. Out of all the different demographic groups that conform the 75228 zip code, the Hispanic Latino community is the demographic group that surpasses all.²⁹⁷ Almost 50 % of residents speak English and 46.2% speak only Spanish.²⁹⁸ Some of the social issues this neighborhood faces are

²⁹⁶ The ministry was for English-speakers, the church held community events but there was no strategic plan to connect the people with the life of the church; mission was practiced through events and mission trips, and the primary means for discipleship were Sunday schools or Bible Studies for men and women. The church was more inwardly than outwardly focused. David Rangel, *Flipping Church: How Successful Church Planters Are Turning Conventional Wisdom Upside-Down*, ed. Michael Baughman (Tennessee: Discipleship Resources, 2016), Kindle edition, Chapter 6.

²⁹⁷ "75228 Zip Code (Dallas, TX) Detailed Profile," City-Data.com, <http://www.city-data.com/zips/75228.html>.

²⁹⁸ "75228 Zip Code (Dallas, TX) Detailed Profile."

poverty, crime, high school dropouts, and lack of education for the adult Hispanic Latino community.²⁹⁹ A majority of the Hispanic Latino neighbors belong to the Catholic Church. However, some are attached to the Catholic faith by tradition more than by practice. The Hispanic Latino adults are blue-collar workers. Members of the Hispanic Latino immigrant community are people who experienced hurt whether when they were in their countries, as they crossed to the United States, or when they made a new life here. This demographic group carries hurt that requires intentional pastoral care.³⁰⁰ Indeed, since the 50's the community in the Casa Linda area went from a middle-class Anglo neighborhood to a low-income Hispanic Latino neighborhood. The schools had the challenge not only to serve a diverse group of people but also to deal with Spanish-speaking students and parents whose English is not their first language. About half of the businesses in the area are inclined to provide services to the Spanish-speaking community by their outdoor sign "Se habla español" or by giving their business a Spanish name.

Undoubtedly one of the main realities between 2010 and 2014 was the lack of discipleship connection between Casa Linda and its mission field. Even when Casa Linda provided enough community programs, many people only came for the benefit and left. The church did not develop deep relationships with them. Eventually Casa Linda began offering a Spanish ministry, but it was challenging. In those years, I became the pastor of Casa Linda United Methodist Church, and I realized that the church did not have a process in Spanish (or even in English) to make disciples, nor did the North Texas Conference or the United Methodist

²⁹⁹ "Crime in Zip 75228 (Dallas, TX)," Best Places, <https://www.bestplaces.net/crime/zip-code/texas/dallas/75228>. "Zip code 75228, Texas Education Data," Town Charts, <https://www.towncharts.com/Texas/Education/75228-Zipcode-TX-Education-data.html>.

³⁰⁰ Many members of this community have experienced trauma, pain or hurt due to the social situation in their countries. Others, overall women, have experienced rape as part of the process of crossing the border while some have experienced hurt or pain as victims of discrimination.

Church have materials in Spanish. The lack of Spanish literature in the matter of making disciples became a challenge for my ministry during those years. In my first years at Casa Linda I tried to make disciples as I did in Mexico, but it did not work out well. I realized that I was missing something: the context was different. The main needs and realities of the context involved poverty, social needs, immigrant people, emotional support, and Spanish programs.

The Discipleship Claim

The context in Casa Linda United Methodist Church claimed for a model that could: 1) offer a discipleship ministry in Spanish; 2) connect people who were disconnected from God and the church; 3) deal with personal healing; 4) create a sense of belonging and discipline to serve and witness; 5) present a process for busy people; and 6) guide the person through a gradual process to be in relationship with God.

The Discipleship Model

The purpose of Route 180 is to “lead people through experiences that generate a relationship with God so that this may be demonstrated by living a personal discipleship, making disciples, serving in the church, and witnessing in the world.” Route 180 is a pathway that is developed by stations, and in the praxis a person who does not have any church, spiritual or biblical background cannot start in the middle of the process, and then move forward.³⁰¹ Every station determines a new level of commitment and maturity. As the person moves from one station to the next, there are certain expectations and potential changes in the life of the individual. Because we did not assume people will arrive at each station by themselves, there

³⁰¹ However, there was a class we called “alignment.” This class was taken by anyone who had previous church, spiritual or biblical background. This class placed the person immediately at the third station, *experience*.

was a reminder to all of them every time a new station started. Each station required preparation in recruiting the attendees and in having everything needed for those sessions.

Figure 1 shows the path that the individual followed from the first to the last station.



Figure 1. Stations included in Route 180.

Source: Author's Route 180 Model.

Table 10. Route 180 Stations

Genesis: One on one sessions where the person begins a relationship with God (5 sessions).	
Expectation and potential change in the life of the individual during and after <i>Genesis</i>	
Begin a relationship with God.	God begins to be part of the life of the person.
Grow- A course with practical information to grow their relationship with God (4 sessions)	
Expectation and potential change in the life of the individual during and after <i>Grow</i>	
Grow the relationship with God.	Adopt and practice personal discipleship disciplines.
Experience- A retreat accompanied by experiences with the grace of God that will help the participant in his or her relationship with God. (24 hours)	
Expectation and potential change in the life of the individual during and after <i>Experience</i>	
Experience God's grace in a personal way.	Seek personal and communal experiences with God.
D 1 to 1- A course where the person comes to demonstrate his or her relationship with God through serving, making disciples, and witnessing (4 sessions)	
Expectation and potential change in the life of the individual during and after <i>D1to1</i>	
Be equipped to demonstrate the relationship with God through deeds, actions, and words.	The person becomes a disciple who serves in the local church, makes disciples, and witnesses in the world.
Fundamentals- A course that solidifies the relationship with God in a deeper way (5 sessions)	
Expectation and potential change in the life of the individual during and after <i>Fundamentals</i>	
Strengthen and solidify the relationship with God through fundamental discipleship knowledge.	Look for ways to solidify one's relationship with God.
Renew- A retreat that renews their commitment to be in relationship with God (24 hours)	
Expectation and potential change in the life of the individual during and after <i>Renew</i>	
Renew the relationship with God.	Seek and/or cause renewal opportunities on a regular basis for his or her relationship with God

Source: Author's Route 180 Model.

Table 11 shows the topics taught in each station of the route. The page number indicates where a particular topic is located in the student’s booklet.

Table 11. Route 180 Topics		
<p style="text-align: center;">GENESIS TABLE OF CONTENTS</p> <p>Introduction—5</p> <p>Chapter 1 Topic 1: God’s Plan—6 Review questions—10 Devotionals —11</p> <p>Chapter 2 Topic 2: Salvation—16 Review questions—20 Devotionals—22</p> <p>Chapter 3 Topic 3: Spiritual Disciplines—26 Review questions—31 Devotionals—32</p> <p>Chapter 4 Topic 4: Obstacles in your journey—37 Review questions—39 Devotionals—40</p> <p>Chapter 5 Topic 5: Holy Spirit—45 Review questions—49 Topic 6: Evangelism—50 Review questions—52 Devotionals—53</p> <p>Conclusion—57</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GROW TABLE OF CONTENTS</p> <p>Introduction—5</p> <p>Chapter 1 Topic 1: Learning to prayer—6</p> <p>Chapter 2 Topic 2: How to study the Bible —10</p> <p>Chapter 3 Topic 3: Congregating—14 Topic 4: Sharing my faith—18</p> <p>Chapter 4 Topic 5a: Grace—22 Topic 5b: Holy Communion—24 Topic 5c: Baptism —26</p> <p>Conclusion —30</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EXPERIENCE (retreat) TABLE OF CONTENTS</p> <p>Introduction—5</p> <p>Session 1 “The Past”—6 Session 2 “Jesus Christ” —10 Session 3 “Healing wounds” —15 Session 4 “Holy Spirit”—17 Session 5 “The Church/Membership”—19</p> <p>Conclusion—27 Reflections—28</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">D1to1 TABLE OF CONTENTS</p> <p>Introduction—5</p> <p>Chapter 1 Topic 1: Praying for others —6</p> <p>Chapter 2 Topic 2: Evangelism—10</p> <p>Chapter 3 Topic 3: Pastoral Care—18 Topic 4: Gifts and servanthood—22</p> <p>Chapter 4 Topic 5: Genesis Program—28 Topic 6: Social Witnessing—30</p> <p>Conclusion—33</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FUNDAMENTALS TABLE OF CONTENTS</p> <p>Introduction —5</p> <p>Chapter 1 Topic 1: God —6</p> <p>Chapter 2 Topic 2: Evil—13</p> <p>Chapter 3 Topic 3: Repentance —19 Topic 4: New Birth—25</p> <p>Chapter 4 Topic 5: Salvation —31</p> <p>Chapter 5 Topic 6: The Church —38 Topic 7: Eternal Life—42</p> <p>Conclusion —46</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RENEW (retreat) TABLE OF CONTENTS</p> <p>Introduction—5</p> <p>Session 1 “Renew your relationship with God”—6 Session 2 “Renew your call”—9 Session 3 “Renew your interior”—12</p> <p>Conclusion—15 Reflections—15</p> <p><i>* Even though the categories for each session remain the same (renew your relationship with God, renew your call, and renew your interior), the content of the topics for this second retreat is different every year.</i></p>

Source: Author’s Route 180 Model.

