

Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary

“THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DISCIPLESHIP IN ACTS”

A Thesis Project Submitted to

The faculty of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

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May 2015

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

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Abstract

THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DISCIPLESHIP IN ACTS

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Discipleship study had unavoidably been focused on the Gospels, and rightfully so. Whereas missions and church planting tended to occupy center stage in the study of the book of Acts, and discipleship was often overshadowed. Nevertheless, Spirit-empowered discipleship, undoubtedly, had played a crucial role in the explosive growth of the early church. The purpose of this project is to utilize the four “E” principles of discipleship implicit in Acts: empowerment, exhortation, encouragement and exemplification to galvanize growth in Faith Hope Love Chinese Church. It shall investigate the discipleship pattern that existed, apply the underlying principles given, and subsequently, analyze the lives through surveyed responses from church members, and conclude with a model for disciple multiplication. The project seeks to show that by applying these principles, new believers of Faith Hope Love can become powerful change agents for God’s Kingdom.

Abstract Length: 133

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“There is not a shortage of preaching about Christ or a lack of mission emphasis; they are present in abundance in American churches. The startling lack is in this most fundamental of tasks, the being and making of disciples.”¹ Discipleship study will command interest as long as there is such a thing called “church”. Jesus came to the world for a unique mission that defied every religious pretenders of His day. He came to seek and save the lost mankind (Luke 19:10). He began His ministry with anointing (Luke 4:18-19), in words and deeds; and ended by saying, “It’s finished” (John 19:30). But, His mission did not end with His departure. Jesus fully understood that for Him to succeed, His mission must be passed on. Training the twelve disciples to perpetuate His mission was His highest priority on earth.

Just before He ascended to heaven, He gave the Great Commission, “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Matt 28:18-20).² The mandating of the Great Commission would amount to nothing if the disciples did not have the means to do it. That is the reason He promised the disciples just before He ascended to heaven, “But you will receive power

¹ Bill Hull, *Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Loc. 3543, Kindle.

² Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Talking about empowerment in some churches may sound like stating the obvious. However, after more than twelve years of pastoral ministry in Faith Hope Love Church (henceforth, FHL) and thirty two years in pastoral ministry in different countries, it can honestly be said from observation that there’s a marked contrast between professing and practicing Pentecostals. FHL hopes to genuinely follow the example of the early church in engaging the Spirit’s empowering presence, thus providing the context to investigate its transforming power in the contemporary scene. This church will be used in this thesis project as an example.

Statement of the Problem

Contemporary rendering of the book of Acts tends to be compartmentalized, with emphasis placed on several important themes. But scholars do not quite concur on the themes in Acts. Keener takes prayer, signs and wonders, the Holy Spirit, and world evangelization as the themes.³ Professor Charles Puskas listed seven.⁴ The NIV Life Application Bible has church beginnings, Holy Spirit, church growth, witnessing and even opposition as its mega-themes.⁵

³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), Loc. 5894, Kindle.

⁴ (1) salvation to the Gentiles, (2) progression of the gospel, (3) the Holy Spirit, (4) prayer, (5) wealth, poverty and the marginalized, (6) Christianity as the true Israel, and (7) fair treatment under Rome. These themes will also provide some information on Luke’s views of Christ, salvation, Christian piety, church community, the Jewish law, and offer some clues on the type of audience he is addressing. Charles Puskas, “Chapter 6 Key Themes of Luke-Acts,” Academia.edu. www.academia.edu/4196090/Chapter_6_Key_Themes_of_Luke-Acts (accessed January 15,2015).

⁵ Ronald A. Beers, Gen. Ed., *Life Application Study Bible NIV* (Grand Rapids: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012), Loc.76000, Kindle.

Missions, undoubtedly, is one of the predominant themes. Missionaries will often look to Acts as a source of inspiration. The content of the book of Acts fits perfectly with the missiological structure of Acts 1:8. Emil Brunner described the missional life of the church well in his work *The Word and the World*, “Mission work does not arise from any arrogance in the Christian Church; mission is its cause and its life. The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith.”⁶

Church planting is another theme that Acts provides much resource materials, from principles to methods, to urban church planting strategies, Acts will not disappoint. Roland Allen says, “Everyone who loves God and lost souls would be deeply moved by Paul’s soul reaching stories. His church planting strategies were studied and applied by many church planting movements. It would be difficult to find any better model than the Apostle in the work of establishing new churches. At any rate this much is certain, that the Apostle's methods succeeded exactly where ours have failed.”⁷

Christians of Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions look to Acts as the authoritative document for pneumatological study. Jack Hayford, noted Pentecostal scholar said, “The power of the Holy Spirit through the church is the most striking feature in Acts.”⁸ Clark H. Pinnock in his foreword for the book, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* by Roger Stronstad said: “Until now people have had to recognize Pentecostalism as a powerful force in the areas of spirituality,

⁶ H. Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: SCM Press, 1931), 108.

⁷ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or?* (London: Robert Scott, 2011), 115, Kindle.

⁸ Jack Hayford, *Acts: Kingdom Power (Spirit-Filled Life Study Guide Series)* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), Loc.160, Kindle.

church growth, and world mission, but they have not felt it had much to offer for biblical, theological, and intellectual foundations. But this is fast changing, and with the appearance of this book we may be seeing the first motions of a wave of intellectually convincing Pentecostal theology which will sweep in upon us in the next decades."⁹

Surprisingly enough, discipleship was never mentioned by theological circles as one of the themes! It is implicit that the success stories of Acts ensued because the early church believers lived out their lives as true disciples of Jesus Christ. Witnessing, church growth, missions and themes mentioned above could not have been effectively carried out apart from discipleship! It is the author's contention that Spirit-empowered discipleship was the underlying factor in the explosive growth of the early church.

Discipleship must be given credit back to the study of Acts of the Apostles. By reading Acts correctly with the lens of discipleship, evangelism, missions, church planting and even social works can then be considered true to the Great Commission, and long term success can be assured. Discipleship has always been, and is, indispensable for church life and ministry. Bonhoeffer said, "Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."¹⁰ The contemporary church scene does not fare much better. Research performed by the Barna Research Group, the Harris Poll, and LifeWay Research all indicated a serious crisis in the discipleship of Christians in the contemporary church.¹¹ Wilkins lamented, "In our day we have

⁹ Roger Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984).

¹⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 59, Kindle.

¹¹ Harris Poll #119; Barna, *The Barna Report*; LifeWay Research Group, *Manual for Administration of The Bible and You* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, n.d.).

lost that perspective. Often people of the church feel as though discipleship is optional, that perhaps it is only for those who are extremely committed, or else it is for those who have been called to leadership or ministry. We must regain the perspective of Acts: To believe on Jesus draws a person into community, a community that defines its expectations, responsibilities, and privileges in terms of discipleship.”¹²

Discipleship has been conveniently overlooked, assumed, as if the fulfillment of the Great Commission in early church was done in spite of discipleship! Google “discipleship in Acts” and one will be surprised at how little has been written.¹³ What actually happened? The question must be asked, “Why was discipleship given so little attention in the study of Acts?”

This project shall attempt to answer one central thesis question: what crucial role did the Spirit-empowered discipleship play in the success of the early church? The purpose of this project is to demonstrate that the four “E” principles of empowerment, exhortation, encouragement and exemplification were the keys used by the early church to make, mature and multiply disciples in fulfilling the Great Commission. When these components are present for discipleship in the body of Christ, the church will continue to thrive.

Limitations and Delimitations

This project will be limited by the scarcity of literature in the Spirit-empowered discipleship in Acts. There is not much prior research to build upon. Since Faith Hope Love

¹² Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2010), 257, Kindle.

¹³ Michael J. Wilkins in the bibliography section of his book *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* listed just four works concerning the title “Discipleship in Luke-Acts.”

Church is a Chinese speaking church, this writer also googled discipleship in Acts in Chinese (使徒行傳的門徒訓練), with the hope of finding some related Chinese materials. There was none.

Discipleship materials found on the Chinese websites are sporadic at best, shallow and disorganized. Hence, this work will of necessity be quite original and unique.

This project will also be limited primarily to the study of the post-resurrection, post-Pentecost church in Acts, consultation will be made to the first account in the Luke gospel only when necessary. Even though continuity in Luke-Acts is a big thread in the study of Luke's writings, it's beyond the scope of this project to cover both. The research will rely heavily on Luke's historical narrative and didactic intent of the events related to the theme of this project, with the presumption of his three purposes in mind, which were ecclesiastical, apologetic and legal.¹⁴

Another limitation that must be mentioned is that Faith Hope Love Assembly is an ethnic, small size church of Chinese origin, with people coming from different parts of Asia, the model that we used, methodologies and strategies employed will be culturally conditioned. Anyone using materials in this project must keep this in mind.

Theoretical Basis for Project

George Barna said, "The chief barrier to effective discipleship is not that people do not have the ability to become spiritually mature, but they lack the passion, perspective, priorities,

¹⁴ The two purposes mentioned by Keener in *IVP Background Commentary on the New Testament* are apologetic and legal.

and perseverance to develop their spiritual lives.”¹⁵ What is the theoretical basis for the claim that Spirit-empowered discipleship is the underlying factor for the success of the early church?

Scriptural data

Scriptural data serves as the primary source. The Lukan writings were an “orderly account” (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1) presented to Theophilus (meaning “lover of God”), a high ranking Roman official, who was probably a prominent Gentile believer.¹⁶ He was eager to know how this narrative unfurled, culminating in Jesus’ crucifixion, and how the resurrection event started a movement that spread far and wide. The disciples were trustworthy witnesses of this unprecedented religious movement (Luke 24:48). Wilkins says, “The fact that the term disciple was still used makes it clear that continuity is maintained between those who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry and those of the post-Resurrection church.”¹⁷ However, it was more than a historical connection. The disciples were marvelously transformed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, from a timid clique to mighty men of conviction who went about preaching and performing miracles. Jack Hayford summarized it well when he said, “The same Spirit power in Acts 2 gave the same authority to the disciples. Jesus is the prototype of the Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered life (10:38). The Book of Acts is the story of the disciples receiving what Jesus received in order to do what Jesus did.”¹⁸

¹⁵ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (New York: The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 2013), 54, Kindle.

¹⁶ Robert Lintz, *The Chronological Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), Loc. 58400, Kindle.

¹⁷ Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 243.

¹⁸ Hayford, *Acts: Kingdom Power*, Loc.165.

Nature of the Great Commission

The nature of the Great Commission warrants the indispensable role of discipleship in the book of Acts. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 underscores “making disciples of all nations” as its main objective. There are four verbs, πορευθέντες (to go), μαθητεύσατε (to make disciples), βαπτίζοντες (to baptize), and διδάσκοντες (to teach). The Greek “μαθητεύσατε” (aorist imperative active, second person plural) meaning “you all are to make disciples,” is the main verb, whereas “πορευθέντες, βαπτίζοντες, διδάσκοντες” are instrumental participles, which show the means or how discipleship is to be carried out. Since Acts gave an orderly account of how the early church fulfilled the Great Commission, it would be blatant disobedience to ignore making disciples in their post-Pentecost ministry setting. Thus, any intelligent reading of the book of Acts must embrace the idea of discipleship as its backdrop.

Though Acts illustrates the work of the disciples through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, the exalted Christ remains central. The Synoptic Gospels record Jesus’ life and ministry, Acts recounts the ministry of Jesus through His disciples. Christ now works in and through His Church, from the heavenly throne. If discipleship has been Christ’s focus while on earth, there’s absolutely no reason to believe otherwise after He left. Any attempt to minimize discipleship in Acts sounds illogical and inconsistent. It may be implicit, but the idea is clear.

Word Occurrences

It is significant that the word disciple occurs in the New Testament 269 times, Christian three, and believers twice. The noun “disciple” (from μαθητής, a disciple) occurs at least twenty-eight times in Acts, mostly in the plural form, three times in the singular, and twice in 9:26 and 21:16. Other names used interchangeably with disciples are believers, brothers and sisters, and

saints. Word occurrences show the continuity and importance of discipleship. The book of Acts recorded this continuity and expansion. Wilkins says,

The small band of disciples around Jesus during the darkest moments exploded to thousands in Jerusalem within days of Pentecost and soon became countless throughout the Roman world. The disciples were now empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim boldly in the remotest parts of the earth the Gospel message that Jesus had inaugurated in Israel. And these disciples were now joined together to form the church, the body of their risen Master, Jesus Christ. Jesus called individuals to discipleship, yet responding to that call brought disciples into a community of faith. Luke is the only evangelist to extend his story from the time of Jesus' earthly ministry to the time of his ascended ministry. As Luke continues his story from the Gospel to the book of Acts, he allows us to see the crucial necessity of the community for discipleship. Jesus no longer was with his disciples physically, yet he promised to be with them always (Mt 28:20). Through the Spirit, the community would now provide the fellowship, encouragement, edification, and mutuality necessary for following the Master in the new era.¹⁹

Church History

Church history validates the importance of discipleship. There will be no lasting results of any church ministry related movements without emphasis on discipleship. In 313 A.D., after the Roman emperor Constantine was converted, he issued the "Edict of Milan," which commanded official toleration of Christianity and other religions. It ushered in the Christendom. Conversion to Christianity became the fad. Thousands upon thousands made the confession, without any emphasis given to discipleship. Yet not too long after, the church age plunged headlong into 1260 years of the Dark Ages (AD 538 till 1798), which was coincidentally, the period of papal supremacy.

¹⁹ Hayford, *Acts: Kingdom Power*, 233.

Modern Day Disciple Making Movements

David Watson, who played a pivotal role in catalyzing more than sixty disciple making movements across the globe, was sent to India as a missionary to work among 80 million Bhojpuri in an area known as the “graveyard of missions and missionaries.” He was almost fired after several years with no report of any conversion. His report says, “All of a sudden, we saw eight churches planted in one year. The next year, there were 48 new churches planted. The year after that, 148, then 327, and then 500. In the fifth year, we saw more than 1,000 new churches planted....By 2008, another survey of the work revealed 80,000 churches planted and 2 million people baptized. Things were exploding!”²⁰

Does the church exist to make more believers or mature believers? The answer obviously is both/and. Growing churches face the challenge of depth, to be able to mature the believers. Mature believers yield fruitfulness. Fruitfulness is a sign of true discipleship (John 15:8). Leveling churches face the challenge of width, to be able to motivate members to reach out to the lost. Obedience is a sign of friendship with Christ (John 15:14). Both are equal shareholders of the Great Commission. The four verbs in Matthew 28:19-20 demonstrate the necessity of both. The verbs “go, baptizing” emphasize evangelism, while “make disciples, teaching” emphasize edification and maturing of believers.

²⁰ David Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), Loc.170, Kindle.

Methodology

Research Methodology

This project shall go through five research steps. In step one, the primary source, which is the biblical data in Acts will be surveyed. Every passage explicitly or implicitly related to the four “E”s will be earmarked for investigation.

Step two shall move from passage to principles. The research will exegete the passages related, to investigate the discipleship pattern that existed in Acts, noting any recurring pattern, and draw out the underlying principles for application.

The third step involves a survey of secondary sources of literature: books, journals, theses and articles that are related, with the aim of substantiating the findings of step two above.

Next, in step four, together with the leaders in the church, a plan will be mapped out. The plan includes objectives, methodologies and strategies for empowerment, exhortation, encouragement and exemplification in FHL. This process will take about three months. A group consisting of six to twelve committed cell leaders will be chosen for this pilot project at the end of the third month. This group shall then meet every Wednesday night for nine months for training. They are expected to learn, and apply what’s learned to train a group of three to five disciples the following week. The eight steps in Robert Coleman’s *Master Plan of Evangelism* shall be intensely consulted.

Step five consists of the execution of step four. It includes training, and monthly review of the plan’s execution together with the leaders, with a view to make adjustments for improvisation. Cell leaders’ report together with members’ lives data will be scrutinized on the

basis of these four “E”s. It will eventually come up with a perpetual, effective and workable plan for reproduction at the end of second year. The goal is sustained disciple multiplication.²¹

Definition of Terms

Disciple. For the purposes of this project, this term will refer to any person who has accepted Christ as Savior and Lord, and is a follower, imitator and fruit-bearer for Christ.²²

Discipleship. This term will be used in a broad sense to refer to the totality of being a disciple, including both the process of disciple-making (as defined below) and the attributes of being a disciple (as defined above).

Disciple-making. This term refers specifically to the processes and methodologies involved in equipping an individual to become a disciple of Christ. It includes both making and maturing believers.

Empowerment: The power of the Holy Spirit that is released to the disciples to evangelize the lost and edify the body of Christ as they travail before God’s presence.

Exhortation: The faithful and authoritative preaching of the Word of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit that result in transformed lives of the believers.

Encouragement: The positive energy of joy and comfort that is channeled to Christian living as a result of connecting with Christ and the community of believers.

Exemplification: The exemplary living that exudes from the disciple-maker, which the disciples model after as they do life and ministry together.

²¹ 2 Tim 2:2 “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

²² Dallas Willard says “If I am Jesus’ disciple that means I am with him to learn from him how to be like him.” *The Divine Conspiracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), Loc. 5145, Kindle.

The first chapter will include an introduction to the project, a statement of the problem, and a brief statement of the limitations. The theoretical basis substantiates the unique contribution of this project, signifying the importance of the thesis and author's interest in the field. The research methodology includes a five step strategy that incorporates the four "E" principles of empowerment, exhortation, encouragement and exemplification. Much of this work is done with the understanding that there is no one model that fits all church settings. Even the model that Jesus provided is considered fluid by some.²³ This chapter also provides a literature review of not less than twenty books, theses and journal articles related to discipleship in Luke-Acts, and synopsis of at least fifteen scripture passages that are directly related to the four principles.

Chapter two hinges on "You shall receive power" (Acts 1:8), and elaborates on the necessity for the Holy Spirit's empowerment. What brought about the change in the disciples, from pre-resurrection cowards, to post-resurrection greats? This section tries to uncover their secrets of success, find the missing link for discipleship, and apply to the present milieu in FHL. This chapter also tries to ascertain what does this power entail? The disciples in the upper room were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Was there any formula? How would disciples in FHL know for sure that they have received such empowerment? It will be impossible for this project to delve into all the theological arguments surrounding pneumatological studies. Praxis will be the best critic.²⁴ This chapter attempts to arrive at a mode of practice for members of FHL as its goal.

²³ See Charles C. Bing, "Coming to Terms with Discipleship" (*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*), Vol. 5:1.

²⁴ In the words of J. B. Phillips, The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of which we read in these [the New Testament] letters is that to us it is primarily a performance; to them it was a real experience. We are apt to reduce the Christian religion to a code, or at best a rule of heart and life. To these men it is quite

Observations and analysis will be made among church members against what is found in Scripture, and upon collection of data for objective evaluation, to come up with a functional and effective action plan to power charge church members.

Chapter three covers exhortation, the faithful and authoritative preaching of the Word of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit which resulted in transformed lives of the believers. This study seeks to demonstrate that discipleship in the early church was not built on personalities or emotionalism, but solidly in the teaching (διδάσκη) of God's Word. It shall endeavor to scrutinize the characteristics of the apostles' preaching and teaching by investigating the sermons found in Acts. They are found to be simple, uplifting, authoritative, and Christ-centered. FHL will inculcate such delivering principles into every preacher/teacher of the Word of God in church and cell ministry. Practical training lessons which reflect the above characteristics shall be provided. Faithfulness and fruitfulness of the Word ministry shall be emphasized. This chapter ends with a model of multiplication for FHL.

Chapter four involves encouragement and/or comfort. Acts shows how a church that is strengthened and encouraged can fulfill the Great Commission effectively. This chapter seeks to discover the sources of encouragement by surveying the events in Acts, and how discouraging factors were dealt with promptly and effectively.²⁵ Simultaneously, this project seeks to find out what are the discouraging factors existing in church by conducting a survey among the congregation. The leadership will then devise a course of action to rectify these discouraging

plainly the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life altogether. (From the translator's preface, J.B. Philips, *Letters to young churches: a translation of the New Testament Epistles*. London, Macmillan, 1960).

²⁵ Some of them include murmur (6:1), leadership loss (12:1-4), backslidden worker (13:13), and worldly philosophy (17:16ff).

situations. The need for kingdom focus will be emphasized. This chapter concludes by positing that the more of the encouraging factors found in Acts are present in church life and ministry, the more positive energy the church can garner for growth.

Chapter five celebrates exemplification. The author is convinced that this is where the discipleship scene generally was found wanting. This chapter shall point out the insufficiencies of the classroom and “chat-room” model. It will also study how Paul demonstrated and exemplified discipleship according to Acts 20:18, where before the elders of the Ephesians church, Paul said, “you know....” and in verse 34 he said, “you yourself know....” It can be seen from here that Paul modeled transparency. His other traits while in Ephesus includes humility (v.19), sacrifice (v.24), faithfulness (v.27), long-suffering and diligence (v.31, 34), and integrity (v.33). His concluding remark was, “In every way I've shown you that by laboring like this....”(v.35). The object of this chapter is to spell out the example in Paul’s life as a disciple and servant leader according to Acts 20:17-35, and ingrain these discipleship values into every member in FHL.

The final chapter will summarize the project, present conclusions, and offer insights pertaining to the implications of this study.

Literature Review

Books

George Barna. *Growing True Disciples*(2013).

Barna’s work is more like “field study” of discipleship. It paints an analytical mental picture of the state of discipleship in the States. He helps readers see “Doing more of what you’re already doing won’t take you to the next level”.²⁶ The key is to start with a clear sense of what one is trying to accomplish and be committed to seeing a qualitative improvement.

Lee Camp. *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World* (2008).

Camp gives a different perspective on discipleship in relation to church and the state. He is preaching a kind of “relevant discipleship.” Since both of them cannot possibly be separated, how could believers live the life of disciples effectively in a society which emphasizes political correctness? Should discipleship be linked in any way to state policy? Camp’s work is an asset in the writing of chapter four, on exemplification. His ideas, where appropriate, will be incorporated, to bring relevance to modern day discipleship (p.48).²⁷

Robert E. Coleman. *Master Plan of Evangelism* (2006).

This book is a classic, precise and poignant. Do not be deceived by the title. Even though it says evangelism, it addresses discipleship to the core. The eight steps delineated was actually

²⁶ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Barna Reports) (Colorado Springs: The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 2013), 10, Kindle.

²⁷ Lee Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World*(Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 48f., Kindle.

Jesus way of doing discipleship, as gleaned from the Gospels. It is both biblical and practical. When the principles are followed, results can be assured. The eight steps are: selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision, and reproduction. The steps laid out in this book shall be used to strategize discipleship training in FHL.

Joel Comiskey. *Home Cell Group Explosion* (2002).

_____. *How to Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting* (2011).

The single most effective vehicle to make and mature believers is the cell groups. These two books form the source books of the cell ministry in church. The first one gives the blueprint for cell multiplication from day one. “If you want to know how churches grow, study growing churches” penned his introductory statement. This statement could be applied to discipleship as well.

The second volume lucidly shows how to conduct a successful cell meeting, beginning with the heart that is pure, and ends with eyes that see the detail. FHL already used this book for training cell leaders. It helped the cell leaders avoid many pitfalls when leading the cell meeting.

Dave Earley, Rod Dempsey. *Disciple Making Is . . . : How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (2013).

This is a book written by two practitioners who are both informed and experienced in disciples training. It is practical as well as helpful. Much wise counsels are given in the pages. It comprises four parts. Part one deals with the biblical and theological foundations of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The second part explores how Jesus made and matured disciples. The last section examines the context for making disciples-the church. It also provides several models at the end for readers to hatch on. The value of this book is in helping Christians to draw

on the practicality of discipleship making, from passages to principles, and from principles to methods and models.

Robby Gallaty. *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (2013).

This is a book from an insider, who was once a drug pusher. He turned around because someone took time to mentor him. The author uses banyan trees to illustrate the absolute necessity of discipleship multiplication, “Discipleship is about shoots and sprouts”²⁸ Some parts of the book are very informative and insightful. His model for discipleship: missional, relational, and rational. Some of his suggestions would be useful, like the forming of D groups, a group of three to five persons. One would find using the acronym H.E.A.R to do journaling helpful. His appendices from 1-11 will come in handy.

Bill Hull. *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (2006).

This is one of the favorites on discipleship. It began with the biblical foundation, to tell readers “what is” discipleship. The unique characteristic of Jesus’ discipleship is elaborated. It’s the radical transformation of disciples. His popular four phases of discipleship are enlightening: come and see, come and follow me, come and be with me, and remain in me. The practical aspect of coaching and mentoring was given, from small groups to congregations to future generations. The author is keen to list what he thinks is important, including the “ten commandments of coaching.” The need to do it right is stressed, and it is to reproduce and multiply. In his appendixes, different successful models of discipleship as practiced by churches

²⁸ Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Bloomington: CrossBooks, 2013), 16, Kindle.

were given. The value of this book for the project, as the title suggests, it's a complete book on discipleship, or may be better called, a handbook on discipleship.

Aubrey Malphurs. *Strategic Disciple Making* (2009).

Malphurs' work consists of two parts. The first asks the "what" question, "What is the current state of discipleship in church?" It also asks the "who" question, "Who is responsible for making disciples in church." The second part deals with the process. The author is a seminary professor, and also church trainer and consultant, skillful at helping churches and disciple groups with the technicalities. This book hits me at the weak spot, the technicalities and structure of things. Discipleship needs the Spirit's help. It needs structure to run efficiently too. This is where it can contribute to the project.