The pathway leads the person to begin a relationship with God through the first station: *Genesis*. This is a one to one study in which an already-disciple functions as facilitator and meets with the candidate. Then the new disciples who passed through *Genesis* are now guided to develop their relationship with God through the second station: *Grow*. This is a dynamic and practical course for new disciples who want or need to grow their relationship with God. After this course, the already-disciples attend a retreat called *Experience*; this is the third station of the route. Here the group spends 24 hours experiencing the grace of God in a very personal way. The retreat helps the participants in their relationship with God. When the attendees are back from the retreat, they come to *Ditol* (disciples 1 to 1), the fourth station. This is a course in which the disciples learn to demonstrate their relationship with God by serving in the local church, making disciples, and witnessing in the world. Then, they arrive at *Fundamentals*, the fifth station. This is a course where the disciples solidify their relationship with God as they dive into some of the most important topics that were seen during the whole route. In this course, they are encouraged to look for ways to solidify their relationship with God. Finally, the disciples may participate in the second 24-hour retreat called *Renew*: the sixth station. Here the attendees renew their relationship with God, renew their call, and renew their interior. Even though this pathway is for people who have no spiritual, church or biblical background there is a class offered for those already-disciples or those people who have previous spiritual, church, or biblical knowledge. This class is called, *Alignment*. If the person took the *Alignment* class, he or she may join immediately Route 180 and will be placed at the third station, *Experience*.

Table 12. Alignment-A class that aligns people to the church and to Route 180 (1 session)

Expectation and potential change in the life of the individual during and after <i>Alignment</i>	
Receive a fast track of <i>Genesis</i> and <i>Grow</i> , alignment to the Wesleyan doctrine, local church, and Route 180 methodology.	Commitment to join Route 180

Source: Author's Route 180 Model.

There is a celebration through a graduation or an acknowledgement during worship for every graduating class that concludes the route. The disciples, once finishing the first route may come back only to *Renew*, as a way to renew themselves. The content of the topics of this retreat is different every year, and the disciple may find this retreat very renewing each time. An item in the route that serves as a guide and support is the booklet. Each person that joins Route 180 receives a booklet for each station. The purpose of the booklet is to prepare the people in advance for each station they are attending and is used as a textbook in every session.

The Wesleyan doctrine is part of the formation throughout the route. As people are guided through the route, they come to a place where they are to make the decision to respond to God's grace. In the route, they may encounter: 1) God's prevenient grace [*Genesis*], 2) justifying grace [*Grow* and *Experience*]³⁰² and 3) sanctifying grace [*DltoI*, *Renew* and *Fundamentals*]. The disciples learn through the route the doctrine of grace from the Wesleyan perspective and how to use grace even as a systematic way to understand their growth.³⁰³ There is a level of intentionality in guiding the attendees to understand the way God's grace works in their relationship with God and how this is demonstrated through personal discipleship, making disciples, serving in the church, and witnessing in the world. Because one of the purposes of Route 180 was to connect with the Hispanic immigrant people, the process connects the church with 1) those who attend one of the community programs the church offers; 2) those who are part of one's circle but have not attended church, and 3) those visitors who have not yet begun their discipleship journey.

³⁰² Even when some people made the profession of faith in *Genesis*, it is not until *Grow* or even *Experience* when they experienced the assurance of justification. Hence, for some people the experience of justification takes place in *Grow* or *Experience*.

³⁰³ As it was mentioned before, one of the challenges was to find a Methodist discipleship curriculum written in Spanish (not translated) for the Hispanic Latino immigrant community.

During the year, Route 180 is promoted through:

- a) Announcements: When any station of the route is about to begin, this is announced in the church bulletin, and through a verbal announcement in worship.
- b) Marketing: Flyers are distributed for those interested; shared testimonies about Route 180 are given in social media and during worship. Posts are placed on social media.
- c) Hospitality: At the end of worship services people are invited to stop by the hospitality area or to pass by the information table to receive information about Route 180.
- d) Personal invitation: Visitors are tracked, and they receive a text or a phone call to introduce them to Route 180. They also could be reached through face to face meetings during the week to encourage them to join Route 180.
- e) Recommendation: Those who just finished a station are encouraged to invite others to join the route. This word of mouth invitation by the members becomes the most fruitful and effective way to recruit people to Route 180.
- f) Relational evangelism: Lay people are trained to teach *Genesis* to someone or to know how to invite someone to church. Once they come to church the hospitality team will follow up with them and will guide them to Route 180.
- g) Community programs: Casa Linda representatives connect with people through the community programs to offer them any kind of emotional or spiritual support, and to introduce them to Route 180.

An example of how Route 180 was used in Casa Linda is by following the church's mission statement: "embrace people, empower them to grow, and equip them to serve." People got connected (embrace) to Casa Linda through community engagement and intentional hospitality. Once people were embraced, they were motivated to join any program or opportunity

where they grew spiritually (empower). Here is where many people came to join Route 180. As part of the Route 180 curriculum, they came at a place where they were encouraged to make disciples, serve in the church, and witness the gospel in the world (equip).

It is important to mention that the pathway should move smoothly from one station to the next. To accomplish this effect, there must be an ongoing logistic work such as: 1) providing booklets for each station; 2) having lay people teaching the stations; 3) defining the same room for the classes; 4) having an intensive follow up system from one station to the next one so people can complete the route; 5) providing a Route 180 team, 6) scheduling ahead of time every station (a year in advance preferably); 7) providing evaluation; and 8) recruiting and training new facilitators and members for the Route 180 team.

The Discipleship Traits or Criteria

The Route 180 model contains certain discipleship traits or criteria that formed the life of the disciple. These traits or criteria are: being vulnerable to experience change, being active in personal discipleship practices, becoming a disciple maker, serving in the local church, witnessing in the world, and embracing Wesleyan formation. Most of the people who joined Route 180 belonged to the Hispanic Latino immigrant community from the Casa Linda neighborhood. Unfortunately, many of them began to adopt unhealthy behaviors that had to be changed to have a better interpersonal and intrapersonal life. The individual in the route knows that vulnerability is necessary to be able to experience spiritual, personal and relational changes. People who join Route 180 learn personal discipleship practices and are encouraged from one station to the next one to be active in each of them. This intentionality forms in them the discipline of the new life in Christ. As the new disciples grow in their relationship with God,

they are encouraged and challenged to help others begin their own relationship with God by becoming facilitators of the *Genesis* station. Constantly throughout the route they are asked if they were becoming disciple makers. By finding a place where they may serve in the local church, the disciple by the end of the route understands that part of his or her discipleship life is about serving in the local church. Moreover, as the disciples grow, they are also encouraged to take opportunities where they may be servants and witnesses in the world. Explicitly and implicitly the individual is being formed in the history, doctrine, and structure of Methodism. This formation prepares people to embrace the Wesleyan roots in their discipleship journey. These discipleship traits or criteria are integrated within each station of the route and are part of the formation and life style that the disciple is developing.

The Discipleship Catalysts

But for Route 180 to be an effective and fruitful contextualized discipleship model, there must be certain catalysts to accelerate disciple-making. The following discipleship catalysts are part of Route 180: lay leadership, one on one discipleship, retreat experiences, gradual process, personal reflections, follow up, opportunities to commit, and community.

Lay leadership

Lay people are the ones who disciple new people through *Genesis*. Also, lay people are carefully selected to be trained as facilitators for the different stations in the route. The facilitators before and during the station are in conversation with the pastor. After a station is completed, the facilitator reports directly to the pastor and is evaluated through the *evaluation form* they receive from those who attend their class and from the visit the pastor makes to one

of their classes. The Route 180 Team is formed by lay people as well. They assist with what is needed in each station, especially in the retreats. At the end of the year this team evaluates Route 180 and makes necessary changes for the new year.

One on one discipleship

One on one discipleship is part of the entire route. Overall in the first station, *Genesis*, the already-disciple takes the responsibility to walk alongside the candidate. This companionship forms a bond and assures the new disciple the support needed to go through the rest of the route. It is through this companionship that the already-disciple provides guidance, spiritual support, connectivity, and oversight. This one on one commitment is a growth opportunity not only for the new disciple but also for the already-disciple as well. The one on one discipleship takes place face to face or through phone calls. The main purpose of this catalyst is to monitor the new disciple and be a spiritual companion in his or her disciple journey.

Retreat experiences

Most of the Latin-American immigrants carry pain and lack time for themselves. Providing a safe and isolated space for them to encounter God and experience healing, creates one of the most impactful catalysts in the route. Retreat experiences serve to create a community and affirms the faith of the new disciple. In general, these experiences offer opportunities for lay people, clergy, and attendees to come together and experience God. Because the intention in every retreat is for the attendees to encounter God, having these experiences not in the church building but in a camp, is vital to avoid interruptions or distractions.

Gradual process

The Route 180 program is not a static event. It provides movement in the disciple's journey. Each station is not only part of a sequential process but also part of a gradual system in which from one station to the next more commitment, demand, and intentionality is required from the disciple. The gradual process encourages and allows people to move to the new station and celebrate their growth. Therefore, if for personal reasons the disciples are not able to move to the next station in the present route, they can do it in the next one starting in the station where they stopped.

Personal reflections

Through the courses and retreats, the disciples are introduced to self-reflections. These exercises guide them to seek change, align them to their commitment, and help them to affirm their intentions to be in relationship with God. Indeed, time is an element that is very limited in the Hispanic Latino immigrant community in the U.S. Having moments for self-reflection for this community opens a space that normally does not exist in their day to day agenda. Therefore, every self-reflection activity must be evaluated so that it contributes to the spiritual experience of the disciple.

Follow up

One intentional process during the route is the follow up system given to the disciples throughout the route. Even though people come from a previous station, sometimes they do not continue because of their work load or indecisiveness. Because we do not assume people will arrive at each station by themselves, there is a reminder to all of them every time a new station

starts. The fact that someone finishes the second station, *Grow*, does not mean that the disciple will continue. Therefore, an intentional follow up is needed to maintain attendance, movement, momentum, and excitement from one station to the next one. Therefore, it is essential for the entire route to maintain updated the Route 180 roster so that appropriate follow up is given to members.

Opportunities to commit

Route 180 is not only theory and knowledge; it provides opportunities to commit to personal discipleship, serving the local church, and witnessing in the world. For this reason, the church needs to be clear on what type of opportunities should be offered to the disciples. It is part of the process that the disciple will begin to learn to use his or her time, talents, energy and willingness to bless others. Commitment is another metric used to evaluate the growth of the disciple through the route. Hence, commitment is expected to be demonstrated in the disciple from the first station to the last and through their entire life journey.

Community

When the local church knows that a new station is about to begin or a retreat is coming up, the congregation is encouraged to support Route 180 through their prayers, moral support, promoting Route 180 and inviting others to join it. From the community arises those members who begin the route, the facilitators and the Route 180 Team. Community is something that organically happens as the already-disciple becomes a companion for a new disciple and as the disciples walk alongside others in each station of the route. This helps the new disciple to develop a sense of belonging and experience communal discipleship.

Conclusion

As a result of Route 180, Casa Linda became in those years a church where diverse languages, colors, and nationalities were part of the new identity of the church. This transition brought a bilingual and diverse membership that included young immigrant families worshipping alongside English-speaking members.³⁰⁴ The main needs and realities of the context involved poverty, social needs, immigrant people, emotional support, and Spanish programs. The Route 180 model provided a process that: 1) offered a discipleship ministry in Spanish; 2) connected people who were disconnected from God and the church; 3) dealt with personal healing; 4) created a sense of belonging and discipline to serve and witness; 5) presented a process for busy people; and 6) guided the person through a gradual process to be in relationship with God. The contextualized discipleship increased disciple-making in Casa Linda from 2011 to 2015.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ David Rangel, *Flipping Church: How Successful Church Planters Are Turning Conventional Wisdom Upside-Down*, ed. Michael Baughman (Tennessee: Discipleship Resources, 2016), Kindle edition, Chapter 6.

³⁰⁵ Vince Isner, "21st Century Evangelism and Disciple Making," United Methodist Interpreter, September-October, 2015, http://nxtubiquity.s3.amazonaws.com/unitedmethodist/interpreter/septemberoctober2015/UPLOADED_ASSETS/Sept_Oct_2015.pdf, 19.

Table 13. Summary of Route 180 Model

Summary The Route 180 Model	
Period	Modern Church – Twenty First Century
Context, Needs and Realities	From 2010 to 2014, the community of the 75228 Zip Code was considered a low-income community. The Hispanic Latino community was the demographic group that surpassed the rest. Crime, high school dropouts, and lack of education for the adult Hispanic Latino community were some of the social realities of this community. Among this demographic group many were dealing with hurt and other emotional pains. Many of the Hispanic Latino people were not actively practitioners of faith and needed a personal relationship with God. Some adults were busy at work while others raising their children. The needs and realities of the context involved poverty, social needs, immigrant people, emotional support, and Spanish programs.
Discipleship Claim	The discipleship methodology Casa Linda United Methodist Church used was not being relevant to the Hispanic Latino immigrant community of its mission field. The United Methodist Church did not have discipleship literature in Spanish. The church did not have a discipleship process that could connect the neighbors with the church and eventually to guide them in their discipleship journey. The context in Casa Linda church claimed for a model that could: 1) offer a discipleship ministry in Spanish; 2) connect people who were disconnected from God and the church; 3) deal with personal healing; 4) create a sense of belonging and discipline to serve and witness; 5) present a process for busy people; and 6) guide the person through a gradual process to be in relationship with God.
Discipleship Model	<p>Route 180 leads people through experiences that generate a relationship with God so that this may be demonstrated by living a personal discipleship, making disciples, serving in the church, and witnessing in the world. Route 180 leads the people to respond to God’s grace through discipleship as they encounter in their path God’s prevenient grace (<i>Genesis</i>), justifying grace (<i>Grow</i> and <i>Experience</i>), and sanctifying grace (<i>D1to1</i>, <i>Renew</i> and <i>Fundamentals</i>). Every person that joins Route 180 receives a book based on the station they are attending.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph TD 1((1)) --- 2((2)) --- 3((3)) --- 4((4)) --- 5((5)) --- 6((6)) 1 --- G[GENESIS] 2 --- GR[GROW] 3 --- EX[EXPERIENCE] 4 --- D1[D 1 TO 1] 5 --- F[FUNDAMENTALS] 6 --- R[RENEW] </pre> <p>1 GENESIS -Beginning a relationship with God</p> <p>2 GROW -Growing in relationship with God.</p> <p>3 EXPERIENCE -Retreat experiences that strengthen the relationship with God</p> <p>4 D 1 TO 1 -The relationship with God is shown through service, making disciples and witnessing</p> <p>5 FUNDAMENTALS -Solidifying the relationship with God</p> <p>6 RENEW -Renewing the commitment to be in relationship with God</p> </div> <p>Genesis-One on one sessions where the person begins a relationship with God (5 sessions) Grow-A course with practical information to grow their relationship with God (4 sessions) Experience- A retreat accompanied by experiences with the grace of God that will help the participant in his or her relationship with God (24 hours) D 1 to 1- A course where the person comes to demonstrate his or her relationship with God through serving, making disciples, and witnessing (4 sessions) Fundamentals- A course that solidifies their relationship with God in a deeper way (5 sessions) Renew- A retreat that renews their commitment to be in relationship with God (24 hours)</p>
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	Vulnerable to experience change, active in personal discipleship practices, become a disciple maker, serve in the local church, witness in the world, and embrace Wesleyan formation
Discipleship Catalysts	Lay leadership, one on one discipleship, retreat experiences, gradual process, personal reflections, follow up system, opportunities to commit; and community.

Source: Author’s Route 180 Model.

Chapter 4 The Contextualized Discipleship System

4.1 Contextualization

The previous chapters have described how the context of discipleship emerged. As we get closer to entering in the development process of the contextualized discipleship system, it is vital to first get acquainted the concept of contextualization. It was in 1972 that the term *contextualization* was introduced at the World Council of Churches consultation by Shoki Coe. Contextuality is the capacity to respond meaningfully to the gospel within the framework of one's own situation.³⁰⁶ *Contextualization* is the process of making the gospel relevant to people in such a way to be able to speak to their hearts.³⁰⁷ Even when contextualization is a modern term, contextualization happened in the Old and New Testament.

The Old Testament authors used mythical figures and language from ancient Near Eastern religions, such as Rahab (Isa. 51:9) and Leviathan (Isa. 27:1). The design of the tabernacle and temple had precedents among the nations that surrounded Israel. Both the form and perhaps some of the content of biblical Wisdom literature seems to have been borrowed from surrounding cultures.³⁰⁸

In the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles adapted the gospel message to address different groups of people. In 1 Corinthians, Paul calls the believers in Corinth to follow his example of adapting their cultural practices for the sake of the gospel (9:4-5, 12, 14-15, 19-20). The authors of the New Testament used many idiomatic expressions to give those words spiritual meanings for the Christian movement (e.g., *Logos*, *Koinonia*, sacrifice, and *ekklesia*).³⁰⁹

To understand contextualization, one needs to engage in contextual hermeneutics. The term hermeneutics comes from the Greek *hermeneuo* ("to interpret"). Hermeneutics is the art and

³⁰⁶ Bruce J. Nicholls, *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 21.

³⁰⁷ Ruth Julian, *Local Theology for the Global Church*, eds. Matthew Cook, Rob Haskell, Natee Tachanpons (California: William Carey Library, 2010), 58.

³⁰⁸ *Encountering Theology of Mission*, eds. Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss and Timothy C. Tennent (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), 271.

³⁰⁹ *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 272-273.

science of interpretation. Preachers use hermeneutics in preparation to write a sermon. When we contextualize we are trying to interpret our context.³¹⁰ Some ways to interpret our context could be done through demographic studies, observing people around us, listening with our senses, being aware of the news, and understanding cultural expressions. However, during the process of contextualization, one needs to be careful of its own worldview. Worldview is where one finds “the underlying premises, emotionally charged attitudes, basic goals and drives, assumptions, values, starting-points in reasoning, reacting, and motivating.”³¹¹ Worldview is the totality of the culturally structured images and assumptions in terms of which people both perceive and respond to reality.³¹² The worldview may not be seen immediately; sometimes this could be seen lightly in the surface level, but at the end it drives and could rule one’s own reasoning.