Joseph Mattera. *Travail to Prevail* (2014).

Mattera is an intercessor and a prayer warrior, praying three to five hours daily. Things must first be birthed in the spirit through travail, before it can be seen in the physical realm. His description of the five kinds of prayer is enlightening. The author enthused, "Before we can have societal transformation, many things need to be in place. One of them is to have a remnant of people that will have an intense longing for God and for His purposes that are willing to lay down their agendas and push His purposes through in prayer until He gives us the victory."²⁹ It makes me think, "Can a disciple pray his way to success?"

Greg Ogden. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (2003).

²⁹ Joseph Mattera, *Travail to Prevail: A key to "Experiencing the Heart of God* (Independent self-publishing platform Createspace, 2014), Loc.386, Kindle.

Three words sum up the review of this book: introspection, retrospection and prospect. Of particular interest is his treatment of the development stages of a disciple, which helps one to understand what role a discipler takes in different stages of development for a disciple. Since no two disciples are the same, there's a need for a discipler to customize the tract for each disciple to facilitate his progress. The author's three in a group accountability system is what is being implemented now in Faith Hope Love. That's why this book is in. However, the content of the meeting, which draws from his other book *Discipleship Essentials*, from having a quiet time, to sharing your wealth, seems to be stifling. Any content that's too stuffy makes the discipleship session discussion based, and is hardly life changing and reproducible. His second book is out.

Steve Smith and Ying Kai. *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (2011).

T4T (meaning Training for Trainers). The goal is to multiply generations of trainers by using the three-thirds training process. Smith's T4T process is in contrast to David Watson's methodology, with emphasis to begin small. Watson had six (himself included) for his first group. "You and your team must sow the gospel broadly to win the first believers to train." Smith said, "The CPM that has emerged in Ying's ministry has challenged common discipleship and church-planting expectations of today. It harks back to the original discipleship revolution."³⁰ The value of this work is that it provides a strategy to work on for the process of church multiplication. Since, according to the book, it works well in an Asian context, and FHL is a Chinese church, the proposals of this book could be given a try.

³⁰ Steve Smith and Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Monumet: WIGTake Resources, LLC, 2011), Loc.226, Kindle.

John Stott. *The Message of Acts* (2014). (The Bible Speaks Today Series)

Stott is adept at bringing out Acts' messages: articulate, thought provoking and enlightening. This is a commentary on Acts that every pastor must read. Stott was voted as one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2005. His works often exude scholarly excellence and contemporary relevance. It's certain that his work will be constantly referred to in the study of Acts.

David Watson. *Contagious Disciple Making* (2014).

This book is here to change the landscape of discipleship making. The author himself is a true disciple, was able to successfully catalyze more than sixty disciple making movements across the globe. Watson's emphasis on prayer is paramount. Prayer network envelopes his disciple movement. Most Christians want to make disciples, but do not know how. This book shows a proven method on how to do discipleship.

Michael J. Wilkins. *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (2010).

The important contribution from this book lays in part five, *Discipleship in the Early Church*. Wilkins' work is solid meat. As the title suggests, it provides insights on the discipleship in the early church from a biblical-theological stand point. Questions like: Who are the disciples? What does a disciple do? What's entailed in discipleship? And the role of individual and community are answered.

Theses and Journal articles

Charles C. Bing. "Coming to terms with Discipleship" (*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*), Spring 1992. Vol.5:1.

Reading this article makes one re-think what really “is” discipleship. There is a proliferation on discipleship books and how to fulfill the Great Commission, but confusion remains as to the meaning of a “disciple.” It provides an interesting discussion to the Lordship salvation debate. The author also gives an in depth account of who are the disciples, and the concept of discipleship as recorded in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles. His concluding remark is that the discipleship concept in the New Testament is a fluid term.

Don Hardgrave and Syd Gould. “The Discipling Process in Mission Theory and Practice.” September 2005. (A paper for presentation at the Australian Missiology Conference, Melbourne).

It provides contextualized insights in incorporating discipleship concepts from missions’ perspective. Since Bing (above) concludes that discipleship is a fluid term, it pays to take heed of the subtle differences that culture brings into Christian discipleship. Orientals would not be ignorant of the concept of discipleship, since it was very much embedded in their upbringing through the movies and media. Institutions such as the Shao Lin, and Kung Fu maestros such as Bruce Lee and Ip Man are known worldwide. The flow chart that depicts the disciple’s progress from knowing about God to living God’s way, is especially helpful. The best there is.

Discipleship Journal Anthology (All Issues, 1-150). This is a goldmine of articles on discipleship. Most of the contributions are written from a practical standpoint, since it is written with the people on the pews in mind. The journal stopped publication in 2005, to the chagrin of many discipleship advocates. One can find an article on follow-up in Issue One, by Dawson Trotman, the founder of Navigators. Others can also benefit by the writing of Roc Bottomly, author of *“Promised Power: Experiencing the Union of Word and Spirit* (NavPress), Issue 150,

on “*How Can I be Sure it’s Him?*” Though the ideas given might not be as scholarly as a professor would expect, it’s nonetheless helpful for ordinary disciples.

Boyd Luter, Jr. “The Theology of Discipleship in Luke-Acts” (1985), page 62-103. (Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary).

Luter attempted to establish the individual and collective input each writer had toward a New Testament theology of discipleship. He seems to distinguish what’s given in Luke’s gospel as preparatory and Acts as transition and fulfillment. There are threads that serve as linkage between the two works, such as the works of the Holy Spirit, missions, and the concept of disciples and apostles. The book of Acts also provides a greatly different theological context in which the Great Commission was to be fulfilled. Through the survey of the purpose of Acts and its structure, the author concludes that Luke did not intend to develop a disciple making model.

Selected Scripture texts

Empowerment

Acts 1:8 “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*”

What does this power entail? Some say it’s mainly for witness, others insist it’s for Christian living, yet others say it’s for both. How was this power manifested in the lives of the disciples? But we do know, without this power that comes from the Holy Spirit, there will be no Acts of the Apostles.

Acts 4:31 *“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”*

In this passage, we see the model sequence for ministry of God’s Word.

Pray→ Filled→ Preach (spoke).

The fact is one could still preach without being filled, but that is not going to make any real difference in the spiritual realm. When the spiritual realm is shaken, we would be able to see things begin to change in the physical realm. Preachers that are filled with the Spirit shall deliver God’s Word like a sword, alive and active. Such word penetrates.

Acts 11: 22 *“News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch 25Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”*

Empowerment includes empowering people. We see here how Barnabas travelled more than three hundred miles to look out for Saul, brought him to Antioch, and team taught for one whole year with him. It can be discovered from here that the process of empowering involves looking out for people, mentoring them, and then releasing them. The discipleship process is a continual process of empowering people.

Acts 12:5 *“So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him...12When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.*

Spirit-empowered discipleship has one central characteristic, empowerment to pray earnestly. After Peter was imprisoned, the church was earnestly praying for him. It was an

overnight prayer meeting. This is travail in prayer, PUSH (Pray Until Something Happens) prayer. Every disciple maker who wants to see a breakthrough in his discipling process will do well to learn the secret of travail to prevail (See Joseph Mattera, *Travail to Prevail*).

Exhortation

Acts 2:42 *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*

Acts 14:22 *“Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. ‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.’”*

Christ came. He taught and performed many miracles. The apostles continued to teach what Jesus taught (2:42). Discipleship sustenance depends on continuity in the teaching of the Word of God. Without rootedness in the Word of God, discipleship gives way to emotionalism. Maturing believers must take into consideration a structure to systematically teach the Word of God. Paul told the Ephesians church elders, Acts 20:31 *“So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”*

Acts 2:37 *“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”*

Peter’s preaching during the day of Pentecost was reminiscent of Jesus’ preaching on earth and was full of authority. Acts was filled with apostles’ anointed preaching. Such preaching made believers, as well as moved them to obey God’s Word. Peter was preaching that Christ was raised from the dead, and He is Lord. The Bible says, his preaching “cut to the heart.” Preaching that cuts to the heart will have the listeners ask, “What shall we do?” Not “so what?”

Acts 28:30 *“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. 31He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!”*

It was Plato that talked about ethos, pathos and logos in communication. “Ethos” represents the character of the preacher, “pathos” the passion and compassion of the preaching, and “logos” the content which was delivered. When all three are present, the communication will be persuasive. Paul’s preaching has all three.

Encouragement

Acts 9:36 *“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.”*

Dorcas was always doing good and helping the poor. She died, people were heart-broken, but Peter prayed, and she was brought back to life. What an encouragement. The disciples of Christ can use different gifts to encourage people. Preaching and teaching can bring encouragement, miracles and good works too. The church needs different gifts for the encouragement of the body of Christ.

Acts 15:31 *“The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. 32Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.”*

The disciples were encouraged by the letter from the Jerusalem council, and words of encouragement from the leaders. There need to be a tone change in the church today, from the pulpit to the pews. Too much negativity and rebuke has been going on. Preachers need to preach positive messages of encouragement. This brings a better chance of success in transformation

than nagging tones. A study of the preaching, teaching and conversations in Acts led me to discover that the preaching of the apostles in Acts was very much uplifting and encouraging.

2 Tim.4:2 “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage.”

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

This passage is a favorite text in the study of Acts. It is just a few verses, but it says a lot about church life and discipleship. Several things were mentioned here that bring encouragement and comfort to the body of Christ. They obey God’s Word (v.42). There is powerful presence of the Spirit (v.43), community (vs.44-45), daily fellowship (v.46), praise and worship (v.47), good testimony and favor of the people (v.47). The people outside liked them, for they were real and unpretentious.

Acts 9:31 “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.”

What does it mean by encouragement “by” the Holy Spirit? (Most translations have “of” (HCSB, NASB, ESV). One thing we know, true encouragement comes by the Spirit, who is the Spirit of comfort. He is the Comforter. The context of this verse was about Paul preaching Christ crucified. People just didn’t trust and believe what he said. He was persecuting believers not long ago. And now he’s proclaiming Christ. The persecutor now became the persecuted. So the disciples in Jerusalem sent Paul away (may be to get rid of him?), back to his home town Tarsus. After that, the church surrounding Jerusalem enjoyed peace, was encouraged, and grew. Missiologists may argue that persecution spurs the church of God forward. This passage says otherwise. What is more important is the other element that is shown in that verse, the fear of the Lord. Without the fear of the Lord, the church will not grow in any environment.

Exemplification

Acts 20:35 *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”* See also vs. 17-38.

Paul says “in ALL things I gave you an example” (WEB). And in v.20, he says “you know,” v.34 “you yourself know.” Paul was with the Ephesians church for three long years, of course they knew. In fact this was the longest that Paul had stayed anywhere, since his ministry began. Paul was modeling transparency here, a main ingredient of successful discipleship. The other things that he modeled, according to the context were: humility (v.19), faithfulness (v.20, 27), diligence and long-suffering (v.31, 34), honesty (v.33), and in all things (v.35). If one ever wonders why Paul was so successful as a disciple maker, the above gave the important reasons.

Acts 5:28 *“We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood. 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!”*

The apostles were arrested, due to the jealousy of the High Priest. But the angel of the Lord delivered them. So the next morning they went preaching again, in the most public place possible, the temple complex. That’s as good as preaching in Times Square of New York. When summoned, the apostles did not back down, but said, “We must obey God rather than men.” (5:29). The apostles modeled boldness. And there is no question as to whom they will obey when pressed. American churches are under siege, challenges are thrown all over us. We need courage and boldness as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Acts 12:17 *“Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.”*

Peter modeled accountability. He was imprisoned alone this time. But an angel delivered him again. This happened because the church travailed before God’s throne of grace. Prayer was offered for him unceasingly. What did he do as the first thing after he realized that he was free? He reported to James and those in the house of Mary who were still enjoined in prayer for him. As disciple and servant leaders, we need to have a person or accountability group where we report to. When we do not want to be responsible to anyone, we are cruising into eventual trouble.

Acts 14:28 *“And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.”*

The apostles and leaders modeled relation building. They spent time with the disciples. The time spent helped greatly in relation building. That’s why Paul was always able to return to visit these churches and felt welcome. Effective discipleship must be done in the context of relationship, without which, what remains is hollow superficiality. Time is a precious commodity for discipleship. We redeem time, to give time to those in need. Time spent on this side of the world shall reap rewards in eternity.

CHAPTER 2

EMPOWERMENT

Acts 1:8 “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*”

What does this power entail? Some say it’s mainly for witness, others insist it’s for Christian living, yet others say it’s for both. How was this power manifested in the lives of the disciples? One thing we do know, without this power that comes from the Holy Spirit, there would be no Acts of the Apostles.

The challenge about writing this chapter lies in the empowering fabrics itself. It is an irony that scholars cannot even see eye to eye on what this empowerment entails. After going through three theological institutions of non-Pentecostal traditions, the author will not go so far as to say that people of the non-Pentecostal/Charismatic traditions do not understand the nature of the empowering presence of the Spirit.³¹ The disagreement rests more on flawed hermeneutical principles (such as using Paul’s writings to shape Luke’s meaning and intent) which resulted in superimposition, and less than distinctive individual writer’s thoughts, which could lead to distancing from this empowering presence. There are some that hold on to the empowering issue purely from a faith perspective, teaching that when believers pray once and

³¹ Wonsuk Ma, a Pentecostal scholar says, “Whereas for most other Christians the presence of the Spirit is just that, presence, for Pentecostals the presence of the Spirit in their midst implies empowerment.” (Wonsuk Ma, ed. *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity* (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series). Volume 20, p.36.

believe, such power comes naturally, without hitch. But, in actual Christian living, it may not be that simple. Christians will often be challenged by the reality of the presence of this power, or the lack of it, in the crucibles of Christian life and ministry. The coming of the Spirit in Acts always brings about a power surge which expressed itself in myriad forms. Sanders said, “It seems strange that although the twelve apostles had enjoyed three years of concentrated individual instruction under the peerless Teacher, their lives were characterized more by weakness and failure than by power and success. Pentecost changed all that; they were filled with the Spirit.”³² It is undeniable that the disciples in Acts were powerfully different, both in life and ministry, from those recorded in the Gospels. Acts two recorded the Pentecost event that brought about such transformation.

There has been a lot of study on the third person of the Trinity, in a similar vein to the study of the Godhead. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be formulated thoroughly, beginning from Genesis to Revelation, yet such knowledge may not add a tad of power. For the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit is essentially an experience, a life changing transformation. Part of the reasons for the above dilemma could be attributed to what Chan termed theological integrity. In emphasizing the absolutely crucial need of the Holy Spirit in church, Chan says, “Perhaps it’s not theology we’re missing, but rather theological integrity. Many have the knowledge but lack the courage to admit the discrepancy between what we know

³² Oswald J. Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship: Principles of Following Christ for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 163-164, Kindle.

and how we live.”³³ For him the culprit is intentional neglect of the third person of the Trinity, which he termed the “forgotten God.”

“You shall Receive Power” (Acts 1:8)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you....”

Since the turn of the century, God has marvelously shown His mercy by pouring forth His Spirit to different denominational groups and individuals to bring about renewal and vitality. Such visitations of power were often accompanied by signs and wonders, healings and deliverances. In the commonly called three waves movement of the Holy Spirit, wave one began in 1901 at Bethel Bible College, Topeka, Kansas. Agnes Osman received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Out of this wave grew the mainline Pentecostal denominations, Assemblies of God included. The second wave began from the 1960s. It is sometimes called the New Charismatic Movement, new because it crossed denominational boundaries. “The Kansas City Charismatic Conference was held in the summer of 1977. All three wings of the Pentecostal movement were present: (1) Old Pentecostals (sometimes called "classical Pentecostals"); (2) Protestant Charismatics; and (3) Catholic Charismatics. This was the biggest and most inclusive gathering of ‘baptized in the Spirit believers’ in modern history. There were nearly 50,000 participants in this 5-day conference. One speaker proudly hailed this conference as ‘the largest and most inclusive ecumenical assembly in the history of American Christianity.’ Almost half of

³³ Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), Loc. 181, Kindle.

the participants were Roman Catholics.”³⁴ The third wave began around 1980 and it drew adherents from the Charismatic and non-Charismatic churches. This movement emphasized healings and the gift of prophecy, but not speaking in tongues.

What is so special about these movements of the Spirit that sent shock waves throughout the Christian world? Francis McNutt said,

Over the centuries some individuals and groups of Christians have rediscovered this spiritual power, notably in the past century. This is especially true of the Pentecostal churches, the charismatic groups in the mainline churches and now hosts of independent evangelical charismatics. In fact, those churches and groups that have experienced the power of the Spirit are growing at an extraordinary rate. But most ordinary churchgoers remain unaware of their need for an explicit empowering of the Spirit in order to grow as Christians.³⁵

The Purpose of Empowerment

It is an irony that though the church of Christ agrees on the absolute necessity of the empowerment of the Spirit, differences existed on what this empowerment entails and how this empowerment comes about.

A word of caution is in order here. As in the study of many other doctrines, there is a tendency to compartmentalize truths to an “either...or” option, which often results in obscuring the “sensus plenior” of the whole truth. This is particularly true in the study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. At times, such a position pushed scholars to the extremes towards both ends of the spectrum, where a lot of shouting and debating occurred, without really making a sincere effort

³⁴ Pastor George Zeller, “A Brief History of Pentecostalism,” *The Charismatic Movement: 35 Doctrinal Issues*. <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/char/abrief.htm> (accessed February 16, 2015).

³⁵ Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening: Reclaiming Our Lost Inheritance* (Minneapolis: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 64, Kindle.

to hear, understand and embrace each other's differences. More often than not, when dialogues were held, participants tended to discover that both sides needed to hear each other out, and realized in the process, theological integrity has given way to emotional undertones. To the contrary of the belief of many suspects, the converging of these differences, when approached in the right attitude of brotherly love, actually complemented each other, and thus made the Church as a whole stronger.

The purposes of the empowerment of the Spirit fall into one of two broad categories: Christian life and/or service. Menzies argued this empowerment is strictly for ministry, "It's why we associate Spirit-baptism with empowerment for mission rather than with spiritual regeneration."³⁶ The book of Acts emphasizes the Spirit's role in disciples' witness for Christ. It may be clearly seen, throughout the book, the Spirit of God pushes people far across cultural missions (Acts 8:29, 10:19, 11:12, and 15:28). But, there is certainly more than missions in Acts.

Such view of reading the explicit (power ministries) in Acts while discounting the implicit (life witness) presents a dilemma: how can disciples as witnesses for Christ on earth, dichotomize their words from deeds in their lives? If this Spirit baptism consists only of empowerment for missions, where does the power for Christian living come from? How could one separate Spirit power from holy living? The Spirit of Life is in fact the Spirit of Missions!

This is not talking about Spirit baptism as the cause of holiness, meaning those baptized in the Spirit being more holy than those who are not; but rather as the result, meaning, baptism comes as a result of being consecrated and surrendered to Him. The unhealthy fragmentation of

³⁶ Robert Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story is Our Story* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2013), Loc.70, Kindle.

the baptism concept gives rise to Christian leaders and ministers seeking power, with no regard to thinking this power comes to fill a humble vessel, fit for the Master's use. Fernando said it well when he strived for balance.

Each of the emphases within the church regarding the Holy Spirit can lead to unbalanced Christianity. The danger with the conversion-initiation interpretation is that it can take away a yearning for God's fullness and create a class of half-baked Christians who are not experiencing everything that God wishes them to enjoy. On the other hand, those who emphasize the idea that the baptism with the Spirit empowers one for mission can neglect the vitally important aspect of living holy lives and having the fruit of the Spirit. This is happening so often now that it should be a major concern that the charismatic movement must address.³⁷

Palma sees the two themes of evangelization and Spirit-empowerment as so intertwined that one cannot be understood apart from the other. He also concurred with Turner when he quoted the former, "the Spirit is an empowering to serve the church as much as it is to serve its mission to outsiders, even if Luke's account of the expansion of Christianity inevitably gives more space to the latter."³⁸ In addition to that, in the daily life of the church, the Spirit gives the disciples discernment and guidance in church matters (Acts 5: 3, 15:28). Sanders said, "There is a tendency to think of the ministry of the Spirit only in connection with spiritual activities. But a study of the book of Acts reveals that He was involved in the social and racial problems His disciples faced, as well as in their ecclesiastical and economic concerns. Jesus required the anointing of the Spirit and power, not only for vocal ministry but also for going about doing good (Acts 10:38)."³⁹

³⁷ Ajith Fernando, *Acts (The NIV Application Commentary)*(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 15, Kindle.

³⁸ Anthony D. Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield: Logion Press, 2012), Loc. 7315-7317, Kindle.

³⁹ Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship*, 166.

When commenting on the need of the wholesome experience of the empowering presence of the Spirit, Jack Hayford, a renowned Pentecostal scholar said,

Nothing in the believer's life is more essential to his or her becoming a daily, fully empowered replication and representative of Jesus Christ than being and keeping filled with the Holy Spirit. From Pentecost until our Lord's return, the Church's commission is to be "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24: 49), "do business till I [Jesus] come" (Luke 19: 13), "go into all the world" (Mark 16: 15) and to experience "the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16: 20). Fulfillment of this rather full mandate is only possible through being baptized in the Holy Spirit and continually being freshly filled with His love and power.⁴⁰

To lend weight to the "both/and" position, George Wood, current general superintendent of the Assemblies of God Church said, "The gifts are meant to flourish among those who are baptized in the Spirit. Spirit baptism plunges a person into new dimensions of intimacy with God and empowerment for witness."⁴¹ Joseph Mattera went even one step further when he wrote, "So many only want the blessings of God or the power of God. The baptism of the Spirit without the baptism of fire or the Kingdom without the cup (Mark 10:37, 38). God wants us to embrace the cross now and to travail in agony of soul now so we can share in His glory later on."⁴² Evidently, the above writers see the danger of fragmenting the Spirit empowerment as strictly for missions or witness.

However, those holding the "either/or" position would still argue from the standpoint of purity that each New Testament writer should be given the freedom to formulate his own thoughts and speak independently of the other. Only then, we can arrive at sound New Testament

⁴⁰ Jack Hayford, *Living the Spirit-Formed Life: Growing in the 10 Principles of Spirit-Filled Discipleship* (Ventura: Gospel Light 2001), 116, Kindle.

⁴¹ George O. Wood, *Living in the Spirit: Drawing Us to God, Sending Us to the World* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2011), Loc.1304, Kindle.

⁴² Joseph Mattera, *Travail to Prevail: A key to Experiencing the Heart of God* (Independent self-publishing platform: Createspace, 2014), Loc.616, Kindle.

Biblical Theology. That being the case, they would argue, that the Spirit empowerment in Acts is for ministry (missions and evangelism), and in Pauline writings, for Christian living.

Such argument sounds attractive on the surface. But upon deeper analysis, one would find it raises more questions that it purported to resolve. Scholars tend to dispute on what they read (not possible to be totally unbiased, of course); and parishioners tend to bicker on what they see (not easy to differentiate the form from the function as well). Shepherds of the flock tend to see both (they can't help, but got to). What drives pastor nuts? The super spiritual, zealous, power-crazed chasers, "holier than thou" camp who would not listen to the pastor, and do not manifest the necessary fruits. These modern day Pharisees, whose look is delusional, and whose words and deeds do not measure up. On the other end, there is the equally frustrating group: the over-trained, ever-learning, daily dying, but never serving because they feel they are not good enough "waiting for perfection" group. This is what will happen when one tries to separate empowerment on Christian life from ministry. Jesus Christ never separated both of them, He warned His disciples against that by His own deeds (John 13:14, Mark 10:45), and His teaching (Matt 7:20). Even apostle Paul was wary of such danger, why should Acts be read differently?

Gordon Fee gave an all-encompassing perspective on Spirit empowerment from Pauline perspective. In describing life in the Spirit as life in the radical middle, he explained,

The Spirit as an experienced and empowering reality was for Paul and his churches the key player in all of Christian life, from beginning to end. The Spirit covered the whole waterfront: power for life, growth, fruit, gifts, prayer, witness, and everything else. If the church is going to be effective in our postmodern world, we need to stop paying mere lip service to the Spirit and to recapture Paul's perspective: the Spirit as the experienced, empowering return of God's own personal presence in and among us, who enables us to live as a radically eschatological people in the present world while we await the

consummation. All the rest, including fruit and gifts (that is, ethical life and charismatic utterances in worship), serve to that end.⁴³

The Necessity for Empowerment

Without the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, there would be no church, and without empowerment, there will be no life, nor vitality. Chan says it well, “The Holy Spirit is absolutely vital to our situation today. Of course, He is always vital; but perhaps especially now. After all, if the Holy Spirit moves, nothing can stop Him. If He doesn’t move, we will not produce genuine fruit—no matter how much effort or money we expend. The church becomes irrelevant when it becomes purely a human creation.”⁴⁴ John Stott adds, “Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christ-likeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead.”⁴⁵

It seems strange that though the disciples were under three years of intensive training under the master Teacher, their lives were characterized by whiffle-waffle and failures rather than courage and success. The baptism of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost radically changed all that. It was a transformation beyond human comprehension. Just as the visitation of the Spirit

⁴³ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1994), Loc. 218-222, Kindle.