Charles H. Kraft describes the following five critical characteristics of worldviews: 1) worldview assumptions or premises are learned by people as children and, therefore, are not reasoned out but assumed to be true without prior proof; 2) a worldview is an organized system consisting of several levels and types of assumptions; 3) a people’s worldview provides them with a lens, model or map in terms of which reality is perceived and interpreted; 4) our worldview not only guides us in the commitments we make but we are committed to our worldview as well; and 5) those arising from differences in worldview are the most difficult to deal with.³¹³ Hence, if we are not careful, during the contextualization process our personal or communal worldview could influence the outcome of the contextualized discipleship system.

³¹⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, eds. Charles Anderson and Michael J. Sleasman (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 35

³¹¹ Julian, *Local Theology for the Global Church*, 59.

³¹² Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christians Witness* (California: William Carey Library, 2008), 12.

³¹³ Kraft, *Worldview for Christians Witness*, 14-22.

Being aware of our personal or even congregational worldview is wise at the point of developing our discipleship system. In the contextualization process, you will be able to work together to understand the best way to implement discipleship based on the interpretation of the needs and realities of the church and mission field. In sum: The gospel + discipleship + contextual assessment = contextualized discipleship.

4. 2 Definition of Terms

The fact is that without discipleship, churches risk ending up creating attendees and spectators rather than devoted followers of Jesus Christ. For this reason, before we develop our discipleship strategy, we must have a clear understanding of certain terms which will influence the proposed work. First, what is a disciple? At some point, you will need to develop your own answer based on your context, ecclesiology, practices, or attributes that you hope to see. It is essential to define what a disciple is, so we can nurture that identity through the entire discipleship process. Second, what is discipleship? If the disciple is the person, then discipleship is the process that builds up the person's disciple identity.

Discipleship is not just about information. It is about behaviors. Discipleship is not just about education. It is about transformation.³¹⁴

In other words, discipleship should not only help people learn about Jesus but be like Jesus. Discipleship in the biblical tradition is not just learning about Jesus, but becoming like Jesus—doing life as Jesus did life.³¹⁵ Part of the development process is for you to have a

³¹⁴ Phil Maynard, *Membership to Discipleship: Growing Mature Disciples Who Make Disciples* (USA: Excellence in Ministry Coaching, 2015), 13.

³¹⁵ Maynard, *Membership to Discipleship: Growing Mature Disciples Who Make Disciples*, 18.

consistent definition of what discipleship is. And third, what is a contextualized discipleship system?

Discipleship is not a program or one more class, discipleship is about a transformational process. John Wesley, founder of Methodism asked the questions: “Are you going on to perfection?” Perfection does not mean lack of flaws, but a path of growth in maturity and in what it means to be a disciple. Phil Maynard states, “Discipleship is not a state of being, rather it is a process of becoming.”³¹⁶ My proposed work revolves around the contextualized discipleship system. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, system is a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole. Every group matters and every group is interconnected to the whole system and contributes to a unified result. It is important in your development to be aware of the role of processes and methodologies that the church could create for transformation to take place in individuals. The following definitions were created as part of my discipleship development process.

Disciple

Anyone who follows the way of Jesus in devotion, community, witnessing, and servanthood.

³¹⁶ Phil Maynard, *SHIFT 2.0: Helping Congregations Back to Effective Ministry* (Tennessee: Market Square Books, 2018), 122.

Discipleship

It is a process of a continual journey towards God in which one grows to *peripateo*,³¹⁷ lives the way of Jesus, and becomes a mature disciple of Jesus Christ.³¹⁸

Context

It is the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs: environment, setting. In other words, the context involves the socio-cultural conditions in which a community exists

Contextualized Discipleship System

It is a holistic system that generates organic growth based on people's needs, realities, and pace so that they develop from the inside out the identity of a mature disciple.

Contextual Assessment

It is an analysis that describes the needs and realities of the mission field, congregation, and the individual.

Discipleship Claim

It is the argument and reason for a contextualized discipleship, which describes in a few lines the components, target areas, disciplines, or opportunities that the entire contextualized discipleship system will trace.

³¹⁷ From the Greek word *περιπατέω* to live, walk, conduct, behave, or lead one's life. The Apostle Paul refers to this word in Romans 6:4; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 2:10, 4:1, 5:8; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 4:1.

³¹⁸ Maturity based on my definition is one who is active in discipleship practices of devotion, community, witnessing, and servanthood.

Catalysts Stations

They create the discipleship system through which the disciple moves. It is within each catalyst station that discipleship activities or programs take place.

Traits or Criteria

It is a sentence in form of a list of behaviors, virtues, attributes, habits, practices, or characteristics expected in the life of the disciple.

4.3 Components of the Contextualized Discipleship System

In this section, I will introduce the components of the contextualized discipleship system. These components appeared in every discipleship model that was presented in the previous chapters. The components are: context, discipleship claim, discipleship model, discipleship traits or criteria, and discipleship catalysts. Before anyone develops the components of the contextualized discipleship system, I recommend forming a discipleship team. Mike Schreiner and Ken Willard in their book, *Stride*, suggest forming a team of three to six people and including in the discipleship team spiritually mature individuals, one or two who are new Christians and new to your congregation and the rest somewhere in the middle.³¹⁹ The truth is that each church must develop its own set of expectations for this team. For the sake of this dissertation, I will include in the following content some tasks that the discipleship team could consider doing.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Mike Schreiner and Ken Willard, *Stride: Creating a Discipleship Pathway for Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 23-24.

³²⁰ Some of the tasks that the team could consider doing are: 1) praying for the vision, discernment and development process of the discipleship system; 2) creating the discipleship system (give name to the whole system, develop the traits or criteria, define every station of the system and establish the discipleship activities); 3) designing a method for implementing the process and to create a communication plan to introduce the

Context Assessment, Needs and Realities

As mentioned in each of the six discipleship models, the context involves needs and realities which play an essential role in developing the contextualized discipleship system. Therefore, before any church rushes to buy the newest discipleship program in the Christian industry or acquires the latest discipleship material that a well-known Christian leader has written, one must look at the context. One may ask, but how do I assess my context? I propose the following three areas: 1) mission field; 2) congregational; and 3) individual.

Mission Field Contextual Assessment

1. Members of the discipleship team could do a demographic study of the mission field.

They may choose any of the following sources of demographic data on the web:

- i. <https://missioninsite.com/>;
 - ii. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/international-programs/about/dem-soc-analysis.html>;
 - iii. <https://data.census.gov>;
 - iv. <https://www.urban.org/research/data-methods/interactive-maps>;
 - v. <http://www.usreligioncensus.org/>; or
 - vi. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>
2. The discipleship team could coordinate a walk through the mission field to sense, see, learn, and/or gain a better understanding of the needs and realities of the mission field.

Congregational Contextual Assessment

1. The discipleship team will evaluate the congregation's existing discipleship state through any of the following discipleship church-wide surveys:

discipleship system to the congregation; 4) continuing this process until it becomes part of the church's culture; 5) evaluating how effectively the system is being implemented within the congregation; and 6) creating a calendar that will show when certain activities of the discipleship system will happen in the year.

- i. Real Discipleship Survey³²¹ <https://emc3coaching.com/services/real-discipleship-survey/>
 - ii. Intentional Discipleship Survey³²²
 - iii. Gospel Discipleship Congregation Guide³²³ <https://www.cokesbury.com/Gospel-Discipleship-Congregation-Guide>
 - iv. Discipleship Church-Wide Survey
 - a) What discipleship programs does the church have?
 - b) How many people are involved in all discipleship opportunities?
 - c) How many of those programs have new people?
 - d) How does personal spiritual growth take place in those programs?
 - e) How does communal discipleship take place in those programs?
 - f) How does servant discipleship take place in those programs?
 - g) Do the discipleship programs of the church reflect the mission field?
 - h) In what way do the discipleship programs create opportunities for the attendees not to come to a halt but to grow in their faith journey?
 - i) According to the local church, do the discipleship programs shape the identity, traits, criteria or values of what a disciple should be?
2. The pastor, a designated mystery guest, or any member of the discipleship team could walk through the different discipleship classes or programs to sense, see, learn, or gain a better understanding of the needs and realities of the existing discipleship ministry.

Individual Assessment

1. The discipleship team could ask individuals to self-evaluate where they are in their discipleship journey through any of the following surveys or assessments:
 - i. Personal Spiritual Gifts Survey³²⁴ <http://survey.adultbiblestudies.com/> or, <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4640>
 - ii. EMC Personal Discipleship Survey <https://emc3coaching.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Discipleship-Survey.pdf>

³²¹ Excellence in ministry coaching provides this online survey.

³²² Phil Maynard, *SHIFT 2.0: Helping Congregations Back to Effective Ministry* (Tennessee: Market Square Books, 2018), 112-114.