⁴⁴ Chan, *Forgotten God*, Loc. 177-179.

⁴⁵ John Stott, *The Message of Acts (The Bible Speaks Today Series)* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), Loc. 953, Kindle.

was necessary for the Old Testament prophets, judges and kings to perform their duties; the same Spirit empowered Jesus while He was on earth, to preach, heal, cast out devils and perform many miraculous signs (Acts10:38). Such power, Jesus stressed, could be the disciples' portion when the Spirit falls on them (Acts1:8), to be effective witnesses, both in words and deeds for Him.

This power is available for every sphere of the disciples' lives. This power can also be truncated and quenched (1Thess 5:19). George Wood likens disciples' lives to that of a submarine. The deeper it dives, the greater will be the pressure against it. And greater corresponding power and pressure is needed within it to resist the evil one. Disciples don't successfully deal with sin until they cry out to the Lord to fill them full of His Spirit and presence.⁴⁶

“Right believing leads to right living.” Joseph Prince of Singapore is fond of saying. Christians cannot live right if their beliefs were wrong to begin with. They would be better called heretics. However, it will be wide off the mark to think just in term of belief-system necessity. The necessity is more of an experience necessity than a theoretical one. One could be theologically dead yet remain untouched by the truth that he learned. This is cold orthodoxy, which persists as the cold front of pneumatological pursuits. It was such coldness in religious belief system that gave rise to the Holy Spirit movements of the past century.

One's de facto theological/pneumatological inclination must be examined under unbiased scriptural study, and let the discovery of his study be informed by his own experience, as well as the experiences of the church at large, to arrive at a satisfactory, beneficial conclusion. But this is certain, a mere theological treatise of the Holy Spirit is inadequate. For the Spirit is a person to

⁴⁶ See George Wood, *Living in the Spirit: Drawing Us to God, Sending Us to the World*, Loc.1510.

be appreciated, not a thing to be investigated. He came to empower people, not things. People can experience His presence and power. He became real to them that desire Him, the “You” that’s close to their hearts, rather than the “Him” that they came to dissertate about. Jesus used wind, springs, and rivers of living water to describe the Spirit. However, some have confined the Spirit to monasteries, study rooms, and lecture halls. Why such confinement to rational exercises? Could it be that, once this power is unleashed, there will be a need to attempt to explain what happened, and they could be just as bewildered as Nicodemus, when Jesus explained the work of the Spirit to him (John 3:4). It was more than what they can handle! They believed, as long as the concept of the Holy Spirit remained passively, a doctrine to be researched, it can be managed.

Robinson gave a telling comment on the situation,

Perhaps one of the reasons for contemporary ambivalence about the Holy Spirit - part of what makes it powerfully attractive in some quarters and suspect in others - is that the Spirit is often linked to religious experience that is non-rational, emotional, and ecstatic. This is particularly true, of course, of the gift of speaking in tongues. In Acts the Spirit certainly does move in surprising ways that are not always explicable purely on the basis of reason. Nevertheless, the mark of the Spirit in Acts is not the non-rational, emotional, and ecstatic nature of the experience; nor are such qualities of the Spirit's presence ends in themselves, as if the extraordinary nature of events was itself the point. In Acts the point is the mission of the church, the fulfillment of God's promises, the crossing of boundaries and barriers with the good news of the gospel, and the creation of the new community of shared goods where all things are held in common. In Acts the Spirit leads, guides, builds, corrects, teaches, and empowers the church to be the church.⁴⁷

On the surface of the issue, empowerment sounds simple enough. When He comes, He gives power. But when biblical and hermeneutical concepts spiral in, it could become

⁴⁷ Anthony B. Robinson, *Called to Be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), Loc. 1683, Kindle.

complicated. Simply because scholars can't even agree on what evidenced this baptism empowerment of the Spirit. It can split denominations and congregations. A valid question needs to be asked, "Can one build a church without delving into the complex understanding of the Spirit's empowerment?" The answer is certain, for there is obviously more than one way to build the church. But it's for a lesser church! In other words, true empowerment of the Spirit according to the model in Acts always brings about positive results, beginning with those already "in", to those who are yet to know Christ. From the Scripture, one can see that God's way of working is through His Word and His Spirit. God's Word is eternally powerful.

Luke 1:37 "For no word from God will ever fail"

Isaiah 55:10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

When God's Word is released, the responses of the hearers play an important part in bringing results. The parable of the sower (Matt 13:1-9) likens God's Word as seed and hearts as soil. Seeds have life in them, it's an unchangeable factor. God's Word is always like good seed. The variable lays in the soil. There are four types listed in Matthew 13, but only one is good. And only good soil brings forth much fruits. Even after the soils are cleaned, they need to be softened by watering to produce the desired effect. This is where the Spirit's work comes in. When the Word of God is proclaimed, it can sound very much like law, it may harden and even kill (2 Cor 3:6); but when it is preached under the anointing of the Spirit, John says the same

Law convicts man of sin, righteously and judgment (John 16:9). It removes the soils from all filth and softens them. They are then able to respond positively to the seed of God's Word.

Jeremiah 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Acts 2:17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."

Zechariah 4:6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Both the Word and the Spirit bring forth God's power. The two need to work together to produce the best results. Each can still work independently of the other, but when there is a combination of the two, God's power will always be released. Peter preached the first post-Pentecost sermon, he had the Word and the Spirit, and three thousand got saved. Since then, this has been the paradigm for ministry. Pentecost brought these two to fruition. What could have been the result if Peter had preached the same sermon before Pentecost? There would still be responses from the hearers, but it definitely would not be three thousand saved, may be not even thirty.

For reasons such as church traditions, institutional restriction and theological disposition, there are still preachers and teachers who tend to lean towards either end of the extreme, holding an "either...or" position. There is no question we need both. The promise of the Father is for His church, not just the early church. "Christianity is the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. The faith once delivered to the saints is a miracle gospel, a miracle salvation with physical evidences. The supernatural is only of the Spirit, and only according to the Word. No matter how we read Scripture, it is impossible to see there a gospel shorn of the supernatural. Jesus was

stripped at the Cross. We dare not present a Jesus stripped of his omnipotence, promises and compassion.”⁴⁸ Bonnke adds, “but the objective of the Spirit is not to make us swoon with joy, but to set us on fire and bring changes into the world. Prayer is not enough to arouse a dead church. It needs the power of the Word imbued with the life of the Spirit. Life comes from the living Word. What we can do and what we should do is to preach the Word.”⁴⁹

There is no discord among evangelical churches on the importance of the ministry of the Word. Romans 1:16 says “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” However, a great chasm exists concerning the role the Spirit in the process. How could one explain for such anomaly? When reformed scholar and prolific writer R. T. Kendall, who succeeded Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel, wrote the book entitled *Holy Fire*, it was branded by John MacArthur, the president of The Master's Seminary, and pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California as “Strange Fire”! This is indeed a serious accusation by a Calvinist/cessationist toward a reformed theologian.⁵⁰ Kendall gave an objective, balanced view of the subject when he explained,

Those on the Word side stress earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, expository preaching, sound theology, rediscovering the doctrines of the Reformation—justification by faith, sovereignty of God. Until we get back to the Word, the honor of God’s name will not be restored. What is wrong with this emphasis? Nothing. It is exactly right, in my opinion. Those on the Spirit side stress getting back to the Book of Acts, signs, wonders, and miracles, gifts of the Holy Spirit—with places being shaken at prayer meetings, get in Peter’s shadow and you are healed, lie to the Holy

⁴⁸ See Reinhard Bonnke, *Holy Spirit - Revelation and Revolution* (Orlando: E-R Productions LLC, 2010), Loc. 2159, Kindle.

⁴⁹ Bonnke, *Holy Spirit - Revelation and Revolution*, Loc.1702.

⁵⁰ For a rebuttal by Kendall on MacArthur’s serious “strange fire” accusations, see: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/adrianwarnock/2013/11/rt-kendall-responds-to-macarthur-strange-fire/>

Spirit and you are struck dead. Until we recover the power of the Spirit, the honor of God's name will not be restored. What is wrong with this emphasis? Nothing. It is exactly right, in my opinion. The problem is, neither will learn from the other.⁵¹

Since then, not to be outdone, a group of twenty-six Pentecostal scholars in 2014 blasted back at the cessationist movement by defending the use of supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. They entitled their work wittily, *Strangers to Fire: When Tradition Trumps Scripture*. It is an anthology published by the Foundation for Pentecostal Scholarship which rebuts John MacArthur's *Strange Fire* book and conference. The book consists of two parts. The first half gives direct rebuttal to John MacArthur's *Strange Fire* and the latter half with classic replies to cessation theology.⁵² An attention grabbing theological tit for tat! John the Baptist said in Matt.3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." From "Holy Fire" to "Strange Fire," and now "Stranger to Fire," it makes one wonder which is the true fire that John said Jesus would send!

Gordon Fee, a distinguished New Testament scholar, used Paul to enlighten the discussion,

For Paul this double display of power (empowered words and powerful deeds) forms the foundation for his understanding of the role of the promised Spirit. That is, he never argues for such empowering, nor does he allow anyone to authenticate either his ministry or their faith on that basis (2 Cor. 5:13). But neither would he understand the presence of the promised Spirit without such a double expression of power. We are dealing with the Spirit of God, after all, the present eschatological fulfillment of God's empowering presence. It would never occur to him that the miraculous would not accompany the

⁵¹ R. T. Kendall, *Holy Fire: A Balanced, Biblical Look at the Holy Spirit's Work in Our Lives* (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 2014), Loc. 369, Kindle.

⁵² See Vincent Furano, "Strangers to Fire' Blasts Back at Cessationist Movement; Defends Use of Supernatural Gifts of the Holy Spirit," *The Christian Post*. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/strangers-to-fire-blasts-back-at-cessationist-movement-defends-use-of-supernatural-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit-126074/> (accessed February 17, 2015).

proclamation of the gospel, or that in another time some would think of these two empowerings as “either-or.” For Paul, it is simply a matter of, “of course.”⁵³

Does It Make Any Difference?

“One hundred years ago a new age of the Holy Spirit dawned. A new dynamism has since animated hundreds of millions of Christians. It has taken time to impact the world. But what an impact! It is the primary phenomenon in history.... It has been claimed that greater advances have been made in understanding the Spirit – the theology – since 1900 than in the previous 1,900 years.”⁵⁴

The experience of empowerment of the Spirit cannot be adequately explained in paper writing, for it is an intensely personal experience. We read about the one hundred twenty disciples being filled with the Spirit, and they spoke in other tongues. There was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind, and they saw what seemed like tongues of fire come on each of them. Try for a moment to imagine the powerful life changing experience: the exhilaration in their spirit, the overwhelming exuberant emotion, and the keen sense of expectancy that something unprecedented had occurred right among them. Unless you were there with them, you just could not feel the emotion and joyful excitement. Baptism in the Spirit is not emotionalism, but it never happens on dead wood. It comes with excitement and emotion. And this emotion filled experience must be shared to be appreciated. You cannot argue against it, for they experienced the presence, power and reality of God like never before. Nothing against theology, but a person

⁵³ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, Loc.1422.

⁵⁴ Bonnke, *Holy Spirit - Revelation and Revolution*, Loc.34.

who has the experience is not at the mercy of one who has an argument, for as far as experiencing the raw power of God is concerned. They just knew they got it.

Sharing about his experience of baptism of the Holy Spirit, Francis MacNutt, a Roman Catholic priest and scholar, who was prominent and influential in the charismatic renewal in the 1960s said, “I was overwhelmed with joy, and a wave of laughter swept over me. My life has never been the same. Since then I have prayed for hundreds of people whose lives have also been transformed as they asked to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁵ He later gave the encouragement, “If you have not received the baptism of the Spirit, study about it, then pray to receive it. The empowering of the Holy Spirit enables us to minister deliverance more effectively. In addition, it brings with it those charismatic gifts essential for a fully rounded deliverance ministry- gifts like healing and the discerning of spirits.”⁵⁶

Acts is certainly clear that all disciples can be empowered for the work of the ministry and Christian living amidst life’s challenges. They knew when the going got tough, the Spirit was with them to enable them to get going. Signs and wonders would accompany those that believed, and to authenticate the preaching of His Word. They chose not to be weak, because they knew with His empowerment, they could be strong in every situation. Menzies said, “The Pentecostal reading of Acts provides clear and ready answers. On the basis of their reading of Acts, Pentecostals affirm that every disciple is called and empowered and every disciple is encouraged to expect that “signs and wonders” will accompany his or her witness.”⁵⁷ Such

⁵⁵ Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1995), 271, Kindle.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁷ Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story is Our Story*, Loc. 1752.

empowerment does bring a marked difference to disciples' life and ministry. People around them will then know, that the God of the Bible is not just good and powerful in theory only, but what they see and hear from the Bible is what they would get.

Greater Works

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever” John 14:16

“Another” (ἄλλον) means another of the same kind. Jesus left, but another “παράκλητος,” translated Helper, Comforter, Advocate and Counselor in various English translations had come to them. What the disciples were able to do when Jesus was with them, they were now able to do through this “another.” The same Holy Spirit that empowered them empowers the church today. Before Jesus arrived at the scene, the Spirit was the One executing the will of God. When Jesus came, the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to do the will and the works of God. After Jesus left, the same Spirit continues to empower the Christians to do likewise. And since disciples everywhere at any time can be empowered to serve through words and deeds, this can be considered greater works, at least in terms of extensiveness. Bonnke, who has witnessed hundreds of thousands of people saved, healed and touched by Christ in Africa said, “Today, even more than in Bible days, the reality, presence and power of the Holy Spirit is being demonstrated, unmistakably Him. What did not happen before does happen now. What was

fruitless and impossible before Christ came is seen now every day. Not only material and physical powers are at work, but salvation powers for the whole man.”⁵⁸

Professor John Foster of Glasgow University related a story on how an inquirer from Hinduism approached an Indian bishop. Without any help, he had read the New Testament. The story of Christ had fascinated him. Then he continued reading and felt he had entered into a new world. In the gospels it was Jesus, His works and His suffering. But in the book of Acts, the disciples were like replicas of Jesus, taken the place that Christ had occupied. The Church picked up where Jesus had left off at his death. That man then said to him, “I must belong to the Church that carries on the life of Christ.” The book of Acts describes the story of the Church that carries on the life of Christ.⁵⁹

The Signs of Empowerment

Prayerfulness is the first sign of empowerment. The early church prayed and waited in expectancy. Prayer is the most important characteristic of the early church. They liked to pray. Whenever they were confronted with challenges, their first response was always to pray. Without prayer, the church would be emptied of power, for they would be disconnected from the source. The book of Acts mentioned prayer 32 times, proving that the early church was a praying church. It was their foundation of success. “Prayer is mentioned in one form or another ten times in Matthew, 12 times in Mark, and five times in John. But Luke mentions it 19 times in his gospel

⁵⁸ Bonnke, *Holy Spirit - Revelation and Revolution*, Loc.1617.

⁵⁹ William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles (New Daily Study Bible)*(Westminster: John Knox Press, 2010), 11, Kindle.

and 32 times in Acts.”⁶⁰ Watson said, “Prayer is critical, and we cannot emphasize enough—you cannot have a Disciple-Making Movement without a prayer movement.”⁶¹

Acts 4:31 “*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*”

In this verse, we see the model sequence for ministry of God’s Word.

Pray→ Filled→ Preach (speak).

The fact is, one could still preach without being filled, but that is not going to make any real difference in the spiritual realm. When the spiritual realm is shaken, we would be able to see things begin to change in the physical realm. Preachers that are filled with the Spirit shall deliver God’s Word like a sword, powerful and active. Such word penetrates. Hull says, “Prayer attacks the status quo, striking at the root of issues, moving God’s hand, and catapulting angels into action. If you believe the above, you will pray. The first church committed itself to prayer, and I can make that assertion because the Bible uses the imperfect tense to describe their praying. I’ve heard it said that the first church prayed ten days, preached ten minutes, and saw three thousand come to Christ; the modern church prays ten minutes, preaches ten days, and sees a handful come to Christ.”⁶² Hayford in sharing the importance of prayer says, “It is a call to abandon ourselves to the Holy Spirit— to yield to His fullness, to open to the worship He enables, to utilize the full prayer resources He supplies and to exalt and minister the works of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”⁶³

⁶⁰ See appendix 4 on *Prayer in the Book of Acts* by Mark Moore.

⁶¹ David Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 90, Kindle.

⁶² Bill Hull, *Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Loc.1076, Kindle.

⁶³ Hayford, *Living the Spirit-Formed Life: Growing in the 10 Principles of Spirit-Filled Discipleship*, 116.

Vibrancy in Christian life is another sign. We saw in the disciples renewed spiritual vitality (Acts 2:41-47), courage (5:29), fearless in martyrdom (7:55-59), selfless giving (4:32ff), great anointing in ministry (3:6-8, 5:8), persistence in prayer (12:5) and tireless labor (20:31). The miraculous was a normal sign in Apostle Paul's ministry. In Acts 16, we saw demons were cast out (v.18), chains were broken (v.26), prison doors were opened (v.27), and peoples' hearts were convicted and converted (vv.29-34). All these were evidences of the Spirit's mighty presence. Keener in his conclusion of the article on *the Spirit of God* says, "Throughout the Bible, God's Spirit empowers God's people to live righteously and minister to others. Scripture often portrays this empowerment in dramatic ways, such as prophecy or miracles. Other times, the Spirit simply empowers God's people to live their daily lives in a new way, with a new identity that honors God."⁶⁴

How Do You Know

Baptism in the Spirit is essentially submission to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Christians do not have to be Pentecostal or Charismatics to lay emphasis on this special working of the Holy Spirit. However, the term "baptism in the Holy Spirit" in itself may present some difficulty. Palma's explanation may help,

The New Testament writers never speak about a baptism of the Holy Spirit. The term is ambivalent, and could be used for either of two experiences of the Spirit: (1) baptism *by* the Spirit, which incorporates a person into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 13), and (2) baptism *in* the Spirit, which primarily empowers a person (Matt. 3: 11; Mark 1: 8; Luke 3: 16; John 1: 3; Acts 1: 5; 11: 16 ;)... Of all the translation options available, the most viable are "by," "with," and "in." We may eliminate "by" in the Gospels and Acts

⁶⁴ C. Keener and J. D. Barry ed., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Article on the *Spirit of God*) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012).

passages since John the Baptist said Jesus is the One who baptizes. It is a baptism by Jesus in the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵

The New Testament emphasizes the centrality of the Holy Spirit's role in the ministry of Jesus. This ministry was passed on to the disciples in the early church. Jesus' public ministry was launched by the Holy Spirit coming upon Him (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). The Book of Acts presents an extension of that ministry through the disciples by means of the empowering Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

According to the Pentecostal's formulation of doctrine, the most distinguishing features of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are that: (1) it is theologically and experientially distinguishable from and subsequent to the new birth, (2) it is accompanied by speaking in tongues, and (3) it is distinct in purpose from the Spirit's work of regenerating the heart and life of a repentant sinner.

The following expressions in Acts are used interchangeably for the experience:⁶⁶

- baptized in the Spirit—1:5; 11:16; see also Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33. The term "Spirit baptism" often serves as a useful substitute and is employed in this paper.
- The Spirit coming, or falling, upon—1:8; 8:16; 10:44; 11:15; 19:6; see also Luke 1:35; 3:22
- The Spirit poured out—2:17, 18; 10:45
- The gift my Father promised—1:4
- The gift of the Spirit—2:38; 10:45; 11:17
- The gift of God—8:20; 11:17; 15:8
- receiving the Spirit—8:15, 17, 19; 19:2
- filled with the Spirit—2:4; 9:17

The Assemblies of God position paper on Spirit baptism listed speaking in tongues as the initial evidence. The other signs and benefits of the Spirit's presence include openness to

⁶⁵ Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Loc.1723.

⁶⁶ See Assemblies of God position paper on Baptism in the Holy Spirit. http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/index.cfm (accessed January 18, 2015)

spiritual manifestations, righteous living and power for witness.⁶⁷ However, speaking in tongues, or “glossalalia,” which Pentecostals recognize as the initial sign, may be the most divisive and controversial. Even Pentecostals do not see eye to eye on this issue. Some (e.g. Fee) sees tongues speaking as normal, but not normative for Spirit baptism. Even today, there are people among the evangelicals who still labeled the tongues speakers as heretics.⁶⁸ It was easy to label something which they do not understand, and do not want to understand as heretic, for then they do not have to explain why they say what they said. When Jesus’ words and actions could not be understood by the Pharisees, they labeled Him a blasphemer. Reinhard Bonnke, one of the modern day great evangelist and revivalist said,

The history of the glossolalia from the beginning of the first day of the twentieth century is full of spiritual significance. It has produced the greatest soul-saving witness in the entire Christian age. However, the evangelical world conjured up a real fear of tongues, and leaders massed their weight against it. That was tragic and had far-reaching consequences. God had sent revival, but it was rejected by millions of biblical Christians. Apostolic-style revival made its own way mainly without evangelical encouragement. When George Jeffreys, the greatest and earliest of British Pentecostal evangelists, the man I mentioned laying hands on me, went through the United Kingdom like a flame of fire, warnings against him went out from almost every church pulpit. In Britain’s second largest city, Birmingham, ten thousand people received Christ, and one thousand testimonies of healing were received, yet a leading free churchman tried to organize a counter-attraction against him.⁶⁹

Francis Chan gave a candid observation of the contemporary scene in regard to the Holy Spirit, “No matter what religious tradition you come from, you likely carry baggage and harbor stereotypes when it comes to the Holy Spirit. It’s going to require laying aside your baggage and

⁶⁷ See position paper, Assemblies of God. http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/index.cfm

⁶⁸ This was conveyed to the author from one of the cell members recently, who has a friend from an evangelical church. She was warned not to attend Faith Hope Love which her friend labeled as heretic. Evidently, some people do not know that the Assemblies of God is an important part of the National Association of Evangelicals. This is unchristian behavior.

⁶⁹ Bonnke, *Holy Spirit - Revelation and Revolution*, 248.

stereotypes so you can be open to what God wants to teach you. Some people talk a lot about—even boast of—the Spirit, but their lives do not bear His fruit. Others speak of the Holy Spirit in theoretical or scholarly terms, yet do not experience Him at work. Still others ignore Him for all practical purposes and, as you might expect, rarely experience relationship or intimacy with the Spirit.”⁷⁰

How to Receive

The first prerequisite for receiving the Spirit’s power is humility. When the empowering of the Spirit is left on the heated debating platform, nothing is going to happen to the lives of the disciples. Acts 1:8 says, “But you *will receive power* when the Holy Spirit *has come* (ἐπελθόντος, 2nd aorist active participle) on you...,” not *has debated* (italics mine). One can apply a posteriori argument from here, not just one from theological arguments in classrooms and textbooks, but one that also take into account the Missiological and church growth data from all over the world. Why do some churches grow exponentially and some do not? As the caption goes, “theology is essentially practical.”⁷¹

One can almost sense the frustration in Chan’s heart when he responded concerning the when and how of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, “Why do we sometimes feel that we need to debate this endlessly, running through every possible hypothetical situation and answering

⁷⁰ Chan, *Forgotten God*, Loc.204.

⁷¹ Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 140.

every theological question first? When will we simply respond to the truth we have heard and then work through our questions from there?”⁷²

Thirsting and hunger after the Spirit is another condition. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (Matt 5:6). In fact, the Spirit movement did not find fertile soil in many of the intellectual minds. The first recorded incident of Spirit baptism in the modern era was Agnes Ozman, a farmer’s daughter. Her Spirit baptism experience sparked the modern Pentecostal-Holiness movement, which began in the early 20th century. Menzies says, “Perhaps a key to the success of Pentecostal churches can be found in their willingness to take risks. Desperate people take risks. They have little to lose. Historically, Pentecostals have been people with little to lose. As a result, they have been desperate for God. Globally, the majority of Pentecostals still live on the wrong side of the tracks: they are the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized.”⁷³ Bonnke tends to agree, “The swing of interest in the Spirit came from the fringe, from unknown faith people, not from scholars, though it has produced scholars. Such people – nobodies, coming full of the Spirit from the outer edges of Christianity, were met with suspicion, as one would expect. They had only experience, and to men of the Church no theology meant no credentials, no bona fides.”⁷⁴ Later on, he said, “No one is so great that they can expect God’s mighty favors. God does not give the Spirit to the self-sufficient, but to the needy.”⁷⁵

⁷² Chan, *Forgotten God*, Loc.794.

⁷³ Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story is Our Story*, Loc.2005.

⁷⁴ Bonnke, *Holy Spirit - Revelation and Revolution*, Loc. 47.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Loc. 1469.

The Spirit is God's good gift to His church (Luke 11:13). But the Spirit is gentle in His ways. He will not force His ways into the hearts of people. God will not give us something which we do not want. The author had such experience in his early Christian walk. Two weeks of intense praying and seeking God's presence alone in Church resulted in the baptism in the Spirit, accompanied with tongues. Along with the baptism came God's calling into full-time ministry. It was a radical life transforming experience. It has been forty years now, and still joyfully and powerfully sustained by the same Spirit. Chan highlighted the plight of the American church when he says, "However, I also believe that the Spirit is more obviously active in places where people are desperate for Him, humbled before Him, and not distracted by their pursuit of wealth or comforts (like we are). The light of the American church is flickering and nearly extinguished, having largely sold out to the kingdoms and values of this world. While most people see that there is a problem, few do anything about it, and most of those who do, run toward the wrong solutions."⁷⁶

Faith is another condition to receive the gift and gifts of the Spirit. The Scripture makes it plain on this.

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

"How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit" speaks of our attitude in simple faith and trust when Christians come to God, to ask for the gift of the Spirit. Without

⁷⁶ Chan, *Forgotten God*, Loc.170.

faith, neither gift nor grace of God can be appropriated. The operation of the gifts of the Spirit falls under the same thread as "According to your faith let it be done to you" (Matt 9:29).

Anyone who wants it can have it, though some may enjoy deeper level of empowerment. Onu explained on the synergistic aspect of the empowerment when he said,

People of God are people of power; but there are levels of spiritual empowerment. However, it is the same Spirit of God that empowers us. You have a level of power when you are born-again and become a child of God. However, the Power of God in your life will be multiplied by very many folds when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is when you are filled with the Holy Spirit that the Spirit of God anoints you to varying degrees, depending on your obedience, commitment, diligence, faithfulness, and other factors.⁷⁷

Since empowerment is to be clothed with the Spirit's power, yielding is vital. Whoever the Spirit finds yielded to Him, He willingly comes to fill that vessel. The apostle Paul was empowered by the Spirit, and fully yielded to the cause of Christ. He says "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ" (Phil 3:7-8). Johnson remarked, "It would be easy to gloss over this important fact, but let's not do that. Paul's complete yieldedness to, and control by, the Spirit of God is what empowered everything about his ministry: his witness, his miracles, and here his being used of God to judge sin."⁷⁸ Moody was to have a campaign in England. An elderly pastor protested, "Why do we need this 'Mr. Moody'? He's uneducated, inexperienced, etc. Who does he think he is anyway? Does he think he has a

⁷⁷ Godsword Godswill Onu, *The Anointing and Power of the Holy Spirit: A Requirement for the Needed Ability and Empowerment of the Christian and Minister* (Nigeria, Okigwe: Godsword Christian Publications, 2014), Loc.1873, Kindle.

⁷⁸ William Johnson, *Digging Into the Acts of the Apostles* (? 2013), Loc. 3479, Kindle.

monopoly on the Holy Spirit?” A younger, wiser pastor rose and responded, “No, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Mr. Moody.”⁷⁹

Before and After

In counseling lessons under Dr. Dwight Rice, an important aspect of the counseling sessions is the goal, the destination. It began with a description of where one was, moving towards the goal where one desires to be. The counselor offers guidance along the way as well as providing resources to empower and help the counselee gets there.

Spirit empowerment process is very much along the same track. Christians have to feel the tremendous sense of inadequacy doing lives apart from the Spirit before they would finally be determined to seek the empowerment. They have to be desperate enough to want change and for God to use them. Jesus promised those that seek shall find. He provided the sole resource that’s needed, His Spirit. He says, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”(Luke 11:13). But that’s not all. Being baptized in the Spirit does not mean one has arrived. He still needs to be charged with His daily presence. He needs to be filled continuously.

Some Christians see Spirit empowerment as a one-time life experience. They stopped drinking from the well after receiving it, out of pride, ignorance or even fear. “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). The verb “πληροῦσθε,” be filled, is present passive imperative. International Standard Version captures

⁷⁹ Source unknown, “*D.L. Moody 2*,” Bible.org. <https://bible.org/illustration/d-l-moody-2> (accessed February 17, 2015).

the sense well when it translates “keep on being filled with the Spirit.” Palma says, “The Pentecostal understanding and experience of Spirit baptism are firmly grounded in Scripture. Yet a word of admonition is in order. Pentecostals must not, and indeed cannot, rely on a past, initial experience of having been filled with the Spirit. The decisive question is not “When were you filled with the Spirit?” but rather “Are you now filled with, and full of, the Spirit?”⁸⁰ Chan quipped,

Is it possible to get enough or even too much God? Is there a point when a person can be satisfied with the amount of intimacy, knowledge, and power of God he or she experiences? I don't see how there can be, because doesn't every encounter with God only cause us to thirst for Him more? Let me be clear. This is not a call to misinformed extremism, but an acknowledgment that as believers we can never be “done” with God. He is infinite and we are finite; there will always be more of His character to discover, more of His love to experience, and more of His power to use for His purposes.⁸¹

There is a realm of glory and power that one can enter into once he/she is filled and empowered by the Spirit. It begins with the new birth. The birthing process is much the same for all children of God. Disciples of Christ must move deeper, deeper into Spirit-filled life and Spirit-empowered ministry.

People Empowerment: Barnabas and Saul

Empowerment means the power of the Holy Spirit that is released to the disciples to evangelize the lost and edify the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers disciples for the purpose of empowering other people. The Spirit empowers disciples to share the good news to non-believers, for the goal of salvation; to Christians, it's for edification. It is never an end in

⁸⁰ Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Loc. 2997.

⁸¹ Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*, Loc. 214.

itself. The Spirit is likened to living waters, overflowing and refreshing its surroundings, bringing life wherever it goes. In Acts 11 we find a perfect example in people empowerment.

Acts 11: 22 “News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch 25Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

Empowerment includes empowering people. We see here how Barnabas travelled more than three hundred miles to find Saul, brought him to Antioch, and team taught with him for one whole year. It can be discovered from here that the process of empowering involves looking out for people, encouraging and mentoring, and then releasing them to do the same on others. The discipleship process is a continual process of empowering people.

When disciples are not empowered, they would not be able to do what they are called to do. Great Commission will inevitably become Great Omission for them. Jesus bluntly said, *“John 15:5, I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”* It shows that relationship with Christ is the pre-condition for relating Christ to others. And since connectedness with Christ results in doing good works, a disciple’s relationship with Christ is essentially one of empowerment. Crabb explains on the role of the Spirit in empowerment when he says, “When the Spirit of God is dynamic in our lives, his central job is connecting us with God, convincing us of our need for a Savior, drawing us to Christ, whispering to us that God is our Father, making clear to us the truth of God from Scripture, coming alongside of us to console us when we’re wounded, to equip and strengthen us for the work we’re called to do, and to empower us to relate to others with the

energy of Christ. No problem is deeper or more significant than the absence or minimization of this connecting force.”⁸²

In lamenting the lack of effectiveness in the discipling models, Albert says, “Much of the literature related to the Great Commission and much other recent research recognize that something is seriously wrong with, or lacking in, the practices of the contemporary church with respect to its methodologies for disciple-making. There appears to be a growing conviction that many of the contemporary models and methodologies of disciple-making are failing to actually make disciples.”⁸³ The main reason is probably due to the issue of people empowerment. It is not lack of knowledge or methods, but rather the people of God lacking in power to execute what they know they need to do. There is a reason why some of the discipleship movements in third world or developing world Christian churches are doing well. For example, take a look at the churches in China, Africa or Brazil; many of these churches are in their infancy or childhood stage in terms of church development. However, they are experiencing explosive growth. It is hard to conjure a figure of the present Christian population in China. Statistics varies greatly depending on where you get the figure from. Conservative estimates of Christian population in China stands at about eight percent of 1.3 billion, which means close to 100 million strong.

The author frequented the house churches in China while still serving in Hong Kong. It was told many of these house groups were formed by way of natural reproduction. When people attended the house meetings, they were Great Commission conscious; there was no publicity

⁸² Larry Crabb, *Connecting* (Nashville: Word Publishing Group, 1997), Loc. 612, Kindle.

⁸³ Kenneth Albert, “Dawson Trotman’s Theology and Methodology of Disciple-Making in Light of New Testament Principles” (Doctoral Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 4.

about church meetings like those in the States. It would be very risky for them to do that for obvious reasons. Christians had to share the news by way of personally inviting friends. People would be wary if there happened to be a “guest” not related or known to anyone, or some strangers sniffing nearby. It happened once when the author was with them, and they had to change the meeting place the next day, just because of that. Everything was done by way of relationship. Relationship empowered everything that they did, and fed the group. The group would soon outgrow the facilities (normally living room, and adjoining bedrooms). So the handful that came from a distance, but living around the same vicinity would then form another house church of their own. The most experienced among them, would then be chosen to lead this new group. The new leaders may not know much, normally receiving training from outside teachers who came a few times in a year for intensive trainings. But they were empowered to do so, by the new group, more so, by the Spirit. What they knew, they put to practice. What they didn’t know, they prayed intensely for the Spirit’s help. They were people of prayers. Everyone could unashamedly open his/her mouth to audibly pray. Signs and wonders were common scene. To them, God was alive and active in their midst, for He heard their prayers. The larger network of house churches where they sprung from would then provide the community base to cover, help, train and guide. The end result was leaders who had simple knowledge of God’s Word but with heavy doses of the Spirit. The results were staggering.⁸⁴ Fee in his work, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* mentioned something interesting called practical atheism,

Prayer, therefore, is not simply our cry of desperation or our grocery list of requests that we bring before our heavenly Abba; prayer is an activity inspired by God himself,

⁸⁴ A caveat needs to be given here. Many of the churches, on the other hand, due to the shallowness in faith, easily succumb to heresy and splits. But with the standard of training raised and contextualized, the situation is much better now.

through his Holy Spirit. It is God siding with his people and, by his own empowering presence, the Spirit of God himself, bringing forth prayer that is in keeping with his will and his ways. It is probably impossible to understand Paul as a theologian, if one does not take this dimension of his “Spirituality” with full seriousness. A prayerless life is one of practical atheism. As one who lived in and by the Spirit, Paul understood prayer in particular to be the special prompting of the Spirit, leading him to thanksgiving for others and petition in the Spirit, even when he did not know for what specifically to pray. Whatever else life in the Spirit meant for Paul, it meant a life devoted to prayer, accompanied by joy and thanksgiving.⁸⁵

As can be observed above, the essence of empowerment carries the idea of multiplication and fruitfulness. The beauty about empowering is that it is a self-reproducing and multiplying process. Jesus mentioned good soil that bears forth fruits thirty, sixty and hundred fold (Matt 13:23). Such fruitfulness is not possible without empowering people.

Coming back to the case of Barnabas and Saul as an example of people empowerment, without Barnabas (meaning “son of consolation”), the New Testament could be very different. The account in Acts shows after Saul’s conversion, the disciples in Damascus were astonished after hearing him preach. They doubted him, and were skeptical of his motive (9:21). When the Jews wanted to kill him, he went to Jerusalem, but the reception that he got was even worse, “When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, could not believe that he really was a disciple” (9:26). But there came the good man called Barnabas. He sought out Saul, came alongside and mentored him. He also believed in Saul, accepted and supported him (Acts 11:25-26). When others looked on with fear and distrust, Barnabas took a step of faith when he took the risk to empower Saul. Saul then changed to become Paul under Barnabas’ empowerment. What was unleashed was the fulfillment of Acts 1:8 by Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, beginning with Acts thirteen, where the empowering Antioch church and

⁸⁵ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, Loc.2482.

the empowered Barnabas and Paul embarked on their missionary journeys. Half of the books of the New Testament were directly or indirectly related to these journeys. It all began with Barnabas looking out for Saul, to give him that little empowering nudge.

Modus Operandi for Disciplers in Faith Hope Love

In concluding this chapter, let it be said that the Spirit's power is readily available for God's people. To neglect to tap into His provision is any Christian's loss. It's like having a power generator in the cold, dark winter, but it's never put to use. Jesus returned to the Father, so that he may send the Holy Spirit. Evidently, the Holy Spirit comes for His people called church. His presence, provision and power enable every disciple of Christ to live like Christ.

To this end, Faith Hope Love attempts to devise a plan to facilitate every believer to embark on the journey of power and transformation. It incorporates the four "E" principles of empowerment, exhortation, encouragement and exemplification that is uncovered from Acts. Further details will be given once the other chapters are written. The goal of the project is a repeatable process of disciple multiplication. Once this is put into place, FHL is going to be on its way of continual growth, effected by a sustaining model of Spirit-empowered discipleship. It begins when a seeker steps into church.

Chart 1: Every Disciple's Journey in FHL

TIME/ Month	FOCUS	DISCIPLESHIP ACTION
1 & 2	CONNECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A caller from Welcoming Team + bringer assigned to establish link • Initial connection formed with prospective cell leader and a cell member of the same gender • Connection must be made weekly to show care and build trust • Accountable to Welcoming Chairperson who keeps a record
<p style="text-align: center;">Empowerment Weekend</p> <p>(hold quarterly: end of Feb., May, Aug., Nov.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EMPOWERMENT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Place: church</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Time: Saturday (4-6 hr.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leader: Pastor</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Assist: Cell Leaders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel shared: "Romans Road to Salvation" (appendix 2) (1 hr.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confessions 1 Jn.1:9 ▪ New Creation 2 Cor.5:17 • Lesson 101: <i>Basics of Christian Living</i> Part 1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ABC of Bible Reading (1 hr.) ▪ Prayer & Worship (1 hr.) • Lesson 102: <i>Baptism of the Holy Spirit</i> (AG position paper as guide. 1 hr.) • Prayer for Empowerment/ Waiting • Instruction: Now that you have received (15 min.)
3-9	<p style="text-align: center;">EXHORTATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Place: Cell</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Time: Week days</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Place: Church</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 201: <i>Evangelism</i>, using 3 "Win" strategy (Win to Self, Group, Christ). Practical focus. • Weekly Sunday Worship (principles) & Cell Meeting (applications) • Lesson 202: <i>Basics of Christian Living</i>, Part 2. Using <i>Handbook on Follow-up</i> by L.Ruthenpaul, Chinese Ed. 茁茁 (12 lessons) • Lesson 203: <i>Core Doctrines</i>. Using AOG Resource Materials.⁸⁶ • Lesson 204: Strategic Serving

⁸⁶ Core doctrine includes salvation, divine healing, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and second coming. When teaching, the outline will be translated into Chinese. See link http://ag.org/top/beliefs/our_core_doctrines/

	Time: Wed. night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using Peter Wagner, <i>Your Spiritual Gifts</i> ▪ Spiritual gift survey (appendix3) ▪ Seminars with guest teachers
10-12	<p>ENCOURAGEMENT</p> <p>Place: Church</p> <p>Time: Wed. night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F.A.T. disciples will be earmarked for Cell Leader Intern's Training (F-Faithful, A-Available, T-Teachable) • Placement under a Cell Leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do—You Watch You do—I Coach You Do—Others Watch • Mentorship under Pastor • Lesson 301: using <i>T4T Training</i>⁸⁷ (8 Practical Sessions needed)
13-18	<p>EXEMPLIFICATION</p> <p>Qualities:</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Humility</p> <p>Sacrifice</p> <p>Diligence</p> <p>Integrity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intern becomes a New Cell Leader • Personality Test (Appendix 4, in Chinese) • Lesson 401, using Joel Comiskey's <i>How to Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting</i>. • Lesson 402, using Joel Comiskey's <i>Home Cell Group Explosion</i>. • Leaders will need to exemplify the qualities listed on the left. • Leaders expected to multiply after 18 months by using the same model to train others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goal: 4 generations (2Tim2:2)

Note: All lessons will be given outlines in Chinese, since FHL is Chinese speaking church.

Hayford's word is useful to wrap up this chapter,

The call to the Spirit-formed life defines the normal Christian life as conceived by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the kind of life, experience and witness that is described in the book of Acts. Indeed, the steps forward to the Holy Spirit-formed life are clearly set forth in God's Word: 1. Be Spirit-born by repenting for your sins and by putting your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, verifying the commitment by obeying Jesus Christ as Lord

⁸⁷ Steve Smith, Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Monument: WIGTake Resources, 2011).

and being baptized in water (see Acts 2: 38,39). 2. Be Spirit-filled by receiving the promise Jesus gave that His followers shall receive power— power to move in new dimensions of worship , praise, prayer, service and witness (see Acts 1: 5-8; 2: 1-4). 3. Be Spirit-formed by recognizing that the entry door of new birth and the birthright blessing of Holy Spirit fullness are only beginnings—both calling us as believers to growth in Christ’s likeness and discipleship under His lordship (see Rom. 12: 1,2; Acts 2: 42,46,47).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Hayford, *Living the Spirit-Formed Life: Growing in the 10 Principles of Spirit-Filled Discipleship*, Loc.115.

CHAPTER 3

EXHORTATION

Chapter three covers exhortation, the faithful and authoritative preaching of the Word of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit which results in transformed lives of the believers. This study seeks to demonstrate that discipleship in the early church was not built on personalities or emotionalism, but solidly on the teaching (διδάσκη) of God’s Word. It endeavors to scrutinize the characteristics of the apostles preaching and teaching by investigating the sermons found in Acts. They are found to be simple, uplifting, authoritative, and Christ-centered.

During the past century, God raised up many mighty preachers. It used to be said that “the pulpit leads the world.” Few would dare to advance this claim for the macro social-political world today. Phillips Brooks defines preaching as “Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men.”¹ Robinson’s definition of expository preaching helps, “Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him/ her to his/ her hearers.”² Though there may not be consensus on what expository preaching is, Willhite hit the right note when he said, “This much is certain: preaching and theology are united for life. There is a

¹ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 266, Kindle.

² Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1980), Loc.233. Kindle.

theology for preaching; and there is a theology of preaching. What you think about preaching heavily influences how you preach. It is as simple as that.”³

Acts 2:37 “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” Peter’s preaching during the day of Pentecost was reminiscent of Jesus’ preaching on earth, and was full of authority. Acts was filled with the apostles’ anointed preaching. Charles said, “There are three kinds of preachers: the ones you can listen to, the ones you cannot listen to, and the ones you must listen to. I desire to be the kind of preacher that you must listen to.”⁴ The apostles’ preaching belongs to the category of “you must listen to.” Such preaching made believers, as well as moved them to obey God’s Word. Peter’s preaching emphasized the centrality of Christ. He is the Lord. The Bible says, his preaching “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37). Preaching that cuts to the heart will have the listeners ask, “What shall we do?” Whereas preaching that massages the brain will have the listeners responding “So what?” Biblical preaching always makes Christ alive-again and again.

In Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Christ came to the world. He proclaimed the Kingdom message, healed the sick and performed many miracles. The apostles continued to teach what Jesus taught (2:42), authenticated by many signs and wonders. Discipleship sustenance depends on continuity in the teaching of the Word of the Lord. Without rootedness in the Word of God, discipleship gives way to superficiality and emotionalism. Wyrostek said, “Every Christ follower

³ Keith Willhite and Scott Gibson eds., *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2003), 96, Kindle.

⁴ H.B. Charles Jr., *On Preaching: Personal & Pastoral Insights for the Preparation & Practice of Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 10, Kindle.

from the pew to the pulpit needs to stop hitting the snooze button on the alarm, rise up, and be the change that America needs. The church must get back to the basics and make disciples that live out the teachings of Christ. Accordingly, the only hope for America and the nations are discipleship based churches.”⁵

Devoted to Apostles’ Teaching

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching....” The word “devoted” is “προσκαρτεροῦντες,” from “προσκαρτερέω,” which means “to continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of despite difficulty.”⁶ AKJV⁷ has “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine....” It outlined the early church’s attitude towards the Word of God in spite of opposition, and the need to faithfully “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim.4:2). See the apostles’ response when commanded to be silent (Acts 4:19-20), “But Peter and John replied, ‘which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’” Brook Shields in his 1877 Yale lectures stressed courage as the indispensable requisite of any true ministry, “If you are afraid of men and a slave to their opinion, go and do something else. Go and make shoes to fit them. Go even and paint pictures which you know are bad but which suit their bad taste. But do

⁵ Joe Wyrostek, *Discipleship Based Churches: How to Create and Maintain a Church of Disciples* (Chicago: MPI Publishing, 2014), Loc.106-108, Kindle.

⁶ Author Unknown, “HELPS Word-studies,” Bible Hub. <http://biblehub.com/greek/4342.htm> (accessed March 3, 2015).

⁷ AKJV stands for *American King James Version*, <http://biblehub.com/akjv/acts/2.htm>

not keep on all your life preaching sermons which shall say not what God sent you to declare, but what they hire you to say. Be courageous. Be independent.”⁸ What a homiletical challenge!

What does it mean by “devoted to apostle’s teaching?” It needs to be viewed in the same thread as the apostles obeying the teaching of Christ. It implied authority in content and allegiance in intent. Christ left, but His Word remained. The apostle’s teaching was the extension of Christ as Savior (what He did) and Christ as Lord (who He is). It indicated the means by which the teaching of Christ would be passed to the new disciples. Wilkins says, “The “apostles’ teaching refers to a body of material considered authoritative because it was the message about Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed by accredited apostles.” Here the apostles directly fulfilled Jesus’ commission, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:20). The apostles were committing all that they knew of Jesus and His teachings to these new disciples. A definitive objective of Jesus’ form of discipleship was that His disciples would obey His teachings.”⁹ Anderson viewed the apostle’s teaching from the perspective of those preached to rather than the preacher, “The church was based on the truth of God. The apostles' teaching refers to the doctrines of the Christian faith that the apostles had learned from Jesus and were still learning from the Holy Spirit. In other words, a church isn't a church just because a group of people get together and discuss religion. To be a Christian community means basing everything on the truth of God. This was a learning church more than it was a teaching church.”¹⁰

⁸ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 300.

⁹ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 260-261, Kindle.

¹⁰ Leith Anderson, *The Jesus Revolution: Learning from Christ's First Followers* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), Loc. 295-299, Kindle.

Apostle Peter's Preaching (κηρύσσω) in Acts 2:14-36

Chart 2: An Analysis of the First Sermon of the Church

<u>Peter's Word</u>	<u>Emphasis/Themes</u>
14 Then Peter stood up raised his voice ...	
16..this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:	16 Jesus Christ is fulfillment of prophecy
17“ ‘In the last days....I will pour out my Spirit on all people...	17 The coming of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension signifies the beginning of end times
21 And everyone who callson the name of the Lord will be saved.’	21 A new age of salvation has dawned
22“Fellow Israelites.....: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs.... 23....you....put him to death by nailing him to the cross.	22-23 Jesus of history was sent by God, but you killed Him
30....God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his (David) descendants on his throne.	29-30 Jesus was the promised Son of David
32-33 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.... Exalted to the right hand of God....from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.	32-33 God raised Him from the dead, exalted Him
36“.... God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”	36 Christ crucified is in fact Lord and Messiah

Ethos, Pathos, Logos

The Greek philosopher Aristotle divided the means of persuasion and appeals into three categories, namely ethos, pathos, and logos. The goal of argumentative writing and speaking is to persuade your audience that your ideas are valid, or more valid than someone else's. When all three are present, the communication will be persuasive. The apostle's preaching in Acts carried all three.

Ethos

Ethos concerns the speaker's credibility. It is the listener's perception of him as person. It may not be what the speaker is, but what the listener considers him to be. According to Aristotle,

Our perception of a speaker or writer's character influences how believable or convincing we find what that person has to say. This projected character is called the speaker or writer's ethos. We are naturally more likely to be persuaded by a person who, we think, has personal warmth, consideration of others, a good mind and solid learning. Often we know something of the character of speakers and writers ahead of time. They come with a reputation or extrinsic ethos. People whose education, experience, and previous performances qualify them to speak on a certain issue earn the special extrinsic ethos of the authority. But whether or not we know anything about the speaker or writer ahead of time, the actual text we hear or read, the way it is written or spoken and what it says, always conveys and impression of the author's character. This impression created by the text itself is the intrinsic ethos.¹¹

The impact of ethos is often called the argument's ethical appeal. For preachers of the apostolic message, their ethos naturally comes to the forefront, for they are witnesses to the message themselves. Acts 4:20 "As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." Nothing hurts a preacher's message more than his ethos. Paul was wary of this when he

¹¹ John D Ramage and John C. Bean, "Writing Arguments," 4th Edition.
http://www.u.arizona.edu/ic/polis/courses021/ENGL_102-78/EthosPathosLogos (accessed March 3, 2015).

said, “Now the overseer is to be above reproach....” (1 Tim 3:2). It is interesting to note that the word preacher in Chinese is 傳道人, meaning a person who preaches the logos or way. “傳” stands for pathos, “道” for logos, and “人” means person, the ethos. Though the word “人 person” occurs last in the term, and “傳 pathos” comes first, it will be a blunder for servants of God to try to place their pathos “傳” before ethos “人” in their sacred ministry.

Since credibility depends on the hearer’s perception and affects his response to the message, it would be beneficial for preachers to know in advance the factors which contribute to the congregation’s opinion of the speaker. A background research will be helpful. This is especially true for those churches that had gone through pastoral failures. People see the speaker before they hear him. After hearing, they tend to place him under further observation, and if what they see is inconsistent with what they hear, they tend to switch off the speaker. This does not mean that preachers have to be perfect. No, they don’t have to be. They just need to be truthful and real. Nor do preachers need to feel uptight because they are under constant observation, for Hull said, “The impact one person has on another depends on the opportunity one has to observe the other. Everything we do teaches, and the impact of the teacher on students is the first step in the discipling process.”¹²

Pathos

The pathos of preaching involves appealing to an audience's sense of identity, their self-interest and emotions. Many rhetoricians past and present have considered pathos to be the

¹² Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Loc. 2162-2163, Kindle.

strongest of the appeals. However, the issue of pathos can be a two-edged sword, for the emotional and psychological aspect of an audience can be swayed by a speaker for his advantage.