³²³ Michelle J. Morris provides a pathway for congregations to locate their discipleship interest.

³²⁴ The spiritual gifts discovery that appears in the Ministry Matters website comes from the small group study *Serving from the Heart* by Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile.

- iii. Morning Star Church Individual Survey.³²⁵
- iv. Participant Gospel Discipleship Assessment
https://www.abingdonpress.com/Gospeldiscipleship?fbclid=IwAR2kAyVMDvaIzXkGQelqUEkwxJEYmFz2OL1oUmzPF_IliZFIEe8OSyf85X8; or
<https://www.ministrymatters.com/Gospeldiscipleship>
- v. The Individual Discipleship Survey
 - a) What is your age?
 - b) When did you start attending this church?
 - c) Since your first visits, how would you describe your involvement in your discipleship journey in this church? Simple, difficult, confusing, other. Why?
 - d) Rate your personal discipleship, being 1 low and 5 high (1 2 3 4 5), why did you choose that number?
 - e) Personal discipleship: What practices do you do in your personal spiritual life?
 - f) Rate your communal discipleship, being 1 low and 5 high (1 2 3 4 5), why did you choose that number?
 - g) Communal discipleship: How do you grow in your discipleship through communal opportunities? Provide the name of the class or program you are involved in now. (Small groups, UMW, UMM, other)
 - h) Rate your servant discipleship, being 1 low and 5 high (1 2 3 4 5), why did you choose that number?
 - i) Servant discipleship: In which leadership, volunteer and/or missional opportunities are you involved in today?
 - j) In what area would you like to grow more: personal discipleship, communal discipleship, servant discipleship? Why?
 - k) What kind of discipleship classes would you like this church to provide?
 - l) Do you have any other suggestions for discipleship ministry?

The contextual mission field, congregational and individual assessment is an analysis that describes needs and realities. When you arrive at this place in your development process make sure you describe specific facts that you must be aware of. A high-level contextual assessment for Custer Road United Methodist Church is described as follows:

Mission field: It is a diverse mission field. 66% White; 13% Asian; 11% Hispanic; 6% Black; 3% Other. Wealthy area. Many churches are disconnected from the low-income areas of the Plano area. There are few Asian churches and Hispanic congregations.

Congregational: Mainly white middle- and high-class membership. Discipleship in the church is demonstrated through Sunday school, social interaction, and financial support to missions. The church has a digital discipleship resource on Right Now Media and has its own upgraded discipleship library. There is a need to create discipleship classes in Spanish.

Individual: There is a lack of individual involvement in serving in the local church or serving in the mission field. There is a need for personal discipleship and servant

³²⁵ Schreiner and Willard, *Stride: Creating a Discipleship Pathway for Your Church*, 69.

discipleship commitments. Individuals feel stuck in the same discipleship class for many years and they have found their comfort zone in the same discipleship gathering.

The Discipleship Claim

The other aspect that pertains to the context is the claim for a contextualized discipleship system. If I were to provide a definition for the discipleship claim, I state that the discipleship claim is the argument and reason for a contextualized discipleship, which describes in a few lines the components, target areas, disciplines, or opportunities that the entire contextualized discipleship system will trace. The discipleship claim comes from the context assessment. According to the needs and realities of my current church-context, Custer Road UMC, the following is our discipleship claim:

The context in Custer Road UMC claims for a system that could: 1) generate discipleship mobility; 2) create Christian initiation paths; 3) foster discipleship through community; 4) develop accountable discipleship; 5) provide discipleship opportunities in Spanish; and 6) lead people to serve in the church and mission field.

The Discipleship Model

A question Bob Farr asks is, how does one grow in his or her faith in this congregation?³²⁶ When new people come to your church, whether they are already Christians or not, some come wondering how they can grow in their faith there. For this reason, I argue that having a system with discipleship stations will provide the growth movement that will answer the question when someone asks, so what's next for me here, or how do I grow in this church?

³²⁶ Bob Farr and Kay Kotan, *Renovate or Die: Ten Ways to Focus Your Congregation on Mission* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2011), 69.

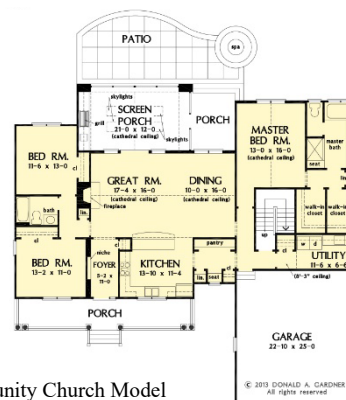


Baseball Diamond Discipleship Model, Rick Warren

Twenty-five years ago, Rick Warren, of the Saddleback Church, introduced the baseball diamond discipleship model. Through this model people went from first base to second, and then from second to third and eventually, home. In his model, each base represents a deeper understanding or commitment. Eventually, Saddleback Church modified the

baseball language to classes: Class 101, Class 201, Class 301, and Class 401. Whether the baseball model or the class method, both are a systematic pathway.

North Point Community Church uses the image of a house to lead people in their discipleship process. They lead people from the foyer, to the living room, and kitchen. Each area has a purpose and expectation for the member. In this model, people are led to one of these three areas and members are expected to move from one to the next.³²⁷



North Point Community Church Model

I argue that discipleship is not limited to a linear process. Using Saddleback's model, people may begin on first base while others on third base. Perhaps, some people may go from first to third, while others from second to home. Using North Point's model, some could start in the kitchen while others in foyer. Therefore, I propose a contextualized discipleship system for discipleship ministries, in which there is freedom within the system for people to go where they feel they should go and experience growth in their own rhythm. Hence, the discipleship system does not lead all the people to step one, then to step two, and finally to step three, rather each person moves through the stations based on his or her own need, reality, and pace. Using Bob

³²⁷ The image does not come from North Point Community Church. The intent is to provide an example of how their discipleship journey moves.

Farr's question—how does one grow in his or her faith in this congregation? – each station of the discipleship system with its own activities must contribute to the growth of the person, and therefore with the development of the traits or criteria in the life of the disciple. Otherwise, we will be entertaining people on a particular activity and people could get stuck in their discipleship growth. In a discipleship system, every station must be evaluated so that it contributes to the expected traits or criteria. Indeed, the discipleship system is the zone and environment that offers spaces that create continuous opportunities where people grow in their disciple identity and become mature disciples. Therefore, because the system is not static but continuous, there is discipleship movement through the system.

Kay Kotan stated in her book, *Gear Up*, that disciple-making is the process that guides, encourages, and defines how to move from where you are in your faith development to becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ.³²⁸ With a discipleship system, people—regardless of where they are in their faith journey—could move and develop their identity and maturity until they become dedicated followers of Jesus Christ. Having multiple stations allows the person to develop their own pace and readiness to later enter another station. Not everyone starts in the same place, but everyone can grow in their discipleship regardless where they are. Kay Kotan provides an excellent example of this reality:

A person might have heavy Bible knowledge but have never practiced servanthood. Or, a person might be volunteer for everything but have never shared his or her faith with another person. People need to be able to enter no matter where they are in their faith development and have the opportunity to grow deeper.³²⁹

³²⁸ Kay Kotan, *Gear Up: Nine Essential Processes for the Optimized Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2017), 36.

³²⁹ Kotan, *Gear Up: Nine Essential Processes for the Optimized Church*, 38.

For this reason, a discipleship system is not a destination, but a journey of continued growth where shaping and being shaped is part of the lifelong process.³³⁰

Even after the discipleship system is completely developed, the system does not change. What changes is the how we make disciples. In other words, the activities in each station may change because those are completely contextualized to the needs and realities of the church and mission field.³³¹ Therefore, the fact that the discipleship activities are defined today does not mean that those will be relevant in ten years. Perhaps, a five-session discipleship class in English may need to be offered in Mandarin in ten years because the demographics of the church shifted.

Discipleship classes before 2020 were most likely onsite. Today, because of COVID-19, many churches have explored new ways to continue discipling through online platforms.

Discipleship activities and how we make disciples may change, but the discipleship system continues to be the same. At some point in your development process, you will have to define the discipleship activities for your contextualized discipleship system. These activities will lead the individual to be shaped on the expected traits or criteria. Eventually, those activities come from: 1) contextualizing and selecting the activities that appeared in the previous discipleship models that were presented in this dissertation model; and 2) identifying those existing activities that your church may modify to support the system. The following are the new and existing contextualized discipleship activities that are included in the system for Custer Road UMC:

New: Evangelization session from the catechumenate model, Mentor assistance from the catechumenate model, Monastic personal-communal-servant discipleship practices, Rule of Life, *Regula* for all small group activities, accountable discipleship for all stations, Wesleyan classes, Societies, Wesleyan Penitent Band, Route 180, special short-term

³³⁰ Kotan, *Gear Up: Nine Essential Processes for the Optimized Church*, 41.

³³¹ In fact, children' ministry and youth ministry may use the same traits or criteria and contextualize the discipleship system to their ministry. Thus, there will be the same disciple traits or criteria shaping the disciples as children, youth and adults as they move in life through their own human development process.

classes with emphasis on metanoia, forgiveness, character formation, and renewal. Personal Wesleyan covenant.
Existing: Membership class, Sunday school, Building Better Moms, UMW, UMM and outreach ministries.