Appeals to our sense of identity and self-interest exploit common biases; we naturally bend in the direction of what is advantageous to us, what serves our interests or the interests of any group we believe ourselves a part of. Even when advantage is not an issue, writers who belong to groups we identify with, or create groups we can belong to, often seem more compelling. We also naturally find more persuasive the speaker or writer who flatters us (especially indirectly) instead of insulting us. Thus skillful writers create a positive image in their words of the audience they are addressing, an image their actual readers can identify with.¹³

Some people may think that pathos is about voice, gesture and animation, but pathos in preaching goes beyond that. It's more than just physical or emotional appeals. Pathos at its core always engages the mind and the will. Charles said, "Passionate preaching is not about gestures, volume, and emotion. It's about deep conviction, blood earnestness, and holy reverence. The people in the pew may not believe what I am saying. But I want it to be evident that I believe it. If preaching is logic on fire, we should preach with convinced minds and enflamed hearts. We should pray that God would set us on fire in the pulpit and that we will burn with passion for His glory."¹⁴ Truth and passion are indispensables of Christian preaching. Stott adds to that by saying that "reason concerning this truth ought to be mightily eloquent, as you see it in the case of the Apostle Paul and others. It is theology on fire. And a theology which does not take fire, I

¹³ John D Ramage and John C. Bean, "Writing Arguments," 4th Edition.
http://www.u.arizona.edu/ic/polis/courses021/ENGL_102-78/EthosPathosLogos (accessed March 3, 2015).

¹⁴ Charles Jr., *On Preaching*, 46-47.

maintain, is a defective theology, or at least the man's understanding of it is defective. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire."¹⁵

Why is pathos in sermon delivery so important? It has much to do with "what" rather than just "how" the message is going to be delivered. Paul specified in Rom.1:16 what this gospel brings, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." Preaching's pathos is important because it is a life or death situation among the hearers.

In the previous chapter, the author mentioned the importance of having both the Spirit and the Word in proclaiming the message. They are the channels through which God is releasing His powerful workings. Though it is hard to make generalization, it seems that preachers coming from church tradition that is steeped in the Word ministry tend to be more restrained, as compared to those from the Pentecostal-Charismatic, who tend to be more opened to the promptings of the Spirit. Cultural traditions do play a part in how listeners appreciate the pathos overflow of the speaker. That does not mean to favor a stone cold style of sermon delivery. The "what" (content) of sermon should dictate the "how" (style or form) of a sermon. Dudit said it well, "The appearance of conviction and passion is indispensable in any preaching which has motivation as its goal. Simply put, if you do not seem to care, they will not bother to care. Enthusiasm is as infectious as negativism. Convictional preachers convey their message with emotional force. In terms of traditional Greek rhetoric, an individual's pathos is the gateway to their ethos and logos."¹⁶Lloyd Jones lamented about a similar situation in the Reformed church,

¹⁵ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 284.

¹⁶ Michael Dudit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1993), Loc. 9319-9322, Kindle.

“This element of pathos and of emotion is, to me, a very vital one. It is what has been so seriously lacking in the present century, and perhaps especially among Reformed people. We tend to lose our balance and to become over-intellectual, indeed almost to despise the element of feeling and emotion. We are such learned men, we have such a great grasp of the truth that we tend to despise feeling.”¹⁷

Since preaching is salvaging souls from the gates of Hades, preachers can’t help but to be enthusiastic in proclaiming the gospel. The content of the gospel alone should excite preachers, for the gospel is good news unto salvation. Good news that is not shared is never good news. And since preachers are chosen to proclaim the good news, there’s nothing really to hold them back from confidently declaring the message of salvation that brings wisdom for living. Lawson was saddened by the lack of radiance on the face of preachers, “The tragedy is that many pastors are not excited when they proclaim the Word. Where there is a lack of zeal in preaching, it is because there is an absence of power. John Murray, who taught at Westminster Seminary, emphatically asserted, “Preaching without passion is not preaching at all.”¹⁸

Pathos in preaching shows how you feel and care for your congregation. Moses so deeply felt for his people that he said, “So Moses went back to the Lord and said, “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written” (Exod 32:31-32). Such love for God’s misbehaved flock moved the speaker to see with eyes of love not loathe, speak from a platform of grace instead of law; from one of judgmental spirit to one of humility and

¹⁷ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 106, Kindle.

¹⁸ Steven J. Lawson, *The Kind of Preaching God Blesses* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 85, Kindle.

compassion. Lloyd Jones put it in a nutshell, “To love to preach is one thing, to love those to whom we preach quite another. The trouble with some of us is that we love preaching, but we are not always careful to make sure that we love the people to whom we are actually preaching. If you lack this element of compassion for the people you will also lack the pathos which is a very vital element in all true preaching.”¹⁹

Passionate preachers will produce passionate listeners. Even more important than what the congregation knows about the subject is how they feel about the subject. Things that excite them shall surely evoke greater positive response from them. A passive and laid back audience will not be a good sign for the speakers. They could be in the pews, but their hearts might be on another planet. Such attitude may be a signal that they just don’t care. Verbal or bodily responses (such as a smile) from the congregation go a long way in bridging the distance between the pulpit and the pews, as well as warming the hearts of the preacher and hearers alike.

Logos

Logos (from Greek λόγος, meaning “a word”) refers to the internal consistency of the message. It encompasses the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence. The impact of logos on an audience is sometimes called the argument's logical appeal. The logic used to support a claim could be either by induction or deduction; it could also be the facts and statistics used to help support the argument.²⁰ Jesus serves as the ethos (model of character), pathos (model of compassion), as well as the logos (model of living,

¹⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 105.

²⁰ See Martha L Henning, “Friendly Persuasion: Classical Rhetoric--Now!” August, 1998. <http://courses.durhamtech.edu/perkins/aris.html> (accessed March 3, 2015).

the Way) for preaching. However, there seems to be a struggle in preaching logos wise. Since logos deals with the logical appeal of the argument, facts and statistics need to be given in support. The tension lies in how much information needs to be given. If too much hard facts are given, hearers may find it difficult to swallow. This happened to Jesus' audience, "On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60). If too little is given, hearers may complain of trivialism. The greatest challenge, at times, comes not from the preacher, but those being preached to. Concerning hearers, Duduit has this to say, "A sermon is not an exegetical lecture, rather it is a persuasive speech about biblical ideas. How things are said is as important as what is said. It is not enough to develop a preaching idea, purpose statement, and homiletical outline. There is more. People listen psychologically more than logically. Logical sermons focus on the content, while psychological sermons focus on people."²¹

But how could preachers possibly make sense of something deemed foolishness and offensive? Paul seemed to have experienced the struggle,

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1 Cor 1:20-23).

Such situations call for something more than the three "thos". As Paul had discovered,

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching

²¹ Duduit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, Loc.1428-1430.

were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power (1 Cor 2:1-4).

Paul said in 1Corinthians 1:23 that “Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”The only way it makes sense is when the Holy Spirit comes and makes alive the understanding to the fallen human faculty. Lawson gave a good commentary of the above, “My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words” (1 Cor 2:4). By this, the apostle clarified what the content of his doctrine (“my message”) and the manner of delivery (“my preaching”) were not. This twofold nature of preaching refers to both its substance and style. By this strong negative denial, Paul was reminding the Corinthians that he did not come to them as did the Greek orators. That is to say, he did not come with a worldly message, nor in a fleshly manner.”²² Concerning this divine power, Lloyd-Jones enthused, “the Spirit gives clarity of thought, clarity of speech, ease of utterance, a great sense of authority and confidence as you are preaching, an awareness of a power not your own, thrilling through the whole of your being and an indescribable sense of joy. You are a man ‘possessed,’ you are taken hold of, and taken up.”²³ Stott in response to the above gave advice, “The preacher must live his message and must by his humility and passion allow the Holy Spirit to work through him, and expect such preaching in the power of the Spirit to change lives.”²⁴

Though preaching is an arduous task, at times the “what, how and why” of preaching are good enough to bog down the most experienced preacher. But preachers must not shrink from it. The apostle Peter when under threat to remain silent declared, “Salvation is found in no one else,

²² Lawson, *The Kind of Preaching God Blesses*, 80-81.

²³ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 324.

²⁴ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 8.

for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Preaching must be done regardless, for there is no other way for people to get saved. The way to go is to think of ways on how to make preaching more effective. Classical rhetoricians taught five elements for the construction of effective speeches which preachers need to improve on a weekly basis:²⁵

1. **Invention.** The speaker plans the speech and its main arguments. Within invention, a speaker might consider employing ethos (an appeal to moral character), pathos (an appeal to emotion), or logos (an appeal to logic).

2. **Arrangement.** This step entails the careful placement of thought units into a logical sequence.

3. **Style.** The speaker selects appropriate words, images, and figures to impress, convince, or entertain the audience. The goal of style is always to gain the listener’s assent to the speaker’s goal.

4. **Memory.** The speaker creates mnemonic devices to help retain and recall the content during the delivery.

5. **Delivery.** This final element deals with the mechanics of verbal pace, gestures, and vocal quality.

Conviction verses Convenience

It’s easy to do or belief something out of convenience, for then it calls for the least sacrifice, adaptation and inconvenience that are needed to cope. Things just flow along naturally. Nevertheless, things meaningful in life always come with a price tag. They incur sacrifice and dedication. Elevate to another level, and conviction will be the pre-requisite. Honestly speaking, the gospel and its implication inconvenience believers. Just imagine the lifestyle change that ensues as a result of becoming a Christian. Fifty two weeks of family doing the same “boring” thing instead of engaging in all kinds of fun fare. Conversion without conviction breeds

²⁵ J. D. Barry and L. Wentz, Eds., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary: Rhetoric* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2012).

inconvenience. Not so with disciples who are convinced of what they believe in and do. It is their constant source of strength, joy and meaning in life.

Conviction is the state of being convinced and sure, thus providing ample evidence or argument, that something which he says or does is true. Conviction is the work of the Spirit (John 16:9), for preachers, it begins with God's call, as in the case of the twelve disciples. To morph from fishermen to fishers of men takes conviction, for fishes do not need to be convinced, but people do. Robinson emphasizes its importance when he said,

Amateurs settle for getting their ideas out of their heads, while professionals strive to get ideas into our heads. In the preacher, technical knowledge and training in the art of public address cannot take the place of conviction and responsibility. Having something to say to a congregation that you want them to understand and live by provides an essential stimulus for effective delivery. It produces the emotional "set" for speaking. We are not merely reciting a script. We are communicating ideas that matter to us.²⁶

If preachers really believe what William Sangster said that "preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ is the highest, holiest activity to which a man can give himself: a task which angels might envy and for which archangels might forsake the court of Heaven,"²⁷ they will surely be powerful messengers for God in their generation.

Why is conviction so important? Salesmen that are not convinced of their products cannot sell. In a sense, disciples are "salesmen" for Christ's salvation "products" with the cross as the "trademark". Stott said, "In a world which seems either unwilling or unable to listen, how can we be persuaded to go on preaching, and learn to do so effectively? The essential secret is not mastering certain techniques but being mastered by certain convictions. In other words,

²⁶ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Loc. 2862-2866.

²⁷ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 43.

theology is more important than methodology.”²⁸ He goes on to mention that there are five convictions that a preacher must have, namely, conviction about God, Scripture, Church, pastorate and preaching. You may probably want to add conviction about preacher’s calling to the list. One cannot preach unless he is called. “And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Rom 10:15).

Conviction grows out of our experience of truth. Knowledge of God’s Word increases one’s faith, but it is the experience of such truth in life that brings conviction. From mental assent, experience turns truth into something so real and meaningful, that it becomes one’s own; something that supersedes the mind, where one’s soul and spirit abide. Stott continues to share, “The low level of Christian living is due, more than anything else, to the low level of Christian preaching. More often than we like to admit, the pew is a reflection of the pulpit. Seldom if ever can the pew rise higher than the pulpit.”²⁹ And there will be no chance of resuscitation in preaching without a prior resuscitation of conviction and calling. A preacher who is not convinced of God’s calling will do justice to himself, others and God’s kingdom by doing something else.

Information verses Transformation

Preaching to convey information is in fact teaching. It can be done in a detached, non-confrontational manner. Listeners who bring home a load of information may indeed be happy learners. Attending classes with the feeling of not learning anything useful could be the most

²⁸ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 92.

²⁹ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 115.

frustrating thing in a student's life. But the danger in a pastor's ministry is acquiesced to just that, as if members come every Sunday to "pay" for some patchy lessons to bring home. What makes preaching such a challenge is the decisional nature of God's Word. Once His message is given, you cannot remain neutral, you either accept His Word and are changed, or reject and be hardened in your spirit. Joseph Stowell said, "Preaching to effect transformation is hard work and risky business. Yet that is the whole point of preaching. An effective sermon is measured not by its polished technique but by the ability of the preacher to connect the Word to the reality of a listener's life."³⁰

The goal of discipleship is to be transformed into Christ's image. Paul compared such process to child birth, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19). The Christ that is formed in you must affect the totality of the being: the mind, emotion, intellect and will. Words given to the outer man are allowed to seep into the inner man. Superficiality and spiritual hypocrisy ensue when the message is allowed to remain just on the mental faculty. Putnam said, "Far too many of us assume that discipleship is merely the transfer of information leading to behavior modification. But discipleship, at heart, involves transformation at the deepest levels of our understanding, affection, and will by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God and in relationship with the people of God."³¹

Stowell commented, "While it is true that transformation is the work of the text under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and that it is He who will ultimately do the work of convicting,

³⁰ Keith Willhite and Scott Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, 125.

³¹ Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Exponential Series) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 49, Kindle.

comforting, healing, helping, encouraging, motivating, and transforming; it is also true that our messages are the conduit. We craft the instrument. He is the enablement. Our challenge is to do our best to create a useful tool in the Master's hand."³² This does not imply that the knowledge of the Word of God is not important. "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests...." (Hos 4:6). The first step of change in the biblical sense begins with the knowledge of the Word of God, but it must not stop there. True change comes only when God's people obey His Word. Obedience to God's word brings about change in the inner man, which in turn brings about change in behavior.

Scott Wenig goes one step further in pin-pointing how the Word of God effects change, "Getting the Bible into the sermon is only an elementary step. If preaching is to be transformational, it must address the needs, hurts, temptations, and trials of listeners. In the jargon of modern missiology, the sermon must be contextualized. As Robinson himself puts it, 'Sermons . . . are not addressed 'to whom it may concern'; they are delivered to men and women sitting at a certain time of day, usually on Sunday in a building with a zip code.'"³³

In 2 Tim 3:16-17, Paul listed four functions of the Word of God to effect change in believer's life. Stowell presented his thoughts on the above functions:

The first dynamic is teaching. Teaching in this context transitions listeners from their ignorance in old, false views that governed their previous life in the dark system of Satan to an educated understanding of kingdom truth about God, themselves, and the world in which they live.... The second objective is reproof. This is the confrontational work of God's Word, which reveals the shortfalls in our lives. The Word proclaimed should connect with hidden faults and expose the shameful secrets in inner lives....The third transformational dynamic is correction. This is the quiet, careful nudging of the Word of God to keep us on track. Whereas reproof deals confrontationally with willful sin in our

³² Keith Willhite and Scott Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, 144.

³³ Keith Willhite and Scott Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, 25-26.

lives, correction is a more subtle influence on our spiritual walk. It checks our proneness to wander...The fourth functional purpose of the Word of God is its ability to train us in righteousness. As a parent rears a child in what is right, so Scripture rears us through a maturing process toward living our lives according to the righteous standards of God. Since these are the divine intentions of the text, transformational proclaimers need to keep these purposes at the forefront as they prepare to communicate.³⁴

Characteristics of the Apostles' Preaching

J.G. Simpson related a story that a preacher was getting preachy and a child, wearied by a preacher's boring utterance, appealed to the mother, 'Mom, pay the man, and let us go home.' There is no lack of sarcasm on preachers. You can find it in comics and book catalogues. The Reverent White has an even ruder one, preaching is "a monstrous monologue by a moron to mutes."³⁵ A study of the sermons preached in Acts has discovered the apostle's sermons to be simple, uplifting, authoritative, and Christ-centered (see p. 4).

Stop Nagging, Start Preaching

Preach to express, not to impress

Wiersbe said, "If the purpose of preaching is to meet human needs, then that preacher is an impertinent thief who uses the pulpit to show off his homiletical or oratorical skills. Like John the Baptist, the preacher must decrease while the Savior increases (John 3:30). Jesus is the Word;

³⁴ Keith Willhite and Scott Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, 130.

³⁵ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 60.

the preacher is only the voice. There ought to be such simplicity about our preaching that people will say to themselves, 'I could have preached that sermon.' True art always hides itself."³⁶

There is often a danger in the act of preaching to impress, particularly the "big timers" in the congregation. The end result is not the exaltation of Christ, but ego; the object is not to make Christ known, but self. The pathos has overshadowed the logos of preaching. The formality has taken over the function. The form becomes the focus, and the content fades into the secondary. Lloyd Jones said, "When the form became more important than the substance, the oratory and the eloquence became things in and of themselves, and ultimately preaching became a form of entertainment. The Truth was noticed, they paid a passing respect to it, but the great thing was the form. I believe we are living in an age which is experiencing a reaction against that.... that has brought true preaching into disrepute because of a lack of substance and too much attention being paid to the form and to the presentation. It degenerates ultimately into what I have described as professionalism."³⁷ F.B.Meyer maintained that there are five considerations that must be met in every successful sermon.³⁸ These are summarized in the chart below.

Chart 3: Five Elements of a Successful Sermon

The reason	God's own appeal to the soul.
The conscience	That sense of right and wrong, that instant appreciation of rightness and wrongness which is the property of each moral being. It is the minister's main ally.

³⁶ W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe, *The Elements of Preaching: the Art of Biblical Preaching Clearly and Simply Presented* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986), 44.

³⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 22.

³⁸ See F. B. Meyer, *Expository Preaching*. (Hope Mills: Heritage Bible Fellowship, 2011), 100-106, Kindle.

The imagination	The gateway through which truth comes to the listeners
The emotions	The sensibility that needs to be awakened, the arctic ice and snow which have gathered over the green pastures of the soul that need to be melted.
The will	The end of all preaching is to obtain the assent of the will. People are not what they think or feel or imagine, but what they will. The will is the keeper of the citadel. It is our innermost self. Until that yields, nothing is yielded. Until that is surrendered, nothing is really gained.

Preach with a Goal in Mind

Preaching's highest goal is always the exaltation of Christ. There may be pastors who suggest behavioral change is the preacher's goal, but that it is the wrong goal. Behavioral and attitude problems may be the milieu or reason for a sermon's teaching, but the exaltation of Christ should always remain as its goal. When Christ is exalted as the Lord who reigns overall, listeners will yield to His sovereignty. And change will come as a result of that surrender. When the weaknesses of believers are targeted instead, they are often taken for a guilt trip. It is fruitless, for they are unable to change without the empowerment of the Spirit, and their unwillingness to surrender to His power. The available resources remain untapped. The apostle Paul knew what was right, but he found it hard to do as he wished (Rom 7:14-20). The answer is to let Christ take over. Ortberg says,

Our problem is that we think we have to close the gap through our own ingenuity. Some people think if they just try harder, they can close the gap between the me God made them to be and the me that currently exists. They think they are simply not being heroic enough in their spiritual effort....At the beginning of our life with God, we are aware of a gap between God and us, separation from God because of sin. We come to understand that we cannot bridge this gap by our efforts or good behavior. We cannot earn God's love and forgiveness; it comes only by God's grace....The only way to become the

person God made you to be is to live with the Spirit of God’s plan is not just for us to be saved by grace — it is for us to live by grace. God flowing through you like a river of living water.³⁹

Preach with Purpose

The preacher’s purpose is to proclaim “εὐαγγελίζω” the good news. Preachers are not giving good advice to people to live good life, but to proclaim to people the good news of salvation and transformation, to bid them to come and receive. MacNutt said, “Seeing lives transformed by God’s Spirit gives us the reason for the hope that we have (see 1 Peter 3:15). All of us who have experienced the Spirit’s transforming power now realize that preaching the Gospel message has changed. It used to be like giving good advice. But now it means proclaiming Good News.”⁴⁰ This good news is that your life can be different. Meyer said, “The highest point of sermon-utterance is when a preacher is possessed, and certainly, in the judgment of the writer, such possession comes oftenest and easiest to a man who has lived, slept, walked and eaten in fellowship with a passage for the best part of a week.”⁴¹

³⁹ John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), Loc. 577-606, Kindle.

⁴⁰ Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening: Reclaiming Our Lost Inheritance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), Loc. 3545, Kindle.

⁴¹ Meyer, *Expository Preaching*, 30.

Feed My Lambs, not Giraffes

While this writer was serving as a lecturer in a Bible college in Hong Kong, a lectureship was organized by one of the leading Seminaries, and a distinguished professor from a famed divinity school in Great Britain was invited as the speaker on the field of religious philosophy. The author attended the meeting, and was left awe-stricken. What left a lasting impression was the magnificent level of his philosophical concept, decorated with such aesthetic pomp of his English language. But to this day, the author was still trying to figure out what exactly he was trying to say. A very impressive talk was given indeed, but with no lasting impression, not in the spiritual sense.

Stott said, “To preach instead over people’s heads, is to forget who they are. As Spurgeon once commented, ‘Christ said, ‘Feed my sheep ... Feed my lambs.’ Some preachers, however, put the food so high that neither lambs nor sheep can reach it. They seem to have read the text, ‘Feed my giraffes.’ Although we must not overestimate our congregation’s intellectual capacity, we must not underestimate it either.”⁴²

On the other end of “feed my giraffe” is “feed my chicks,” where the simplest and low end nutrition food is given week after week, the result is under-nourished, half-grown weak chicks. The pastor’s outline of the sermons might be tweaked, but the content and stories are the same week in and week out. Scripture passages are read and grazed, but never expounded beyond the plainest coatings. Some stories have been heard twenty times. There was no fresh breath of the Word of God. Waggoner said, “God calls His leaders to regularly and passionately

⁴² Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 146-147.

preach and teach His revealed Word. Throughout this book, I have expressed my concern that too many pastors fail to provide biblically substantive sermons....it is difficult to deny that our churches are suffering from lack of biblical depth. It is impossible to think that this is not in part due to superficial preaching and teaching.”⁴³

Preachers are confronted with different worlds. Historically, there was the world in, and of the Bible; on the contemporary scene, there is the world before the Bible, which could be greatly different from the biblical world; not forgetting the world created by the Bible, the Church. There is yet a futuristic, uncertain and hostile world ahead. It will be naïve to underestimate the complexities of a preacher’s task. Tensions are bound to arise amidst all these “worlds”. The author can think of several tensions that preachers often confront:

There is the tension of selectivity. Where are the passages to choose from to exegete? Must both New and Old Testament passages be used every time? Where should the emphasis be, is it the timeless, unchanging truth or the timely need of the people? The “already,” or the “not yet?”

There is the tension of objectivity. What is preached, does it amount to exegesis or eisegesis? Is it accurate and truthful, or is it imaginative speculation? If every verse of Bible has only one sense, which is the original, intended sense of the Biblical author, how could one know exactly that it is the intended meaning?

There is the tension of integrity. Why the pastor preaches in such a tone? Is his sermon original, or is he parroting somebody? Is he trying to exalt law or extend grace (God’s Riches At

⁴³ Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), 308-309, Kindle.

Christ's Expense)? Should he use "thus says the Lord..." Or "I think...?" And by using "thus says the Lord," could he run the risk of contravening the third commandment?⁴⁴

There is also the tension of practicality. How should one design his sermon, how much form needs to be put in place for the content of the sermon? Is there too much of exegesis but too little application? All these go to show that a preacher is indeed facing a gigantic task.

David H. C. Read emphasized that "there are three component parts to preaching. The first is the proclamation of the gospel. The second is the teaching of what the believer needs to know of what God has revealed. The third is ethics which tell us how to live in relationship with others. He urged that we see each sermon we preach as having all three of these elements, although the main thrust will fall into one of these three categories."⁴⁵

Christ-centered, not Congregation

Meyer said, "The main burden of all our preaching, as we have seen, must be Jesus Christ, and the expositor questions often how much of Christ there is present and how he can make Him known."⁴⁶ A survey of the apostles' preaching in the book of Acts will find that their preaching repeatedly testified to the resurrection event. They were experiential preaching-preaching made alive and energized by their experience of the risen Lord. Their preaching was in fact their testimony with a salvific intent (Acts 2:14-36, 3:12-26, 4:8-12, 7:51-60, 10:34ff, 13:26-34, 17:1-4, 22-32, 18:1-28, 26:1-29).

⁴⁴ Exodus 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

⁴⁵ Dudit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, Loc. 8698-8701.

⁴⁶ Meyer, *Expository Preaching*, 33-34.

In this benefits driven “what’s good for ME” society, people in the streets do not really care what the Church “is,” their concern is what the Church “does” for me. By the same token, as far as the centrality of Christ in preaching is concerned, they may want to experience the works of Christ (such as answers to prayer, healing, sense of peace etc.) before they come to know the person of Christ. Christ as Savior for my sins to bring me to heaven when I die, is always more appealing than Christ as Lord of my life! Advertise “Evangelistic Meetings”, and the pastor may find that he needs to turn the evangelistic nature of the meeting into revival, simply because no non-Christian turns up. Advertise “Free Food Distribution”, and the pastor may find the queue longer than the New York welded train!