The Discipleship Traits or Criteria

It is important to have a clear vision of what the discipleship system will develop in the type of disciple someone could become. Therefore, each congregation needs to define the traits or criteria that the discipleship system will develop in the individual. The traits or criteria are expectations that we hope to see as the disciple moves and grows through the discipleship system. The traits or criteria is a sentence shaped like a list of behaviors, virtues, attributes, habits, practices, or characteristics expected in the life of the disciple.³³² For some churches the traits or criteria are the membership vows.

Having a clear discipleship process with clear expectations allows those people who enter the discipleship system to strive to achieve them.³³³ By no means should we assume that someone who begins to attend any church activity will become a mature disciple and will demonstrate those traits or criteria immediately. The lack of traits or criteria will not be consistent with the type of disciple we hope to see in our local church. Hence, having clear traits or criteria since the beginning will benefit the discipleship system when we start developing the discipleship activities.³³⁴ Those traits or criteria lead to the needs and realities of your context

³³² Kotan, *Gear Up: Nine Essential Processes for the Optimized Church*, 38.

³³³ Schreiner and Willard, *Stride: Creating a Discipleship Pathway for Your Church*, 43.

³³⁴ We must know our final product (what kind of disciples we hope our churches will produce), and we must think intentionally about how our church's ministries and opportunities work together to assist in disciple formation. Junius B. Dotson, *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations* (Tennessee: Discipleship Ministries, 2017), 14.

and uphold your discipleship claim. The traits that I defined in the discipleship system for Custer Road UMC include the following characteristics:

Personal discipleship practices, communal discipleship involvement, and devoted servant discipleship.

A more developed form of the traits is: “Regular personal discipleship practices on prayer, intercession, scripture, meditation and abstinence; weekly communal discipleship involvement through worship, Sunday school, and small groups; and devoted servant discipleship by being active in serving in the local church and in outreach ministries.”

The Discipleship Catalysts Stations

The discipleship catalysts stations are those that create the discipleship system through which the disciple moves. It is within each catalyst station that the discipleship activities or programs take place. Even though the starting point is not considered a station, it is important for you to be aware of it. The starting point is where people arrive and receive guidance as to what each catalyst station and its activities are about. The starting point is an onsite and online space where people may find direction about how the discipleship system helps them in their discipleship journey. At some point in your development process you will be able to create a description of all the stations with their own activities. This starting point description will serve as a guide for people to know how they could move and grow through the discipleship system. Thus, the catalyst stations create the space where the disciple could move from one station to the other without necessarily a specific order. Even when there might be a linear process within a catalyst station, that does not mean that the whole system is linear. Rather, I propose that the stations are located around the system, giving the experience of a cyclical system. Every catalyst station must be given a name that represents the type of contribution to the entire system. Giving a name is also essential for communication purposes and to ensure that people can remember

it.³³⁵ For example: Searching, exploring, beginning, growing, and maturing.³³⁶ Another example comes from Rick Warren and the Saddleback Church: belong, grow, serve, and share.³³⁷ The last example comes from the Road to Discipleship from the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference: exploring Christ, transforming in Christ, maturing in Christ and Centered in Christ.³³⁸ You will need to name each catalyst station and develop the purpose and expectation of it. Then, based on the purpose of each station is the type of activity or activities that should support it. As part of the development process, you will begin to organize those activities in each catalyst station based on the catalyst name. Ultimately, each catalyst station through its own discipleship activities shapes the life of the individual in the expected traits or criteria. The following are the catalysts stations for Custer Road UMC (CRUMC):

- Exploring: This station is for people who are eager to discover the Christian faith, or to learn about the local church, or to explore the different discipleship opportunities in the church. The expectation in this station is for people to explore making CRUMC their home church if they wish, to develop an annual discipleship growth plan, and a written discipleship covenant. The activities in this station are evangelization sessions according to the catechumenate model, membership class, explore class, and developing a growth plan and written Wesleyan covenant.
- Basics: This station is for people who are looking to learn the basics of the disciple journey and discipleship practices. The expectation in this station is for people to commit to a systematic pathway of classes and retreats. The activity in this station is Route 180.
- Community: This station is for people who desire to surround themselves with other disciples and build communal discipleship. The expectation in this station is for people to commit to ongoing communal discipleship opportunities. The activities in this station are public worship, and current community groups such as Sunday school, UMW, UMM, and Building Better Moms.

³³⁵ Schreiner and Willard, *Stride: Creating a Discipleship Pathway for Your Church*, 38.

³³⁶ Phil Maynard, *Membership to Discipleship: Growing Mature Disciples Who Make Disciples* (USA: Excellence in Ministry Coaching, 2015), 44.

³³⁷ “Class,” Saddleback Church, accessed on May 28, 2020, <https://saddleback.com/events/class>

³³⁸ Dotson, *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations*, 46-47.

- Nurturing: This station is for people who desire to boost their discipleship life and to continue being active in their discipleship growth plan, discipleship covenant and disciple traits. In this station people enter cognitive, emotional and behavioral opportunities that nurture their discipleship journey. The expectation in this station is for people to be vulnerable, responsible, and mature to learn and grow. The activities in this station are the Wesleyan cohort-class meeting, the rule of life class, and the monastic personal-communal-servant discipleship class.
- Serving: This station is for people who are looking for serving opportunities based on their discipleship maturity. The expectation in this station is for people to demonstrate their disciple traits through service. The activity in this station is the *I Serve* class, which is a menu of serving opportunities in the local church.
- Developing: This station is for people who are currently serving in the local church, inside of the church building, or in the mission field, and who are looking to develop their servanthood and leadership. The expectation in this station is for people to be equipped to become integral servants. The activities in this station are the leadership development school and seasonal Wesleyan Mid-week service, like the Societies.

4.4 Principles for a Contextualized Discipleship System

The *Lexico* dictionary by Oxford University describes principle as, “A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.”³³⁹ As we prepare to develop a contextualized discipleship system, the following principles will serve you as a foundation over which the discipleship system will be held. These principles not only will be necessary during the development process but also, they must continue sustaining the discipleship system after it was created. Use these principles to confirm that your discipleship system is held to the mission statement and remains simple, creates movement, maintains alignment, continues fruitful, and involves mutual accountability.

³³⁹ “Principle,” Lexico.com, accessed May 30, 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/principle>

Mission Statement

Before we consider developing a contextualized discipleship system, we must be clear about the importance of having a mission statement. Whether the local church possesses a mission statement or uses the one that appears in Matthew 28:19-20, we cannot begin the development of the contextualized discipleship system without being aware of what initiates this process: the mission. How every church makes disciples is completely contextualized. But what continues to be the same for all churches since the first-century is the mission of making disciples. The mission is the purpose. It is what keeps all focused, and the reason why an organization or institution exists. In this case, the mission of the Church of Christ is to make disciples. Therefore, the mission statement is always discipleship oriented. Look at the following mission statements and see how they are discipleship oriented:

Helping people know the love of Jesus, Custer Road United Methodist Church in Plano, Texas.

To lead people to become fully devoted followers of Christ, Life Church in Edmond, Oklahoma.

Helping people take their next step toward Christ, Community Church in Granger, Indiana.

Pointing People to Jesus Christ, Casa Linda United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas.

Now, take a moment to describe your church's mission statement:

Once we are clear about the mission statement, we are ready to move to the following principles: simple, movement, alignment, fruitful, and accountability.

Simple. The contextualized discipleship system should not be hard to understand. Short words or phrases work better than long sentences. The use of an image or steps benefit in presenting and

understanding the discipleship system. People want to easily know the options they have in front of them. Having a system developed and presented in a simple way would help people know where the church wants to take them or what the next steps are for them. A large list of programs does not mean discipleship effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary that the discipleship system is easy to understand so that people move freely and experience discipleship growth in their faith journey. Rick Warren, of the Saddleback Church, twenty-five years ago used the baseball diamond for people to grow in their discipleship. North Point Community Church uses the image of a house to lead people in their discipleship journey.

Movement. The downside of limiting discipleship to one or two activities rather than implementing an entire system is that it opens the door for people to get stuck in their discipleship journey. The excitement and purpose that a specific discipleship program or activity brought to a person in the beginning, becomes over time the reason for not growing. Junius B. Dotson states, “The problem becomes, the longer we have been in one place, the greater the likelihood that we have forgotten why.”³⁴⁰ Therefore, having clear catalyst stations allow the person to move freely through the system, creating an organic movement and growth in his or her discipleship journey. This movement creates pathways for existing and new disciples. We cannot make disciples without existing disciples; therefore, growth movement for both, existing and new, is essential.

Alignment. Every station and activity of the system must be aligned to the discipleship claim and to the traits or criteria of the contextualized discipleship system. The temptation for many is to

³⁴⁰ Dotson, *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations*, 14.

continue launching new Bible studies or new affinity small groups, which is not bad, but if those new discipleship opportunities are not aligned to the discipleship claim and to the traits or criteria, then it will be one more thing on the church's calendar. Therefore, it will not support the work that, as a whole, the discipleship system is striving to accomplish. Having many programs or activities in our discipleship system does not mean that discipleship is aligned. At some point, the church will have to look at all the discipleship activities, existing and new, and then evaluate if the activities are aligned to the discipleship claim and the traits or criteria of the discipleship system. Sometimes we continue repeating certain discipleship activities because that is what we have always done, when they are, in fact, not aligned. The alignment principle would: 1) sunset any discipleship activity that is distracting the church from the system; 2) modify any discipleship activity in order to continue being part of the discipleship system; or 3) ask if a specific discipleship activity that cannot be removed can support the discipleship system in any possible way.³⁴¹ As you prepare to define the activities under each station of the discipleship system, ask the following question: Is every activity aligned to the discipleship claim and to the traits or criteria? If not, what needs to be done? Should we modify, leave the same or sunset the activity?

Fruitful. We live in an era where we want to see immediate results. The microwave, fast food restaurants and quick communication through technology are clear examples. When it comes to discipleship, there may be people who want to see a fruitful change in their lives when they commit to join your discipleship system. Thus, during their journey, the discipleship system should give fruit, in other words, should help the disciple to demonstrate the expected traits or

³⁴¹ Schreiner and Willard, *Stride: Creating a Discipleship Pathway for Your Church*, 40.

criteria. Fruit for the contextualized discipleship system means demonstrating the expected traits or criteria. At some point in your development process you will have to define the traits or criteria that will shape the life of the disciple. In other words, you will have to define those practices, habits, knowledge, or character that you hope to see in the disciple in your church.

Accountability. Discipleship must be accountable on both parts, the church and the individual. Therefore, the contextualized discipleship system must create accountable opportunities for the individual to yearn and plan his or her own growth, while the church provides the space, activities and follow up for disciples to grow and mature in their faith.³⁴² The individual is who identifies how he or she hopes to grow during the year, and then commits to his or her growth. The church provides the space, activities, and follow up where the disciple grows. Mutual accountability creates growth, but when one of the two loses its accountability, growth stops happening. Definitely, by the time someone desires to join the discipleship system, accountability is in place and expected to be upheld for both, the individual and the church. Discipleship is a mutual effort. As people move and grow in their discipleship, they should become more proactive in taking responsibility for managing their own journey.³⁴³ Certainly, the discipleship system should develop and uphold accountability for both, the individual and church, from the beginning of one's journey. For instance, giving individuals options to develop their own growth plan for the entire year, and at the same time giving the church or discipleship team the task to develop individual discipleship follow up.

³⁴² Dotson, *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations*, 9.

³⁴³ Maynard, *Membership to Discipleship: Growing Mature Disciples Who Make Disciples*, 63.

The principles for developing a contextualized discipleship system are intrinsically connected and are pivotal for an effective system. At the end, your contextualized discipleship system should be connected to the mission statement and must remain simple, create movement, maintain alignment, continue fruitful and uphold mutual accountability.

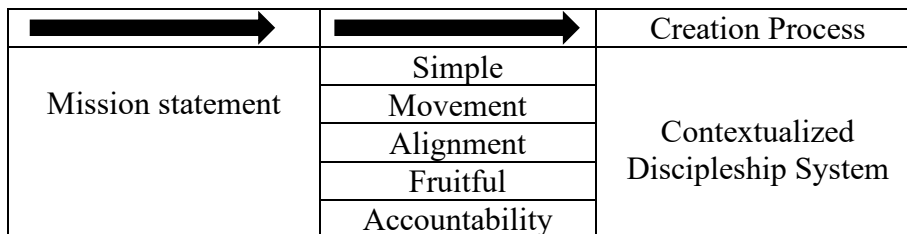


Figure 2. Principles for a Contextualized Discipleship System.
Source: Author's Contextualized Discipleship System

4.5 Developing A Contextualized Discipleship System

Creating a contextualized discipleship system may be a difficult task for one single person. As it was suggested, one alternative would be to create a discipleship team. They could evaluate the findings of the context assessment and could develop the contextualized discipleship system. Because creating a contextualized discipleship system is not an easy job, for pedagogical purposes, I will introduce three fictitious churches that could describe three methods that may be used to develop your own contextualized discipleship system.

- 1) The Practicus Church: This church chooses the prototype contextualized discipleship system I created for Custer Road UMC.
- 2) The Committed Church: This church chooses to create its own contextualized discipleship system.
- 3) The Hybrid Church: This church chooses to adapt the prototype discipleship system to its own needs.

These three fictitious churches may be used as a path for your church to eventually have a contextualized discipleship system.

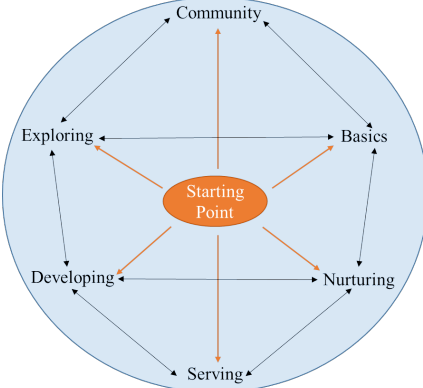
The Practicus Church

The following contextualized discipleship system has been developed to be a prototype for Custer Road United Methodist Church. The fictitious Practicus Church has looked at its own context and has realized that she could adopt 100% of this prototype system for her own discipleship ministry.

Table 14. Summary of the Discipleship System of Custer Road UMC

The Journey Custer Road UMC	
Period	Modern Church – Twenty First Century
Context, Needs and Realities	<p>Mission field: It is a diverse mission field. 66% White; 13% Asian; 11% Hispanic; 6% Black; 3% Other. Wealthy area. Many churches are disconnected from the low-income areas of the Plano area. There are few Asian churches and Hispanic congregations.</p> <p>Congregational: Mainly white middle- and high-class membership. Discipleship in the church is demonstrated through Sunday school, social interaction, and financial support to missions. The church has a digital discipleship resource on Right Now Media and has its own upgraded discipleship library. There is a need to create discipleship classes in Spanish.</p> <p>Individual: There is a lack of individual involvement in serving in the local church or serving in the mission field. There is a need for personal discipleship and servant discipleship commitments. Individuals feel stuck in the same discipleship class for many years and they have found their comfort zone in the same discipleship gathering.</p>
Discipleship Claim	The church and mission field context are claiming for a system that can: 1) generate discipleship mobility; 2) create Christian initiation paths; 3) foster discipleship through community; 4) develop accountable discipleship; 5) provide discipleship opportunities in Spanish; and 6) lead people to serve in the church and mission field.
The discipleship activities of the contextualized discipleship system	<p>New: Evangelization session from the catechumenate model, Mentor assistance from the catechumenate model, Monastic personal-communal-servant discipleship practices, Rule of Life, <i>Regula</i> for all small group activities, accountable discipleship for all stations, Wesleyan classes, Societies, Wesleyan Penitent Band, Route 180, special short-term classes with emphasis on metanoia, forgiveness, character formation, and renewal. Personal Wesleyan covenant.</p> <p>Existing: Membership class, Sunday school, Building Better Moms, UMW, UMM, and outreach ministries.</p>
Definition of a disciple	A disciple is one who learns to live the way of Jesus in devotion, community, witnessing, and servanthood.
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	Personal discipleship practices, communal discipleship involvement, and devoted servant discipleship



	<p>A more developed form of the traits is: “<u>Regular</u> personal discipleship practices in prayer, intercession, scripture, meditation and abstinence; <u>weekly</u> communal discipleship involvement through worship, Sunday school, and small groups; and devoted servant discipleship by being active in serving in the local church and/or in outreach ministries.”</p>
<p>Discipleship Catalysts Stations</p>	<p>Exploring: Evangelization session based on catechumenate, membership class, explore class, growth plan, written personal Wesleyan covenant. Basics: Route 180 stages. Community: Public worship, and current groups such as Sunday school, UMW, UMM, and Building Better Moms. Nurturing: Special short-term classes, Wesleyan cohort-class meeting, Rule of Life class, and monastic personal-communal-servant discipleship practices class. Serving: <i>I Serve</i> class. Developing: Leadership development school and Wesleyan Mid-week service similar to the Societies.</p> 

Source. Author’s Contextualized Discipleship System

The Committed Church

This church is committed to create its own contextualized discipleship system by developing the following eight steps. First, do a contextual mission field, congregational and individual assessment. Then, based on the information collected from the contextual mission field, congregational and individual assessment, make sure you describe specific facts that you must be aware of. What needs or realities do you see in your mission field, congregation and individual members? Write in the Exercise 1.1 the main needs or realities identified in your contextual assessment.

Exercise 1.1.

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church	
Period	Modern Church – Twenty First Century
Context, Needs and Realities	

Second, according to Exercise 1.1, how would you frame a discipleship claim that describes in the Exercise 1.2 the components, target areas, disciplines, or opportunities that the entire contextualized discipleship system will trace?