By using myriads of illustrations, Spurgeon stressed the importance of Christ in preaching, “A sermon without Christ, Spurgeon insisted, is a graceless sermon. Such a sermon, he maintained, has no good news to declare: A sermon without Christ, it is awful, a horrible thing. It is an empty well; it is a cloud without rain; it is a tree twice dead, plucked up by the roots. It is an abominable thing to give men stones for bread and scorpions for eggs, yet they do so who preach not Jesus. A sermon without Christ! As well talk of a loaf of bread without any flour in it. How can it feed the soul? Men die and perish because Christ is not there.”⁴⁷

There may be preachers today who “missed the mark” in preaching, and they feel comfortable about it, simply because they sense they need to be seeker and congregation friendly. They want to make people “feel good.” “Sin and salvation” is not an important topic to them, but the “abounding grace of God”, “how to live your good life”, and “how to be

⁴⁷ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. XIV (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1970, 1976, 1982), 467.

successful” are. Their motto: do not make people feel guilty by preaching on sin. Such feel good preaching will find, eventually, that the well dries up. Jesus said, “But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). Lawson warned, “God the Father honors the preaching that honors His Son. If our proclamation departs from this glorious focus, the blessing of God will be far from it. God will abandon the preaching that abandons Christ.”⁴⁸ Charles observed,

It is God’s will to save the lost and sanctify the church through faithful, biblical, Christ-centered preaching. Unfortunately, biblical preaching is not a high priority for many people looking for a church. Secondary things like music styles, ministry programs, and congregational prominence are often deemed more important than biblical preaching. In some instances, church shoppers consider a congregation’s available parking spaces before they ever consider that congregation’s doctrinal positions. Consequently, many pastors and churches—seeking either survival on one hand or success on the other—have compromised the centrality of preaching.⁴⁹

All preaching needs to point to Christ, only then can Christ’s promise, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28) be fulfilled. That being said, preachers must eventually ask the homiletical questions with the people in the pews in mind, and the best homiletical questions are always contextual. This leads the discussion to the following point.

Relevant, not Ranting

Some quotable quotes on preaching:⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Lawson, *The Kind of Preaching God Blesses*, 34.

⁴⁹ Charles, *On Preaching*, 15-16.

⁵⁰ “Quotes About Preaching,” Goodreads. <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/preaching?page=1> (accessed March 5, 2015)

“I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.” Richard Baxter.

“The backslider likes the preaching that wouldn't hit the side of a house, while the real disciple is delighted when the truth brings him to his knees.” Billy Sunday

“A man who first tried to guess 'what the public wants,' and then preached that as Christianity because the public wants it, would be a pretty mixture of fool and knave” C.S. Lewis

“A preacher shouldn't preach just to make you feel good. Then it's about the money not about the teaching. He should preach the truth because the truth shall set you free.” Alcurtis Turner

What has happened to preaching today? The situation is grave that the elderly Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner has termed it “the trouble with preaching”. This is “the failure to relate the Christian message to the everyday world. Many leave the Church because the language flowing from the pulpit has no meaning for them; it has no connection with their own life and simply bypasses many threatening and unavoidable issues.”⁵¹

Evangelicals hold a high view of Scripture. The Bible is the Word of God. It is authoritative and has eternal relevance. Robinson said, “Relevance shows up in style as well as content. While we speak the eternal message, it must be in today's words.”⁵² Stott reminds us of the importance of the issue of relevance when he said, “We need to remember the relevance of the gospel. A major reason for the contemptuous dismissal of some sermons is that people perceive them to be unrelated to real life as they know it.”⁵³ Honestly speaking, the issue of relevance ought to be the concern of everyone who sits in the pew fifty-two Sundays in a year. Whoever wants to waste precious time on things that do not relate to the fuss and buss of daily

⁵¹ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 44.

⁵² Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Loc. 2791-2792.

⁵³ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 59.

live? And who wants to keep coming back for something that means so little but demand so much?

Unfortunately, the subject of relevance has become an issue itself. To some Christian leaders, relevance comes to mean “blending in” with the popular “isms” of the day, an accommodation of secular relativism of some kind. To them, “caving in” is an art of “blending in.”⁵⁴ Some churches are fond of using the name “Full Gospel Church,” a good example will be Yoido Full Gospel Church, the largest church in the world. But the term “full gospel” never occurs in the Bible. If the “full” gospel is to be preached, according to 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” That means half of the preaching would include negatively, rebuking and correcting (what people may not want to, but need to hear). Plus the other positive half, teaching and training (what people like to hear, but more so, need to do). This is balance and relevance. Objectively speaking, relevance cannot possibly be determined by how a congregation feels, nor by what they like to hear.

Heartbreakingly, relevance has come to mean “makes me feel good” in some churches. Pastors tend to avoid many topics that they feel once preached, may offend certain members in the church. Simply because they fear these sheep may respond by their feet instead of their hearts coming Sunday, by walking to the church next door, and mean enough to rant “hi” from afar to you! Do not think that this is a joke. Proximity means convenient choices are readily available. It could also come to mean “members are always right.” There must be close to fifty churches of

⁵⁴ The issue of homosexuality is a good example. Cracks were already slowing developing in the United Methodist Church. See B.A. Robinson, “The United Methodist Church and Homosexuality: An Overview,” Religious Tolerance. http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_umc4.htm (accessed March 5, 2015).

all kinds within one mile radius of the church where the author is pastor in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, one of the most congested habitats in the States. It is not surprising then, that close to a third of congregants in cities are transferred members from other churches. Paul in addressing the Ephesians church elders said, “You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). This was relevance at its best. It concerns faithfulness to the message and not fearfulness to the members. Men pleasers have no bragging rights to talk about relevance.

In an effort to seek relevance, could the Church somehow gradually lose its calling to be the conscience, the salt and light of the world? Charles said, “I do not believe we have to make the Word of God ‘relevant.’ It already is. Our preaching should make the relevance of Scripture clear. We should preach with the conviction that the Bible is given to us for our transformation, not just information. Head knowledge without life change is spiritual hypocrisy. So work hard to impress upon your hearers the commands to obey, promises to trust, and truths to believe as they are revealed in the text.”⁵⁵

Horton, as quoted by Lawson wrote, “The church in America today is so obsessed with being practical, relevant, helpful, successful, and even well-liked that it mirrors the world itself.”⁵⁶ If that is what relevance means, Jesus would then be the most irrelevant person of His time. Just imagine how well-liked Jesus was to the Pharisees, who controlled the public opinion of His day.

⁵⁵ Charles, *On Preaching*, 52.

⁵⁶ Lawson, *The Kind of Preaching God Blesses*, 22.

There are risks involved in relevance. Paul’s experience in Athens was a fine example of the challenges relating to this issue, as an analysis of Acts 17:16-34 shows.

Chart 4: An Analysis of Paul’s Preaching in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

<p>16While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.</p> <p>17So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.</p> <p>18A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.</p> <p>19Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” 21(All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)</p> <p>22Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.</p> <p>24“‘The God who made the world and everything ... 25...he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26From one man he made all the nations.... 27God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him....28‘For in him we live and move and have our being....</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Synopsis</u></p> <p>16-17 Athens was obviously a heathen place. A great place for mission work indeed.</p> <p>18 What Paul preached (the good news) did not make sense to the local “isms”, not because of anything wrong with the message or messenger.</p> <p>19-21Paul was asked to be relevant, to speak their language, to present in a way that they can understand. He was challenged to adapt in his presentation (method/style).</p> <p>22-23 Paul had good pathos. He commended them for their religiosity. He also had good ethos, for he confronted them on their ignorance. He did not budge under pressure to accommodate/ please the hearers.</p> <p>24-28 Paul adapt his style to get the message across to them, moving from general (creation)to specific- the “unknown god” is in fact the creator God who created and sustained them.</p>
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<p>29“... we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image.... 30....but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.</p> <p>He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”</p> <p>32When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered.... 33At that, Paul left the Council. 34Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed....</p>	<p>29-31 Relevance had to lead to reality. They may not like it and be able to handle it. Reality was that they were sincerely wrong. God will judge them, and they need to repent. Why?</p> <p>For... Jesus Christ is Lord. He aroused.</p> <p>32-34To them, resurrection of the dead was just not possible. It was illogical. It was not a matter of <i>how</i> it was presented (relevance), but <i>what</i> was presented (content/reality).</p>
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Contextualization to missiologists is what relevance is to preachers. The difference lies in the recipients of the message. Missiologists would tell you that contextualization does not always mean effectiveness. The Catholic Church in Taiwan in reviewing her missions strategy in the 1970s, considered the issue of filial piety to be a hindrance to evangelism. In an effort to more effectively lead the Taiwanese to the Lord, they compromised, with the idea to contextualize the message. Beginning from 1971, the Catholic Church participated in the ancestor worship ceremony during the spring festival: burning candles, joke sticks, offered sacrifices and prayer publicly. At times, these ceremonies were held in the Catholic Church building itself, but the statistics of the Catholic Taiwanese two decades later has dwindled by thirty percent.⁵⁷

Stott gave a timely reminder, “I recognize that there are perils in the clamant demand for relevance. If we become exclusively preoccupied with answering the questions people are asking, we may overlook the fact that they often ask the wrong questions and need to be helped

⁵⁷ See Yan Chai, “Christianity and Chinese Ancestral Worship” (B.Th. Thesis, Penang: Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), 86. (In Chinese language).

to ask the right ones.”⁵⁸In attempting to strike a balance, he also gave a timely advice, “Why can we not combine each other’s concerns? Is it not possible for liberals to learn from conservatives the necessity of conserving the fundamentals of historic, biblical Christianity, and for conservatives to learn from liberals the necessity of relating these radically and relevantly to the real world?”⁵⁹

Practical Training Sessions on Delivering God’s Word

Faithfulness in Sowing

Paul was a perfect example of faithfulness in sowing, the book of Acts recorded his habit of going into the Jewish synagogue to reason with (17:2, 17; 18:4, 19), speak boldly to (18:26, 19:8) the Jews (see also 13:14-15, 42-43; 14:1; 17:1-2; 17:10, 18:7). It was not because the synagogue was an easy place to go to, on the contrary, the odds were often stacked against him. Such visitations often brought him and his team much persecution (13:42-46, 14:1-2, 17:1-10, 18:5-12). But Paul remained faithful, preaching Christ wherever he went. The true test of one’s faithfulness is during times of trials and persecutions.

Faithfulness to God

Stott said, “Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching, the only field in which the preacher is to labor.”⁶⁰ Paul in 2 Timothy chapter four admonished young Timothy, who may be facing struggles in his pastoral ministry,

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will

⁵⁸ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 139.

⁵⁹ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 144.

⁶⁰ William Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy* (?; Pavlik Press, 2012), Loc. 67-68, Kindle.

gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Faithfulness to God can be measured by how preachers faithfully deliver the Word of God as His messengers. Camp lamented, “Innumerable businesses, schools, and churches, all run by Christians, begin to assume that the final measurement of success is ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency.’ And yet ‘effectiveness,’ as if a quantitative ‘bottom line’ is the sole measure of ‘success,’ completely ignores the question of faithfulness: to what are we called, and to whom are we accountable?”⁶¹

At times, even the best of preachers may experience a sense of inadequacy, just as Isaiah protested, “Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” (Isa 53:1 NASB). It may be that the message is hard to understand or accept, faithful preachers will not be deterred by the irresponsiveness of the hearers. Dudit gave a timely warning, “Some pulpits are veering away from messages with heavy Bible content. This is a critical error, for unless the Bible is preached to this generation, the next will suffer from spiritual amnesia. The Bible, even in-depth doctrine, can be stylistically presented. Without it, even the present generation of church-goers will be Bible illiterates.”⁶²

The faithful servants of God will keep trusting God, and rely on the empowering of His Spirit, knowing that, “Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing

⁶¹ Lee Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 36, Kindle.

⁶² Dudit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, Loc.9924-9926.

his sheaves with him.” (Ps 126:5-6). Robinson said, “True preaching comes when the loving heart and the disciplined mind are laid at the disposal of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately God is more interested in developing messengers than messages, and because the Holy Spirit confronts us primarily through the Bible, we must learn to listen to God before speaking for God.”⁶³

Faithfulness to Text

What is faithful preaching? Charles pointed out that “Faithful preaching must explain the text—the words, grammar, context, background, and theological significance of the text. If your congregation does not leave with a better understanding of what the text means over and above what they can read for themselves, you have not done your job.”⁶⁴ Willhite said, “By the time the preacher reaches the homiletical phase, the message remains centered in the text, giving allegiance to the same intent...The message also focuses on the audience, using the strong imperatival language and speaking directly to the preacher’s current listeners. Hence, to use Warren’s terms, the message is ‘text-centered’ and ‘audience-focused.’ Throughout the process from exegesis to homiletics, the preacher maintains an integrity with the intent and speaks a relevant word to the contemporary listener.”⁶⁵

How God uses such fallen human beings to preach His sacred text often baffled many. In the church this writer used to be assistant pastor of in Hong Kong, the pastor had been hiding in sin while preaching for a couple of years, and yet the church grew. Eventually the sin was found

⁶³ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Loc. 323-325.

⁶⁴ Charles, *On Preaching*, 52.

⁶⁵ Keith Willhite and Scott Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, 18-19.

out. The scandalous news made headlines in local dailies and the pastor resigned. The less than satisfactory explanation on why the church grew during that time was due to God's grace and mercy. To put it more accurately, it was because of God's faithfulness to His Word. Charles said, "The importance of preaching rests in its content, not in its function. Our preaching is not the reason the Word works. The Word is the reason our preaching works. This is the biblical priority of pastoral ministry."⁶⁶

Faithfulness to Recipients of the Message

Every generation has the right to hear the gospel at least once. And thus preachers of the gospel message need to faithfully proclaim the good news of salvation to every generation. Each Christian in general, the preacher in particular, would be held responsible for his generation. Preachers hold the key to prepare this and next generation for soul harvest. Stott said, "Our responsibility as preachers now begins to emerge. This is not primarily to give our twentieth-century testimony to Jesus (most Western preaching today tends to be too subjective), but rather to relay with faithfulness to the twentieth century (and endorse from our own experience) the only authoritative witness there is, namely God's own witness to Christ through the first-century apostolic eye -witnesses."⁶⁷

Faithfulness to the recipients means preachers give their utmost to make the meaning of Scripture plain to the hearers. It means a lot of hard work needs to be put in, both in the exegesis and application of the text; in the analysis and synthesis of text; in attempting to understand what

⁶⁶ Charles, *On Preaching*, 16.

⁶⁷ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 98.

the text says and what does it mean (to hearers); and even the finding of apt illustrations.

Otherwise, the hearers, after hearing a full load of biblical data will point to the preachers and ask, “What’s the point?” Knowing what the text says is important, knowing “what it means to me” is even better. Faithfulness to the recipients also mean that the preachers would, through the faithful discharge of his ministry, is able to release God’s people to replicate what they are doing.

Stott in commenting on the diligence of preachers said,

It is tragic to see many making the very same mistake which the apostles made. They are extremely conscientious people. In fact, they respond to every conceivable need, and feel guilty if they are not readily available to anybody at any time. One cannot fault their dedication, their enthusiasm or their commitment. And indeed the pastor is called to serve people, as Christ himself did. But they have forgotten that there were times when Jesus himself sent the crowds away, in order to withdraw into the mountains to pray. They have also allowed themselves to be deflected from another priority task to which Christ has called them, namely the ministry of the Word. Their energies and zeal are being channeled in other directions. At the same time, usually without realizing it, they are inhibiting gifted lay leaders by denying them the opportunity to serve.⁶⁸

Fruitfulness in Discipling

In John 15, Jesus taught His disciples the importance of abiding in relationship fruit-bearing.

4Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁶⁸ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 206.

Fruitfulness in discipleship must not come before abiding relationship. The word “if” in verse five tells the condition for fruitfulness. “You remain *in* me and me *in* you” shows the direction of fruitfulness. It is from inside to outside. Internally, such intimate relationship with Christ through the Spirit bears the nine attributes of the fruit of the Spirit, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). These fruits when manifested in an individual’s life will attract people around him, thus bearing fruit externally. Frankly speaking, who wouldn’t want a life of love, joy, peace which characterizes the fruits of the Spirit? Eims said, “Our fruitfulness is the result of abiding in Christ. So fellowship with Christ must come first, for witnessing is not overwork but overflow. It is Christ through people to other people.”⁶⁹

Fruitfulness in the Bible is always seen in the plural. It speaks of multi-faceted description of fruit bearing. Take an apple as an illustration. You may not have given a thought that there are more than 7,500 varieties of apples worldwide!⁷⁰ With Red and Golden Delicious, Gala, Fuji, Granny Smith, Braeburn, Haneycrip, Cripps Pink, and Cameo as the top nine varieties of apples grown in Washington State. Though believers are disciples of Jesus Christ, they are of different varieties. Each person’s personality traits, upbringing, family religious background, education, and differing cultural elements need to be taken into consideration. Since people’s backgrounds are so diverse, adaptability of fruit bearers will determine the fruit bearing process.

In fact, that is the shortcoming of any discipleship system, in that it sees discipleship as a cookie-cutter process, where everyone goes through the same “production line.” Each person’s

⁶⁹ LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 56, Kindle.

⁷⁰ <http://www.bestapples.com/varieties/>

distinctive is not taken into consideration. But no two disciples are the same. The twelve that Jesus had chosen were from so diverse backgrounds that it was a miracle that they could follow the Lord together for three long years!

Song in his article, "Discipleship and Contextualization" writes,

Discipleship is often overlooked in the discussion of contextualization. Generally speaking, missiologists and missionaries pay attention to the initial communication of the gospel and try to ensure that their message is receptor-centered. When it comes to follow up and discipling new believers, however, the approaches taken are not as systematic or well-thought through. How does one disciple a Muslim background believer? How does one disciple a Buddhist background believer? How about those coming from the urban slums of Manila or from a Communist regime? If we are careful about how to package the Gospel message for the first-time hearers, then we should also be careful about how to package the follow-up and discipleship materials for those who desire to grow closer to Jesus.⁷¹

A Model for Multiplication

The final stage in disciple's life cycle is reproduction. With reproduction, life multiplies itself and continues. Reproduction becomes a reality when the apprentice becomes a model, where others can imitate him in following, learning and becoming like Christ. Smith said, "The good news of the gospel is not only for self-application; it is for proclamation. It is meant to be shared. A disciple follows Jesus, invites others to follow him, and then trains them how to repeat the process. Simply put, disciples are called to make, mature, and multiply disciples."⁷²

In closing this chapter, it needs to be emphasized that reproduction and multiplication are the biblical principles laid down to fulfill the Great Commission, without both of them, Great

⁷¹ Minho Song, "'Contextualization and discipleship: Closing the gap between theory and practice!'" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 30.3 (2006): 249-263.

⁷² Brandon D. Smith, *Make, Mature, Multiply: Becoming Fully-Formed Disciples of Jesus* (? : GCD Books, 2014), Loc. 152-155, Kindle.

Commission becomes mere rhetoric. Coleman stressed the importance of multiplication when he said, “It did not matter how small the group was to start with so long as they reproduced and taught their disciples to reproduce. This was the way his church was to win—through the dedicated lives of those who knew the Savior so well that his Spirit and method constrained them to tell others. As simple as it may seem, this was the way the gospel would conquer. He had no other plan.”⁷³ The seed of the Word of God will fall on good ground at some point, for God is faithful to His Word, and it will multiply thirty, sixty or hundredfold.

Chart 5: Every Disciple’s Journey in FHL

<p>Stage Two</p> <p>Months3-9</p>	<p>EXHORTATION</p> <p>Place: Cell</p> <p>Time: Week days</p> <p>And</p> <p>Place: Church</p> <p>Time: Wed. night</p> <p>Process: Building Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 201: <i>Evangelism</i>, using 3 “Win” strategy (Win to Self, Group, Christ). Practical focus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to share “Plan of Salvation” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (appendix 5) How to Follow-up New Believers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (appendix 6) Weekly Sunday Worship (principles) & Cell Meeting (applications) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (appendix 7) • Lesson 202: <i>Basics of Christian Living</i>, Part 2. Using <i>Handbook on Follow-up</i> by L.Ruthenpaul. Chinese Translation 茁茁 (12 lessons) • Lesson 203: <i>Core Doctrines</i>. Using AOG Resource Materials.⁷⁴ • Lesson 204: Strategic Serving
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⁷³ Robert E Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 102, Kindle.

⁷⁴ Core doctrine includes salvation, divine healing, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and second coming. When teaching, the outline will be translated into Chinese. See link http://ag.org/top/beliefs/our_core_doctrines/

	Result: Youth (1 Jn. 4:12-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Using Peter Wagner, <i>Your Spiritual Gifts</i>▪ Spiritual gift survey (appendix3)▪ Seminars with guest teachers
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Note: All lessons will be given outlines in Chinese, since FHL is Chinese speaking church.

CHAPTER 4

ENCOURAGEMENT

The Word “encouragement” is defined in this project as “the positive energy of joy and comfort that is channeled to Christian living as a result of connecting with Christ and the community of believers.” The Bible is full of stories of encouragement. Some of the marked examples include,

- Moses to Joshua. Moses provided Joshua with on the job training in leading the Israelites.
- Jesus to Peter. Peter failed terribly as a disciple of Jesus. He disappointed Jesus at crunch moments. Yet Peter rose to become the great leader of Jerusalem church because of our Lord’s love and encouragement (John 21)
- Paul and Timothy. Timothy was overcome with a sense of weakness, timidity and youthful inexperience. But Paul came alongside to encourage him, “Let no man despise your youth.... For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Tim 1:7).

A study of the book of Acts in different versions has found the following occurrences: encourage three times, encouraging seven times, encouragement five times, and encouraged eight times for a total of twenty three times. Amazingly, the word “discourage” in its various forms could not be found even once.¹ It was not that the early church and apostles never had any discouraging moments (e.g. John Mark leaving the first missions journey half way, Paul’s split with Barnabas, Paul’s experience in Athens, and others) Luke’s intention was very clear. He wanted to focus on the positive side of the ministry. The ministry of encouragement is significant

¹ Author Unknown, “Concordance,” Bible Hub. <http://biblehub.com/concordance/>(accessed March 16, 2015)

in the body life and ministry of the Church. The mission of saving lost souls is too important and pressing to give attention to such instances of ministry lows.

The apostle Paul in the beginning of his Christian ministry was greatly helped and encouraged by Barnabas (Acts 11:22-26). He caught the example and became a great encourager himself, as seen in his constant visits back to the churches that he established in his missionary journeys, to encourage and strengthen them in faith. At times when it was not possible for him to go, he would send his co-workers Timothy and Silas. Passages in Acts show just how important this ministry of personal encouragement was to Paul. After being released from jail, the first thing in Paul and Silas' mind was to go to the first converts in Philippi and they went to Lydia's house to encourage the people meeting there (Acts 16:40). After an uproar in Ephesus, Paul was mindful of the faith of the disciples and he called the disciples together and encouraged them (Acts 20:1). On his way from Ephesus to Greece, Paul visited churches and towns along the way and encouraged Christians (Acts 20:2).

Ogden explained, "Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well."² Hull sees encouragement as a "means to help or to exhort to a certain pattern of conduct," whereas the word comfort means to give confidence to a certain kind of behavior, but to do so by addressing

² Ogden, Greg, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 17, Kindle.

feelings. Encouragement stresses the appeal to a person's logic. Comfort focuses on the Christian's emotional dimension.³

Oswald Sanders once wrote, "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on Him being with them." In other words, they lived by faith and were sustained by grace. They appropriated the divine resources. Malphurs said, "The process of making disciples involves leading unbelievers to faith in Christ so that they become disciples (Christians). Disciple making must not end with a person's conversion, however. It's an ongoing process that encourages the believer (whether a new believer or an uncommitted Christian) to follow Christ and become more like him. When we become more like Christ, we mature as Christians, which is the goal of making disciples (Eph 4: 13– 15; Col. 1: 28)."⁴

Dave Earley likens disciple makers to cheerleaders or sergeants, whose voices woo the disciples to encourage them to move to the next level. "In many ways the role of the disciple maker is to be a human voice in the ear of the disciple, providing continual encouragement to go to the next level. Disciple makers are sergeants exhorting their troops to take the next hill. They are coaches challenging their best players to keep getting better."⁵

After all that's being said, the truth of the matter remains, that there are many discouraged Christians. On any Sunday, a pastor could witness different faces sitting in the pews. Some faces may look worried, some frown and looked angry, some heads may be down toward

³ See Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church: Leading a Body of Believers on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Loc. 2273-2275.

⁴ Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2009), Loc. 554-557.