Exercise 1.2

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church	
Discipleship Claim	

Third, for the Exercise 1.3 you will mention the discipleship activities for your contextualized discipleship system. These activities will come from contextualizing the activities that appeared in the summaries of this dissertation.³⁴⁴ To begin with, go back to the summary of each discipleship model. Then, identify those activities that are contextual and relevant to your expected traits or criteria. In doing so, you may end selecting one activity from the Church in Acts model, three activities from the monastic model, one from the *RCIA* model, none from the Methodist model or the entire Route 180 model. You may also look at your church's weekly activities and identify those existing activities that your church is doing and that could be contextualized to the system. As you see, it is all about contextualization. Now, using the following table, let us start with what Stephen Covey called, "begin with the end in mind."³⁴⁵ Once you have defined the traits or criteria for your discipleship system, write them down on the forth column. Then from every summary of this dissertation write in the first column the discipleship activities that you could potentially consider on your discipleship system. Now, from those activities on the first column, select and place in the second column those activities that will move the disciple to grow in the expected traits or criteria. Lastly, after evaluation,

³⁴⁴ To see the summaries, go to pages 29, 49, 67, 87, 107, 123.

³⁴⁵ Stephen R. Covey, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (RosettaBooks LLC, 2013), Kindle edition.

mention on the third column the existing discipleship activities that could be modified to support the expected traits or criteria.

➔ Summary discipleship activities	➔ New contextualized discipleship activities	➔ Existing contextualized discipleship activities	Traits or criteria

Figure 3. Contextualizing Activities
 Source: Author’s Contextualized Discipleship System

Now, write the new and existing contextualized discipleship activities in Exercise 1.3.

Exercise 1.3

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church	
The discipleship activities of the contextualized discipleship system	

Fourth, using the knowledge acquired from this dissertation and the information found from your contextual assessment, develop in Exercise 1.4 your definition of a disciple.

Exercise 1.4

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church	
Definition of a disciple	

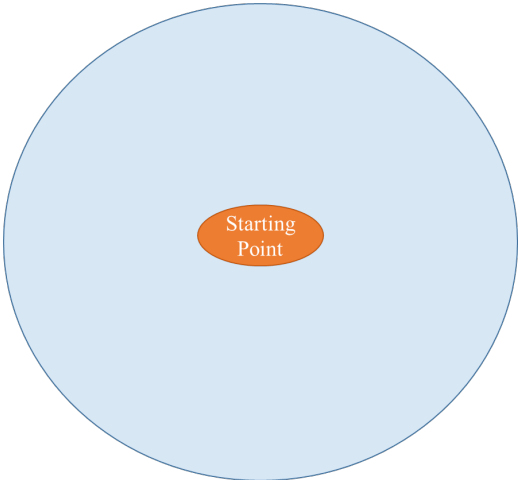
Fifth, what are the traits that are expected to be demonstrated in each disciple or what are the criteria that are expected for anyone who enters the discipleship system? The traits or criteria is a sentence shaped like a list of behaviors, virtues, attributes, habits, practices, or characteristics expected in the life of the disciple. These traits or criteria may also be the church values or church membership vows. Therefore, based on the exercises 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4, describe in exercise 1.5. the traits or criteria that are expected and that would shape the disciple through the discipleship system.

Exercise 1.5

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church	
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	

Sixth, how would you name each catalyst station and how would you organize the discipleship activities or programs within each catalyst station? Use Exercise 1.6 to complete this step. Even when the starting point is not considered a catalyst station, consider it as a guide that describes what the catalyst stations and their activities are about. The starting point is a resource for every attendee to be guided to find their first or next discipleship catalyst. Ultimately, the catalysts stations are what accelerates the disciple-making within the system. Remember that these discipleship catalysts stations create the discipleship system in which the disciple moves through. In the following exercise, you will need to: 1) name each catalyst station; 2) develop whom each station is for and the purpose of it; and 3) include the type of activity or activities that should support it. At the end, each catalyst station shapes and affirms the life of the disciples in the expected traits or criteria.

Exercise 1.6

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church	
Discipleship Catalysts Stations	

Seventh, once you have developed your discipleship system remember to name your contextualized discipleship system. Taking in consideration all the development process, what name and/or image would you provide in Exercise 1.7 that describes your discipleship system?

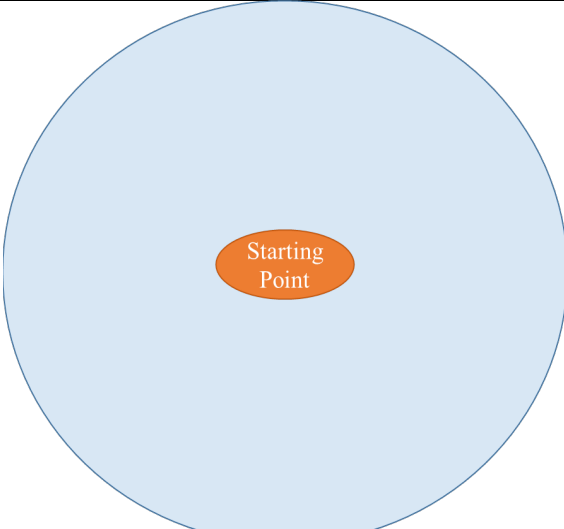
Exercise 1.7

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church		
Your discipleship system's name:	Your church's name:	Image:

Eight, from the previous exercises, 1.1 to 1.7, copy all the information to Exercise 1.8.

Then, evaluate the entire chart and remove, make changes or necessary additions to it.

Exercise 1.8 The Committed Church

Contextualized Discipleship System The Committed Church	
Period	Modern Church – Twenty First Century
Context, Needs and Realities	
Discipleship Claim	
The discipleship activities of the contextualized discipleship system	
Definition of a disciple	
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	
Discipleship Catalysts Stations	

Last, test your contextualized discipleship system and give a time frame to make changes if necessary. Once this time frame is over, you may officially adopt it until there is a shift in your church’s context.

The Hybrid Church

This church is inclined to adapt the prototype contextualized discipleship system to its own needs. In other words, there may be aspects of the Custer Road discipleship system that the Hybrid Church may keep because both churches share a similar context. There could be other components that would come from the Hybrid Church context, needs and realities.

Exercise 1.9 The Hybrid Church

Contextualized Discipleship System The Hybrid Church	
Period	Modern Church – Twenty First Century
Context, Needs and Realities	
Discipleship Claim	
The discipleship activities of the contextualized discipleship system	
Definition of a disciple	
Discipleship Traits/Criteria	
Discipleship Catalysts Stations	



CONCLUSION

The title for this dissertation is *Contextualized Discipleship: A Catalyst System for the XXI Century*. I began this work stating that the Christian church in the U.S. is decreasing in disciple-making. Whether because our local demographic context is changing or because we feel that the context in where we are located is contributing to the problem, disciple-making is not increasing in the nation. It appears that churches are unable to learn their contexts and therefore to engage with the socio-cultural neighbors and members. In addition, there is a decrease in discipleship practices in people's life, decline in church attendance, and local congregations are closing. This sounds like bad news.

Somehow it also sounds like the decline in church attendance and the closing of local congregations will kill the church. As I explained in the Church in Acts Model, many would have thought that persecution would kill the church, instead history testifies that persecution expanded it into other regions. Is not this amazing? The context does not kill, eliminate, or

destroy the disciples, it simply lets them grow. Even when we might think that our context is the reason of our struggles, the reality is that our context could also mean growth. Consequently, churches instead of looking at their context as their reason to close or struggle, they should look at their context as the many or different opportunities they have to make disciples. Out there, in every church context, there could be a discipleship model. But, just because it is different from ours or because it is totally new, we should not think it is wrong. At first, the monastic model was one of those models that was refused just because the church thought that it was a rebellious act. But then, the church saw it as an answer to the needs of its context, and eventually it was adopted. What I am saying is that sometimes the best ideas for disciple making are born outside of the church, I mean, in the context. As it was described through the discipleship models in chapters one, two and three, from the context emerged a discipleship model, even when the context meant persecution, conflict, or controversy for the Christian church.

My hope is that through the proposed work of this dissertation, the local church may look at its context and find insights, connections, and methods to: 1) create their own contextualized discipleship system, or 2) enhance their current discipleship ministry through contextualized methodologies. Perhaps it will not be the newest discipleship model in the Christian industry, but it will be one that comes from our Christian heritage and from our own context, effort, and collective collaboration.

The recommendations of this dissertation are; first, develop a contextual assessment so that you are aware of the needs and realities of your ministry and mission field. Second, develop your own discipleship claim for why you need a discipleship system. Third, develop your definition of disciple. Fourth, define the traits or criteria. And fifth, form the catalysts stations with their own contextualized discipleship activities.

The contextualized discipleship system creates opportunities for individuals to respond to the two historical statements that Jesus Christ is still inviting us today: “Come, follow me” and “go, and make disciples...” We cannot make disciples without existing disciples. Therefore, before we *go*, we need to *come* and be formed, catechized and developed into current disciples. Then, when we *go* we demonstrate such formation through making disciples by proclaiming the gospel, witnessing and service. I argue that the more our churches provide opportunities for people to hear the words *come* and *go*, most likely the more our church attendance will increase. People will grow in discipleship practices and churches, instead of closing, will be launching new congregations. The contextualized discipleship system is itself an incubator of disciples, nothing more, nothing else. The good news is that, from the context and through the contextualized discipleship system, the Christian church in the U.S. can experience a new growth in disciple-making.

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