⁵ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is . . . : How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), Loc. 2207-2209, Kindle.

the floor gazing, and some due to a sense of uneasiness, deliberately avoiding the trajectory of the preacher's vision. They are probably facing the pressures of life, the onslaught of trials and tribulations; or may be even the promises of God that they claimed but haven't seemed to work out as they had hoped. Some may be struggling with the unanswered prayers, sticky problems, unfulfilled visions and lurking doubts, all of these may be written on their faces, diffusing a mood of despondency and retreat. They surely need an encouraging message! Rabey, an author and international speaker on relationships sums it well, "Encouragement is not doing for someone what they can do for themselves. It is not removing pain from their lives. It is noticing them, feeling with them, and reminding them of the hope we have in Christ as we persevere in our walk with Him....The encouragement of others helps us move from fear and passivity to belief and action. It is not a panacea for our fears. It doesn't even eliminate them. But it does help us move forward even though we are uncertain."⁶

It certainly looks like the pastor's focus when nurturing God's people, on Sundays especially, needs to be invitational, informational and inspirational. Jesus promised rest (invitational), "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). He also stressed the importance of learning (informational) that leads to change, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...." (Matt 11:29a). And He encouraged those that came to Him that it was not beyond them (inspirational), "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:30).

⁶ Lois Mowday Rabey, *Discipleship Journal* (Issue 97, January/February), 1997.

Sources of Encouragement Found in Acts

In every culture, there will be encouraging or discouraging factors toward the preaching of the gospels. Much depends on how the Church of God responds, to see them as setbacks or challenges, crisis or opportunities. In the Chinese language, it is interesting to note that the word “crisis 危機” consists of two words, “危” means “danger, risk”, and “機” means “opportunity”. Thus, in every risky or challenging situation, opportunity lurks. If the Church of Christ perseveres in the midst of persecutions and rides the storm, she could evolve from the trials faith full and courageous, and able to embark on a journey of victory and growth. Foss in commenting on the church situation in the States said,

But times have changed. The church and its clergy have lost their privileged positions at the center of community life; hundreds of civic and social organizations compete for the time, talents, and finances of the citizenry; postmodern pluralism has relativized every belief and value system so that the faith is reduced to a commodity in the religious marketplace. For all too many today, Christianity is at best parochial and quaint (read irrelevant) and at worst dangerously intolerant. And for most in our culture, religion of whatever brand has been reduced to the private sphere of life. The gospel as public faith, sadly, seems a contradiction in terms. In the Protestant explosion of the 1950s, membership implied obligation. In today’s cultural context, membership has come to imply prerogatives.⁷

The author has served in various capacities involving pastoring churches and teaching in Bible schools in different countries since graduation from Bible College: in Malaysia (1982-88), Taiwan (1988-1991), Hong Kong (1991-1999), and United States (1999 till present). Many times in conversations with friends in the ministry from various countries, the author was asked what seemed like an embarrassing question, “Which is the comparatively easiest place to serve the

⁷ Michael W. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* (National Book Network, 2009), 14-15, Kindle.

Lord?” It was hinting as if the writer was moonlighting over here! Honestly speaking, that country has not been found. And there is no easy place to serve. The author finds job descriptions as a Chinese pastor in different countries remarkably identical. Preaching, teaching, counseling, visitations, soul care, resolving members’ family problems and disputes, and etc. are similar no matter where one pastors. There may be subtle cultural differences, but the contrast is insignificant. The challenge lies more in how God’s servants grapple with the external factors. Listed below are the encouraging and discouraging factors as experienced by the author in different ministry settings.⁸ As can be seen, they all have advantages and disadvantages.

⁸Disclaimer: These are the author’s general observations, and do not mean to be critical of any one or system.

Chart 6: A Comparison of Serving in Different Countries

Country	Encouraging Factors	Discouraging Factors
Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members submissive to pastor • Members love pastor • Demands on Pastor not high • More zealous/involved believers • Multi-cultural ethnicity/food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfair government policies towards Churches • Low pay/benefits comparatively • Hot weather • Subservient status of Chinese speaking churches to English
Taiwan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly and hospitable people • Submissive members • Respect elderly • Members love/care for pastor • Weather • Good Infrastructure • Fair government policy to Churches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steep folk religions hard to break • Noisy political/ religious occasions • Compliant culture (“yes” could mean “no” behind your back) • Lack of national security (threat from neighbor China) • Christian brain drain
Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient government system • Good affordable healthcare • Very convenient everything • Weather • There’s crowd everywhere (for missions and evangelism) • Reasonable pay • Door step to China (1.4 billion missions opportunity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive city • Overcrowded (most densely populated nation on earth) • Quite demanding membership • Too many people everywhere • Materialistic/ strong consumerism • Divisive society • Detached people to people relationship • Air and water pollution
USA (New York)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and justice society • Land of religious opportunities • Multi-cultural society/ delicacies • Clean free air and clean water • Good infrastructure • Beautiful country with nice people (mostly) • Fast becoming a great mission field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowding of NYC churches • Insurance everything • NY city traffic, congestion • Picky congregants • Pastoral expectations high • Crowded/smelly Chinatown • Tough church parking and odd service time • Less than submissive congregation

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the going was rough for him. In places he just went, he was unwelcomed, persecuted. In 2 Corinthians 11, he related his drenched experiences,

23I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29Who is weak, and I do not feel weak?

Yet he refused to let anything that happened to him discourage him from his calling.

Despite his circumstances, he expressed hope and confidence in God’s provision, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Cor 4:16–17). In the midst of all these trials and persecutions, he could have become discouraged and disoriented. Providentially, Jesus appeared to Paul in a vision when he arrived in a new city called Corinth to encourage him. His word to him was that he should not be afraid, for he would be protected and not harmed (Acts 18:9–10). Botsford said, “These words, born out of persecution and hardship, became a means of encouraging fellow believers in their journey of faith. Paul turned his focus inward and upward—inward to where God was daily renewing him, and upward to where his sufferings for Christ’s sake were continually increasing his eternal reward. With these words, he exhorted the believers at Corinth to do the same.”⁹

⁹ J. D. Barry and M. S. Heiser, Eds. *Faithlife Study Bible (Logos Bible Software)* (WA: Bellingham, 2012). “Listening to the Voice of Encouragement.”

We see in Acts the community of believers found encouragement in God and among the body of believers. The sources of encouragement include: the Holy Spirit, also called Comforter's indwelling presence (Acts 9:31, John 14:4, 16:7), inspiring preaching (Acts 15:31-32, 16:40, Titus 2:15, 2 Tim 4:2), sincere fellowship or community (Acts 2:41-47), words of affirmation (20:1, 16:40), miracles (16:40, 20:12), and continual growth (2:47, 9:31, 16:5). All these contributed to the early church as a community filled with overriding joy (2:46, 13:52, and 15:31).

Holy Spirit the Comforter

“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.”(Acts 9:31)

What does it mean by encouragement “by” the Holy Spirit? (Most translations have “of”, e.g. HCSB, NASB, ESV). One thing we know, true encouragement comes by the Spirit, who is the Spirit of comfort. He is the Comforter. The context of this verse was about Paul preaching Christ crucified. People didn't trust and believe what he said. He was just persecuting believers not too long ago, and now he's clamoring for what these people believed in. The persecutor now became the persecuted. So the disciples in Jerusalem sent Paul away (may be to get rid of him?), back to his home town Tarsus. After that, the church surrounding Jerusalem enjoyed peace, was encouraged, and grew. Missiologists may argue that persecution spurs the church of God forward. This passage says otherwise. What seems more important is the other element that was shown in that verse, the fear of the Lord. Without the fear of the Lord, the church will not grow in any environment, be it persecuted or peaceful.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon gives the following definition to the word “παράκλητος”:¹⁰

1. One who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant; an advocate.
2. One who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor.
3. A helper, succorer, aider, assistant; so of the Holy Spirit destined to take the place of Christ with the apostles (after his ascension to the Father), to lead them to a deeper knowledge of gospel truth, and to give them the divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom: John 14:16, 26; John 15:26; John 16:7.

Barclay gave the historic sense of the word comforter (παράκλητος), “We often call the Holy Spirit the Comforter. That word goes back to the translation by John Wycliffe, made in the fourteenth century; but in Wycliffe’s day it had a different meaning. It comes from the Latin *fortis*, which means brave; the Comforter is the one who fills people with courage and with strength.”¹¹

“Παράκλητος” is translated as "counselor, advocate, helper, encourager" in various English translations. Unfortunately, no one word is adequate to capture the various nuances of the term. It literally means "one called alongside." The Christian life can be discouraging when stretched between the “already” but “not yet,” when battling our inner demons and the hostile world. Christians need comfort and strength to carry on. That’s when the Spirit comes alongside, urging, cheering and instilling hope to press on. Wilkins said, “Now that we are united to Christ

¹⁰ Author Unknown, “Thayer's Greek Lexicon,” Bible Hub. <http://biblehub.com/greek/3875.htm> (accessed March 16, 2015).

¹¹ William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles (New Daily Study Bible)*(Westminster: John Knox Press, 2010), 11, Kindle.

through the indwelling Spirit of God, he works from within to change us, empower us, and encourage us in every circumstance.”¹²

It is not uncommon for those serving God, those embracing such attitude “it’s more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) to find themselves drained spiritually, emotionally, and physically. It was reported that there are more than 1,700 pastors who leave the ministry every month. This staggering number includes some of the brightest and most inspiring pastors in the country. And standing at the top of the ten reasons given is discouragement.¹³ Hull said,

Mass media has created an expectational anxiety among clergy and congregation alike. This change, which has occurred in the last thirty years, has transformed the local church pastorate into the most difficult job in Christianity. The remedy is for pastors to take God’s encouragement to heart. Don’t turn from the task! Move ahead; God’s hand is upon you. God didn’t promise Paul he would never be attacked but that the attacks would not harm him (Acts 18: 10).¹⁴

God’s Word

Acts 15:30 So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. 31The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. 32Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.

Acts 20:1When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia.2He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece.

¹² Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 129, Kindle.

¹³ Tim Peters, “10 Real Reasons Pastors Quit Too Soon” Church Leaders. http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/161343-tim-peters_10_common_reasons_pastors_quit_too_soon.html (accessed Mar17, 2015).

¹⁴ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, Loc.2084-2098.

A study of the preaching, teaching and conversations in Acts led to the discovery that the preaching of the apostles in Acts was very much uplifting and encouraging. Even if rebuking of sins was involved, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, God made sure that the people knew that he was the cause behind these unexplainable happenings. God's people having witnessed the Lord's hand, were encouraged to live consecrated lives that befit the name "disciples of Christ."

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul exhorts Timothy, "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction." These three words "correct, rebuke and encourage" cover a wide range of word-oriented activity. Correct does not imply the person is inherently unteachable. Correction can be done in gentleness, in a congenial environment. However, a leader employs rebuke when he addresses a problem of blatant, unconfessed sin. The major portion of word activity involves encouraging, since the majority of people need some gentle correction and a lot of encouragement. All these word-oriented activities are legitimate discipling."¹⁵

There need to be a tone change in the church today, from the pulpit to the pews. Too much negativity and rebuke has been practiced behind the pulpit. Believers who are bruised and bullied in the work places often find themselves on the receiving end of further rebuking and correcting for failure to live as they ought to, when they come to the worship services. They suffer from an inferiority complex, for they are bombarded with the message that they are no good: in work, in the family, in Church and before God. Such situations give them no strength and hope to change, even if they want to! Preachers need to preach positive messages of encouragement. This brings a better chance of success in transformation than nagging tones. This

¹⁵ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, Loc. 2738-2742.

does not mean preachers should change their message. The gospel is good news of salvation from sins in Jesus Christ. For a person to be converted, the first change is his attitude towards sin, where he sees himself as a sinner worthy of death, but Christ offers hope apart from sin. However, the tone of the message can be changed to that of a compassionate, gracious high priest instead of an unyielding, harsh judge. Stott offered a good commentary on this, “Jesus never concealed the fact that his religion included a demand as well as an offer. Indeed, the demand was as total as the offer was free. His offer of salvation always brings with it the requirement that we obey him. He gave no encouragement at all to those who applied to become his disciples without thinking it through. He brought no pressure to bear on any enquirer. He sent irresponsible enthusiasts away with nothing.”¹⁶Oswald Sanders once wrote, "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on Him being with them." In other words, they lived by faith, sustained by grace. They appropriated the divine resources.

The Fellowship of Believers

Discipleship is individualized, in that Jesus calls individuals to follow Him. In Matt 4:18-19, Jesus called Peter and his brother Andrew, and in verse 21, James and his brother John. They immediately left their fishing nets and boats to follow Him. Discipleship is also a collective endeavor, in that after individuals responded to Christ’s call, they are joined by the Holy Spirit into a community of believers. Barna said, “Discipleship must be done in community rather than

¹⁶ John Stott, *Basic Christianity (IVP Classics)*(Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Loc.1714-1717, Kindle.

in isolation. Other people provide a level of objectivity, accountability, creativity, and encouragement that we cannot muster by ourselves.”¹⁷

Luke is the only gospel writer that recorded the evolvement of this community of believers, from Christo-centric focus in the Gospels, to pneuma-centric in Acts. Spirit-empowered discipleship is essentially pneuma-centric discipleship. Jesus was with the disciples in the Gospels, and He was with them through the Spirit in Acts. Wilkins said, “As we study the record of the Gospels and Acts, we must be prepared to challenge the self-centered individualism of our day and to recognize that Jesus calls us to community. We need each other. The challenges we face in our lives as disciples of Jesus are formidable; without community they become impossible.”¹⁸ Even individualism is warned against in evangelism. Particularly among many of the Asian and Middle-Eastern people, many live in a closely knit kinship based community. By converting one without influencing the family towards the same process is termed “extraction evangelism” by Paul Watson, who said,

Changing our evangelistic mindset isn’t easy. Extraction evangelism is ingrained in Western Christian culture. Yet extraction evangelism techniques create too many barriers to the Gospel to result in church planting movements. Period. They may even inoculate people against receiving the Gospel. There is not one single example, to my knowledge, of a group that uses extraction evangelism as their primary strategy ever catalyzing a church planting movement. Community evangelism, on the other hand, is part of catalyzing church planting movements around the world: even as you read this post! If church planting movements are our goal, we have to make the jump from extraction thinking to community thinking.¹⁹

¹⁷ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 2013), 109, Kindle.

¹⁸ Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 266.

¹⁹ Paul D. Watson, “Extraction Evangelism and Community Evangelism,” David L. Watson. <http://www.davidlwatson.org/2008/02/21/extraction-evangelism-and-community-evangelism/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

Salvation that comes to an individual at the heavy price of alienation from his family members and relatives is depressing and evangelistically unwise.

The Gospel records and Acts showed that the plural form “disciples” is normally used. Such usage stressed an important aspect of discipleship that it is done within the context of community. The church is that community. The book of Acts gave an account of the historical and didactic orientation of this community. Malphurs stressed, “Nowhere does the Bible encourage ‘lone ranger’ Christians. As the church, we need one another. Discipleship is a group process, involving all the body of Christ. We cannot grow and mature alone.”²⁰

The word fellowship (Greek “κοινωνία”), according to Strong’s concordance, means “what is shared in common as the basis of fellowship (partnership, community).”²¹ It is the sharing of the new life found in Christ, to love and to care, of journeying together, with the purpose of building up one another. Howard Hendricks, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary who went to be with the Lord in 2013, taught that every believer should foster three relationships in their life: ²²

- A Paul—an older and wiser believer from whom you can learn
- A Barnabas—a friend who teaches, encourages, and holds you accountable
- A Timothy—a young believer [believers] in whom you are investing

These three relationships give permission to others to speak into your life, and, at the same time, allow you to share in others’ lives. Solomon of old said, “Iron sharpens iron, and one

²⁰ Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, Loc.690-691.

²¹ Author unknown, “2842 Koinónia,” Bible Hub. <http://biblehub.com/greek/2842.htm> (accessed March 17, 2015).

²² Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 78.

man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). Wilkins quoted Charles Talbert who said “On the one hand, discipleship consists of being molded by a tradition, being empowered by an experience, and being a participant in a community. On the other hand, it involves both a way to walk and a mission to fulfill. Such is what we find in the community of faith in Acts, and such is what our model becomes for today.”²³

The book of Acts shows how this community life is to be lived out. Acts 2:46 says “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”

TOGETHERNESS. The early church “meets together”. Discipleship must be done in comradeship, not in isolation before TV sets. The community serves as the motivator as well as the mirror in discipleship.

The church therefore is a community of disciples composed of all those who have believed on Jesus for salvation. In our day we have lost that perspective. Often people of the church feel as though discipleship is optional, that perhaps it is only for those who are extremely committed, or else it is for those who have been called to leadership or ministry. We must regain the perspective of Acts: To believe on Jesus draws a person into community, a community that defines its expectations, responsibilities, and privileges in terms of discipleship.²⁴

INTIMACY and SINCERITY. The early church shared meals with “glad and sincere hearts”. “Community,” exhorted Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “is what we share in Christ” and is not something we create. Community is created by God; we are called to participate in this reality.²⁵

²³ Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 257.

²⁴ Wilkins, *Ibid.*

²⁵ Bill Donahue and Greg Bowman, *Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders: A Practical Guide for Those Who Lead and Shepherd Small Group Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), Loc.372-373, Kindle.

PERSISTENCE. The early church met every day without fail. They did have good reasons to not meet frequently for they were multi-roles persons just as people today. In view of the forecasted bad weather (snow, storm, polar vortex), the author has on several occasions been asked, “Can we cancel the meeting tonight?”

LOVE. The early church shared the love feast together. They loved each other with sincerity. There could be no community without loving one another. Such love is expressed in acceptance, affirmation and forgiveness. Burke said,

God wants to lead us to be a healing community as simple, ordinary people learn to accept, forgive, encourage, and walk with each other no matter how ugly or messy it gets. We have to courageously follow God’s lead to bring our junk into the light of community, but when we do, it makes it safe for others to do the same. Suddenly we aren’t alone in it, and God does something through us together that we can never do for ourselves.²⁶

Growth in Numbers

Biblical discipleship carries the idea of growth and multiplication. The Great Commission necessitates that. Growth and expansion is a good motivator to any organization or movement. Since attending this school, the author has witnessed a very impressive expansion of the school. There was not one time in new student orientation that this message was not hammered upon. No one in Liberty University will argue against the good that comes with such expansion! Success breeds confidence and brings encouragement. However, growth has both a visible and invisible component. Just as in discipleship, as God’s people rejoice in what unfolds

²⁶ John Burke, *Soul Revolution: How Imperfect People Become All God Intended* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 113, Kindle.

before their eyes, attention must constantly be given to the realm of the unseen, the inner quality and character that sustain the external. That which is external was built with a price, but that which is internal (character) is priceless.

Discipleship seems to carry a sequence: spiritual growth presupposes numerical growth. It is progressive and does not have to be mutually exclusive. Any organization or organism that ceases to grow internally tends to truncate its external growth. It eventually stagnates and deteriorates. Death looms.

The early church found great encouragement in growth. Different words were used to describe this multi-faceted growth: added, increased, grew and multiplied; with both instances in Acts 12:24 and 19:20. The growth (spread) of the Word was in the context of numerical growth as can be seen below.

Added

2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

5:14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

11:24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought (ESV, HCSB “added”) to the Lord.

Grew

4:4 But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

16:5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Increased

6:1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing....

*9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it **increased** in numbers.*

Growth in the Word and numbers

6:7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

12:24 But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.

19:20 In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. 19:18 Many of those who believed....

Here comes the more sober discussion. For the church/disciples to grow, the preacher/pastor himself as a disciple must grow. Donahue said, “As you empower and encourage leaders, you are giving ministry into their hands, placing them on the front lines of effective shepherding. It is a ministry of reproduction.”²⁷ Babies and half-grown people cannot reproduce, for they are not yet ready. There is no doubt about it, in order to reproduce, pastors must continue to grow spiritually, grow in God’s Word, and the anointing (presence and power) of the Spirit. Sadly speaking, many pastors ceased to grow after they graduated from the Bible College. The last day of the final exam was the final book day. They ceased to read, grew lax in prayer, and gradually became self-reliant. Such stunted-growth preachers in church are hindrances to church growth. Malphurs said it well, “The church can provide a process of discipleship only for those individuals who are willing to be a part of such a process, whether they are many or few. The church is to come alongside and help.”²⁸

Hull listed six steps in the teaching of Jesus which can effect growth:²⁹

²⁷ Donahue and Bowman, *Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders*, Loc. 393-394.

²⁸ Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, Locations 671-673.

²⁹ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 243-244, Kindle.

- Tell them what.
- Tell them why.
- Show them how.
- Do it with them.
- Let them do it.
- Deploy them.

Discouraging Factors Found in Faith Hope Love

Encouragement is fuel for the soul. With proper encouragement, most people can go the second mile in their journey. Rich DeVos, the founder of Amway, considered "How to be a cheerleader" as his greatest management skill. "The word encouragement speaks of coming alongside another and giving that person courage. Leadership is a fearful thing. Everyone needs someone drawing alongside, saying, 'You can do it. Don't quit.' We all need someone who believes in us. Everyone needs encouragement."³⁰

One way to encourage is to effectively deal with the discouraging factors. For the purpose of this project, the author has done a ministry survey of the FHL church (see appendix 12A). The survey has twenty-six items directly related to the ministry of FHL. The questionnaires cover five main areas: spirituality, leadership, soul care, ministry and facility. Out of about forty forms distributed, twenty two returned their questionnaires. The surveys returned shows the top three most encouraging and discouraging factors (See also appendix 12).

Top 3 Discouraging Factors (weak areas)

1. Church Publicity 55%
2. Church Parking 42%
3. Worship Time 41%

³⁰ Dave Earley, *Turning Members Into Leaders* (Houston: Cell Group Resources, 2004), Loc. 442-445, Kindle.

Top 3 Encouraging Factors (strong areas)

1. God's Word 68%
2. Pastoral Care 68%
3. Praise and Worship 67%

The preaching of God's Word, and pastoral care top the list of encouraging factors. Praise and worship has also done well. These three almost stand at a tie. Spirituality and ministry clusters also seem to be quite strong from the feedback received. Appendix 12 presents the details of the encouraging factors.

On the other side of the spectrum, church publicity ranks as the top discouraging factors. FHL has a sign board to advertise church services. She was not given space for a proper notice board in church. She uses email and text messages to convey news and messages. The Sunday bulletin is only printed twice in a month. Announcements before service used to be given verbally. Cell members use "Whats app," "We-chat" and "Facebook" to connect to the church in addition to the above.

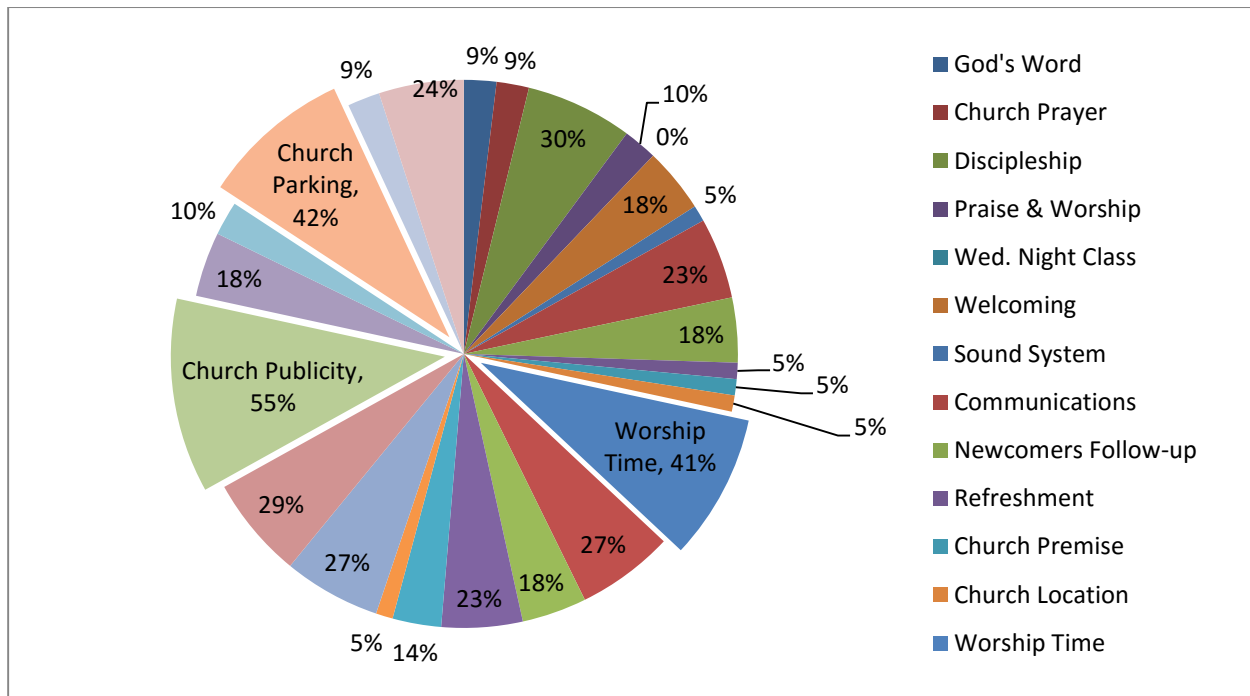
Possible reasons for the discouragement in publicity may be due to the following:

- There is no notice board for posting notices.
- The Sunday announcement is given right before the start of the service. And it used to be given only verbally. The church secretary is the one making announcement.
- A lot of information is conveyed through electronic means. The older generation and some who don't use the chat-room may be left out during the process.
- Sunday bulletin is only printed twice in a month, for it was discovered that many don't really make full use of it.
- Pastor's vision and ideas are not clearly communicated.

The next discouraging factor is church parking, where 42% find it problematic. The normal parking time for members driving to church is about 15 minutes. Once there was a nice couple trying to come to church for a second time, she was driving round the area looking for parking (on the streets). After forty minutes, she had enough and drove home. She never came back since. Honestly speaking, finding a parking space in New York City is always a challenge. Finding parking in Chinatown is a cruel space hunt. Physical clashes due to parking related issues are not uncommon. FHL is located at the hub of Chinatown, Brooklyn. People converge here on Sunday for a hundred reasons. Most of them have to find parking on the streets, where the local residents are taking up most of them.

Forty-one percent of the people find worship time at 3:45 pm on Sundays a challenge. It is siesta time. Some members complain they practically cannot do anything else when they come to church, the time is neither early nor late. FHL is renting from a Spanish church, which has a dwindling congregation of about twenty five persons. Building conditions are quite run down, as many buildings here are. She tried two years back to negotiate a better time, would consider meeting as early as nine in the morning, but failed. Many find the meeting place too hot in the summer and too cold during the winter. The church is trying hard to get its own building so as to meet at a better time and location. More than thirty buildings have been viewed in the past two years. A building costing \$1.1 million was almost secured, but failed at the last moment.

Chart 7: Discouraging Factors in FHL



Several others that have more than twenty five percent of the people consider as weak include visitation (27%), youth ministry (27%), and discipleship (30%). Soul winning and church vision has 23% and 24% respectively. Most others have mediocre performance.

Steps to Rectify the Situation

Publicity

- Secure space for a notice board in the sanctuary, somehow.
- Consider moving the announcement time to after preaching, before end of the service. In that case, everyone will get to hear the announcement. It can be given with the aid of PowerPoint (which FHL is doing now). The pastor may reinforce on those considered as the most important or pressing news.

- On communication with those not familiar with electronic gadgets, paper announcement needs to be more heavily utilized, so that church news may be brought home.
- At the moment the bulletin is done twice a month. This makes the bulletin reception worse. It needs to be done once a week. The right personnel shall be recruited (already earmarked) to enrich the content of bulletin to enhance its readability.
- Pastor's vision not clearly committed. He will incorporate more of vision casting in his weekly sermons. FHL Church will consider printing and distributing book marks concerning church vision and core values soon. Annual calendar and fridge magnet are other considerations.

Parking

- This is a real challenge. As there are really limited parking space. Until the church relocates, there will not be much that can be done. However, FHL members can:
- Pre-arrange with the Spanish church members who drive to church, so that their parking spots can be pick up by FHL members as they leave after Spanish service. This may sound selfish and unfair to the public but that's one way to work towards church advantage. This idea shall be brought up to their attention.
- A survey of the residential housing surrounding the church shall be conducted to ascertain if there are private unused parking lots available for Sunday leasing for a minimal fee. In this way, connections can be established with neighbors as well.

Worship Time

- FHL is considering renegotiation with the Spanish church board to see if morning worship time from 9 till 11 could be arranged. Their worship starts at one pm. And they supposedly have Sunday school going on from 9 till 11. But they have very few kids. Things might have changed now.
- If they will not consider FHL's request, the option left will be to relocate away from Chinatown, or offer to buy the building. There are options available.

- Purchase a building. FHL has saved up a good down payment. She almost got a building last year but failed at the last hurdle due to failure in getting the loan needed. She could consider scaling down on the size of the first building, in that way, a building can be secured, and meeting time changed.

For other issues that deserve attention, such as visitation, youth ministry, discipleship, and soul winning, since they are all ministry oriented issues, when the 4 “E” principles of this project is faithfully executed, much of the shortcomings can be resolved. FHL needs to positively reinforce Christ-like attitudes and behavior through encouragement. How should proper encouragement be given? McCallum gave his advice, “Even when disciples take positive action, you shouldn’t always encourage them. The most important time to encourage is at the beginning. When someone first tries to move out in some way for God, never miss the chance to encourage. But as they become more regular in their movement, you will actually get more response if you only encourage periodically.”³¹

The survey highlighted the encouraging and discouraging factors of FHL. These will be further looked into in the coming board meetings. The vision of building a church based on the four “E” principles must not be forgotten. When this is achieved, she will be a discipleship model church. Building people stands as a higher priority than building a building. As pastor, his role will be to continue giving encouragement, so that she can move towards her goals. A variety of encouragement styles can be used: letter from pastor, cards, Sims text, personal notes, periodic public recognition, verbal praise, awards, token gifts, and meals together. A leadership huddle is

³¹ Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Discipleship: Mentoring Others Into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership* (St. Paul: New Paradigm Publishing, 2012), Loc. 3042-3055, Kindle.

planned three times in a year. It will be a great time of fellowship and joy, sharing of struggles and successes, and will deepen the existing bond of leaders.

Encouragement is a vital ingredient in the discipling process. Hulford offered some practical tips on how to do it. It may be long, but very helpful,

- Discover the vision of the person you're discipling. Compliment her progress toward her goals.
- Recognize small steps toward progress.
- Notice heart attitudes rather than surface actions. For example, "I really appreciate your servant heart" is more meaningful than "Thanks for setting the table."
- Write a short note of encouragement.
- Compliment your disciple in front of someone he respects.
- Celebrate successes. Plan a lunch out to celebrate a new job, passed test, or bad habit conquered.
- Respond to setbacks with a reminder that you know the path is hard, but you believe in your friend's ability to succeed. Point her to God.³²

The Need for Upward Focus

Lying at the very center of every disciple's life (being) and ministry (doing) is worship of God. Discipleship is worshipping God who is worthy, worthy of our life and service. Discipleship is also about molding lives, molding lives to be like Christ. Without Christ at its center, discipleship loses its focus and disintegrates. Ogden said, "Two factors make for vital worship of God: the presence of God and the God who is present....In other words, authentic worship of God is a function of our affirmation that he is here and our understanding of who he is. The vitality and relevance of our worship is directly related to our view of God."³³ A correct view of God is necessary to the practice of authentic discipleship.

³² Barbara Hope Hulford, *Discipleship Journal – Issue 93 July/August*, 1996.

³³ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 57.

Christ is always the disciples' focus. Whatever may be the situation, there may be ups and downs in their journey towards heaven. They know where to look for strength and encouragement. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb.12:1-2). They may lose some battles, but they will go on to win the war, for God's grace is sufficient. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9).

Christ is the disciples' highest ambition. Bonnke said, "Our highest ambition should be to exalt and glorify the name of Jesus. That is the place where the Holy Spirit most loves to be. Jesus is our song, our reason for coming together, and where He is, the Holy Spirit is."³⁴When Christ is lifted up, He will manifest His beauty and majestic splendor, like a peacock that attracts when he opens up. Christ's anointing manifested through His disciples always draws people. Like a magnet drawing iron dust, He draws people to Himself. When disciples focus on Him, dwelling in His presence and gazing at His majesty, they will always get encourage internally.

Paul hit against the wall during his time at Athens. In terms of pathos, he was called "babbling" (Acts 17:18) by the Athenians; in terms of logos, he was "talking strange ideas" (v.20); in ethos, he was being sarcastically "sneered at...we want to hear you again" (v.32). Dejectedly, he went to Corinth, he continued to reason with the Jews, trying to persuade them to

³⁴ Reinhard Bonnke, *Holy Spirit - Revelation and Revolution* (E-R Productions, LLC, 2010), Loc. 1715-1717, Kindle.

Christ (18:4). He was abused. The gentle sarcasm of Athenians was followed by abusive rebuke of the Jews. God knew how to encourage His people. Just as Paul was sinking low, fearing what might come next, the Lord appeared to Him, “One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent” (Acts 18:9). Evidently, he got encouraged when he looked up, and pressed on for a successful ministry in Corinth. His thanksgiving in 1Corinthians 1:4-9 confirmed it.

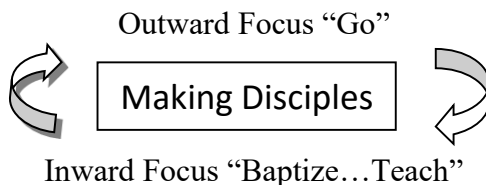
The Need for Outward Focus

Foss in his work *Power Surge* has done a tremendous job in pointing out the flaws of the membership model in most protestant churches in the States, “The Protestant church has focused on itself—for that is what the membership model requires—and our core beliefs are not served by that orientation. Our core beliefs turn us outwards, not inwards. The membership model of the church turns us inwards and not outwards.”³⁵

Why is keeping an outward focus important? It’s because the Great Commission begins with an outward focus, “Go”. Having gone, the church makes disciples. Afterward, the focus turns inwards, “baptizing....teaching” are the means to make them healthy disciples. But then it propels the disciples to continually look outward again to reproduce this process.

³⁵ Foss, *Power Surge*, 20.

Chart 8: Outward and Inward Focus of a Church



Foss continued, “The tragic flaw in the contemporary version of the membership model of the church lies in the focus of its ministry. In that model, ministry focuses on the membership of a particular congregation. With the member as the focal point, the role of the clergy is to meet the spiritual needs of the members.... Perhaps the greatest weakness of the model has been the loss, over time, of its vision for the mission of the church.... Instead of a people organized for mission, the churches frequently became institutions organized for those already there.”³⁶

Putman commented on the contemporary church scene, which can self-destruct if not remedied, “Over the years, we had become building dependent, staff dependent, and technology dependent. Most of our structure depended on attracting new people, using these three components. I was fairly certain that if our building no longer existed, our church wouldn’t either.”³⁷ A solemn warning indeed.

There is a tendency in the community of faith to gradually become inward looking, this is natural as they bond with each other week after week. Unless these groups balance the inward tendency with the outward focus, discipleship could become a self-serving end. The discipleship model for ministry needs to be purpose driven. They frequently meet not for self-gratification but

³⁶ Foss, *Power Surge*, 15-17.

³⁷ Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Exponential Series) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 34-35, Kindle.

for the unique purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission, to evangelize the lost and edify the body of Christ. They must be motivated at both foci of evangelizing the lost and edifying the saints.

Hull said, “Disciple making included introducing people to Christ, building them up in faith, and sending them into the harvest field. This process can be summarized by what I call the three Ds of disciple making: deliver them, develop them, and deploy them.”³⁸

FHL’s dual aspect of training for this stage looks something like this:

³⁸ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, Loc. 363-365.

Chart 9: Dual Aspect of Training for FHL

<p>Months</p> <p>10-12</p>	<p>ENCOURAGEMENT</p> <p>Place: Church</p> <p>Time: Wed. night</p> <p>Process: Leading</p> <p>Result: Parent</p> <p>(1 Jn. 4:12-14)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F.A.T. disciples will be earmarked for Cell Leader Intern's Training (F-Faithful, A-Available, T-Teachable) • Placement under a Cell Leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do—You Watch You do—I Coach You Do—Others Watch • Mentorship under Pastor • Lesson 301: using <i>T4T Training</i>³⁹ (8 Practical Sessions needed)
<p>See also appendix 7 on "How to Build Relationships with Non-Believers."</p>		

The Need for Inward Focus

The inward focus stresses two relational aspects of church: being and doing church. Being church emphasizes her relationship with Christ, and doing church emphasizes relationship to other believers. The inward focus must begin with relationship with Christ. That is the first and foremost relationship in any disciple's life. When a disciple's life with Christ is intimate and healthy as branches to vine, it will spill to other relationships. Doing church ministry is also

³⁹ Steve Smith, Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Monument: WIGTake Resources, 2011).

about relationship, for discipleship must be done in a relational atmosphere. No one should feel manipulated. Such relationship is one of mutual accountability and encouragement.

Leaders also need to be encouraged. Many times they feel lonely and discouraged serving God. They need support and encouragement, not managed. When there is a need for criticism and correction, use the five (encouragement) to one (criticism) ratio. There need to be regular contacts between the pastor and leaders. Connection breeds bonding. The more connections there are, the greater possibility of deepening relationships. When genuine caring and support relationship exist among church leadership, the work of God can run smoothly to fulfill the great commission.

Discipleship is for all. There is only one tier Christians in church, that they are all disciples of Jesus Christ. Malphurs said, “Disciples, then, were synonymous with believers. Virtually all scholars acknowledge this to be the case in Acts.”⁴⁰ It is unbiblical to allow Christians to remain at the justification by faith level, they need to move on to sanctification by grace. The recipe of grace for Christians must be balanced with sincere effort to not “receive God’s grace in vain” (2 Cor 6:1).

Finally, the inward focus must try to appreciate and celebrate each other’s differences. Strive for unity but not uniformity. Diversity in the body of Christ is both beauty and strength. Smith said, “Sadly, this is exactly what much of what passes for Christian community does. We forget that each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made. We expect everyone to look and act the same. Our community is weakened because we try to smooth out people’s rough edges. We forget that our community is strongest when we encourage individuality, not at the expense of,

⁴⁰ Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, Loc. 3001-3002.

but for the sake of community.”⁴¹The challenges surrounding FHL are so great, and diversified that the ministries cannot be accomplished by only the pastor look-alikes. There is truth and power in the priesthood of all believers. Members must be encouraged to strive to be what God wants them to be, nothing more, nothing less.

⁴¹ Brandon D. Smith, *Make, Mature, Multiply: Becoming Fully-Formed Disciples of Jesus* (GCD Books, 2014), 226, Kindle Edition.

CHAPTER 5

EXEMPLIFICATION

Exemplification is the exemplary living that exudes from the disciple-maker, which the disciples model after as they do life and ministry together. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a model as “an example for imitation or emulation.” The word “model” is probably the most common word found in discipleship books other than the word “disciples” (e.g. Smith, *T4T*, has 66 times; Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, 80; Foss, *From Members to Disciples*, 56.)¹ The supreme model for Christians undoubtedly is none other than our Lord Himself. Though there have been attempts to dichotomize the discipleship model of Jesus with the early church apostles,² it was obvious that the apostles followed closely the pattern laid down by the Master. That was the way they knew, and that was how discipleship in the first century was done. The setting may have changed as the gospel spread, the teaching and methods remained very much Christ’s.

MacNutt said, “The basic heresy of the Church today is not doctrinal; we believe in the Holy Spirit and we may even celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. The problem lies in what we do—or rather, in what we fail to do. Jesus was both human and divine, both man and God, and in His humanity He was empowered by the Holy Spirit to become the Anointed One, the Christ, in

¹ Author’s calculation.

² See Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 296, Kindle.

order to fulfill His healing mission. This should encourage us to imitate Him by being filled with the Spirit to carry on His ministry.”³

There are different ways of learning,⁴ and modeling ranks top among the list. Mark 3:14 “He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” Jesus spent three years with the disciples for the purpose of modeling life and ministry to them. Jesus taught them how to live, demonstrated to them how to serve, and showed them how to deal with their adversaries. Lessons were taught as well as caught. What they saw was what they got, it was utterly consistent. Mark 3:15 also shared that they were thrown into unfamiliar terrain to serve. Jesus had the opportunity to coach and correct as He watched them serving. Ogden said,

The most recent studies in secular education reveal that modeling is still the most significant learning dynamic. Neither coercion nor rewards shape human behavior as much as a “motivated attempt to resemble a specific person.” The lowest level of learning is compliance when one individual has control over another. The second level is identification. Influence is maintained because of a desire to remain in a satisfying relationship. Internalization is the third and highest step, for the desired behavior has become intrinsically rewarding. Modeling creates an atmosphere that affects values, attitudes and behavior.⁵

³ Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening: Reclaiming Our Lost Inheritance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 68, Kindle Edition.

⁴ There are seven learning styles listed in “Overview of Learning Styles,” Learning-Styles-Online. <http://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/> (accessed March 18, 2015).

a. Visual (spatial) type prefers using pictures, images, and spatial understanding. b. Aural (auditory-musical) type prefers using sound and music. c. Verbal (linguistic) prefers using words, both in speech and writing. d. Physical (kinesthetic) prefers using body, hands and sense of touch. e. Logical (mathematical) prefers using logic, reasoning and systems. f. Social (interpersonal) prefers to learn in groups or with other people. g. Solitary (intrapersonal) prefers to work alone and use self-study.

⁵ Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (The Essentials Set) (Downer Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 11, Kindle.

The disciples of the early church were unashamedly in many ways a model for disciples today. They showed us how to preach (Acts 2:22-39), to pray (1:14, 2:1-4, 3:1, 4:31, 12:5), to live life as Christians (2:42-47), to share (4:32), to serve (3:1-10, 20:17-35), to crisis manage (6:1-4), and to witness and do missions for Christ (chapter 13ff). Talbert summarized it well, “In our discussion of discipleship in the early church of Acts, we discovered two important components of biblical discipleship. On the one hand, discipleship consists of being molded by the apostolic teaching, being empowered by an experience with the living God, and being a participant in a community of disciples. On the other hand, it involves both a way to walk and a mission to fulfill.”⁶

“Follow Me”, but Go Where?

Christ showed the way. It’s called the small gate, or narrow way (Matt 7:14). Those who think discipleship is just a walk down the block will be in for a surprise. It is not that many would be disciplers do not know the “how” of discipleship, but rather they are not willing to deny self, count the cost and pay the price. Christ in Luke 14:25-33, 9:23-26 clearly dealt with this issue. The many in the “large crowds” of Luke 14:25 had lost their way, not because Christ did not tell them what was expected of them, but rather the “selfhood” stood in the way and insisted on its own way. So, for those who came to know, but were not willing to submit to this knowledge in obedience, they will find themselves lost in discipleship crossroads.

⁶ Cf. Charles H. Talbert, “Discipleship in Luke-Acts” in *Discipleship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 62.

Disciples are followers, learners and imitators of Christ. The discipler's task is to encourage believers to do the same, to walk the narrow way, which leads to eternal life. In Jesus teaching, ministry and life, we can find the perfect model in discipleship. The discipleship practices of the early church were the application of Jesus ways into their context. The milieu may have changed, but Jesus' way remained. That's why the disciples of Jesus were called "people of the Way" (Acts 9:2). Camp aptly put it, "The Christendom project separated 'doctrine' and 'ethics' into two discrete categories, rather than seeing them as two sides of the same coin. The book of Acts often describes the Christian faith as "the Way" (9: 2; 18: 25– 26; 19: 9, 23; 24: 14, 22), a designation that strikes one as remarkably different from our word religion,....But if our claim that Jesus is Lord is a 'Way'— or 'the Way'—then we will not so easily separate His lordship from every facet of life. To understand that Jesus is the Messiah entails a particular lifestyle or a particular way, namely, the way of the Messiah."⁷ Jim Putman adds to this when he said,

Jesus not only told us to make disciples but also gave us a model to follow in doing so. I believe that most Christians have divorced the teachings of Jesus from the methods of Jesus, and yet they expect the results of Jesus. I believe His methods are just as divine as His teachings. He showed us that the fundamental methodology in making disciples is relationships grounded in truth and love. Jesus is the greatest disciple maker in history, and His way works. Discipleship is the emphasis. Relationships are the method.⁸

Disciplers need to take other disciples along, walk with them and show them the way. That's the real challenge of discipleship. Words alone will not make discipleship work. As many pastors discovered, embracing a philosophy of ministry and putting it into practice are two

⁷ Lee Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 40-41, Kindle.

⁸ Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 33, Kindle.

different things. Lessons in life and ministry are more often caught than taught. Highly influential medical missionary Albert Schweitzer observed, “Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing. Those who effectively multiply their ministry start by modeling multiplying ministry. You have to produce before you can reproduce. Experience proves that leadership and multiplication are more often caught than taught.”⁹

Leaders cannot take disciples to where they have never been to, or to places they are not willing to go. Francis Chan gave an honest evaluation,

I honestly believe that most of us—while we might say we want to be led by the Spirit—are actually scared of this reality. I know I am. What would it mean? What if He asks you to give up something you’re not ready to give up? What if He leads you where you don’t want to go? What if he tells you to change jobs? To move? Are you willing to surrender to Him, no matter where He wants to take you? Am I? The fact is that God is calling. The Spirit is beckoning. The real question is will you follow? Will you listen? I know I prefer a multiple-choice option for what God is asking me to do. That way, if I don’t like A or B, there are always options C and D.¹⁰

Modeling stands as the single most important factor in determining the success of discipleship. Several models were presented in Putman’s book *DiscipleShift*. This writer rewrote and summarized them in the following chart.¹¹

⁹ Dave Earley, *Turning Members Into Leaders* (Houston: Touch Ministry, 2004), Loc.193-198, Kindle.

¹⁰ Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*(Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), Loc. 1044-1050, Kindle.

¹¹ Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 16.

Chart 10: Models of Discipleship According to Putman

Attractional Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses programs and activities to attract and disciple people. • Weakness: every program/activity will lose its appeal after several attempts.
Relational Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical discipleship in relational environment. • Weakness: time consuming on the disciplers, must be willing to go second mile in relationship to have desired effect.
Classroom Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on Bible study and doctrine • Weakness: Pastor and staff burnt out, for they are expected to do most of the things such as teaching and training.
Educational Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going deeper in faith. Pastors and teachers teach and care for all people in a relational way. • Weakness: too demanding on pastors/teachers. Not all pastors/teachers are good in teaching.¹²
Missional Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on doing things for people, especially the needy and marginal. • Weakness: good works may not lead to sharing of the gospel.
Organic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing life together for edification. • Weakness: Can be discouraging/ irritating if connecting does not lead to real change.

A caveat needs to be given here. Just as Wilkins said, “The strength of each discipleship model lies in its emphasis upon a particular type of discipleship teaching. The weakness of each discipleship model lies in its de-emphasis of other types of discipleship teachings.”¹³ Mancini explained, “Every ministry model was originally designed to meet a need and solve a problem. What typically drives the creation or modification of a model is a deep and personal connection to some problem....When a leader copies another ministry model, the emotional connection to the problem it solved doesn’t automatically come with it. That’s what I call 2nd generation

¹²“The church is meant to worship God and learn His Word together. Yet it is meant to do more; God wants us to share our lives with one another.” David Guzik, *Acts* (Enduring Word Media, 2012), Loc. 1154-1156, Kindle.

¹³ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 20, Kindle.

passion. When a pastor is stuck in program lock, he is operating with 2nd generation passion. To whatever degree the ‘original pain’ of a problem is missing, the drive and courage to shape a new strategy will be missing.”¹⁴

Information Dead End

In many ways, informational discipleship is comparable to how the author goes about his project writing. Many books and writings were read, some books more than once. Much of those materials gleaned remained as disconnected, fussy data stored in the brain “hard-drive”, until these materials were put into writing, information stayed in the brain just as it is, information. There is no harm with this information, but until something more than just knowing is done, it does not produce the good that this information is supposed to bring.

There is no lack of discipleship philosophy today, as shown by the different models summarized above. Each model carries with it underlying philosophy, and appeals to some specific need of the discipleship community. However, the real challenge lies not in “knowing” but in “being” and “doing.” McCallum said, “The western church as a whole may be embracing personal discipleship as its philosophy of ministry, but still struggles to put it into practice.”¹⁵

Churches in the United States are already enjoying the very best resources that are available in the world. The most pastor density per Christian population, the most number of seminaries and training schools, the best Sunday school education system, the most Christian

¹⁴ Will Mancini, *Innovating Discipleship: Four Paths to Real Discipleship Results* (Church Unique Intentional Leader Series, 2013), Loc.370-372, Kindle.

¹⁵ Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Discipleship: Mentoring Others Into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership*(New Paradigm Publishing, 2012), Loc. 997-998. Kindle.

publishers, most famed professors and pastors, and the richest churches are all here. Disciples elsewhere keep scratching their heads as to why discipleship is not happening as it should here. All these go to show, knowledge or information alone, though important, would not suffice for success in discipleship. Bible knowledge that turns into action is powerful; but Bible knowledge that stores into a database is powerless. The caricature of big head-small body with two “V” raised is an apt description of the local scene, with over-trained but under-utilized laity.



Eims asked the question, “Why are fruitful, dedicated, mature disciples so rare?”

The biggest reason is that all too often we have relied on programs or materials or some other thing to do the job. The ministry is to be carried on by people, not programs. It is to be carried out by someone and not by something. Disciples cannot be mass produced. We cannot drop people into a “program” and see disciples emerge at the end of the production line. It takes time to make disciples. It takes individual, personal attention. It takes hours of prayer for them. It takes patience and understanding to teach them how to get into the Word of God for themselves, how to feed and nourish their souls, and by the power of the Holy Spirit how to apply the word to their lives. And it takes being an example to them of all of the above.¹⁶

Putman continues, “Far too many of us assume that discipleship is merely the transfer of information leading to behavior modification. But discipleship, at heart, involves transformation

¹⁶ LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), Loc. 630-636, Kindle.

at the deepest levels of our understanding, affection, and will by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God and in relationship with the people of God.”¹⁷In the words of J. B. Phillips, “The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of which we read in these [the New Testament] letters is that to us it is primarily a performance; to them it was a real experience. We are apt to reduce the Christian religion to a code, or at best a rule of heart and life. To these men it is quite plainly the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life altogether.”¹⁸

For discipleship in FHL to succeed, she has to move from an information/program/known base to transformation/people/action base. That was the way of our Lord, inherited by the early church. Real transformation comes through demonstration and experience. According to Hull, the discipling process occurs in three stages: demonstration, imitation and reproduction. On demonstration, he writes “Because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake” (1 Thess 1: 5). Apprentices need to have behavior modeled before them so they can visualize the desired attitudes and behavior. Never underestimate the power of personal influence.”¹⁹

What if discipleship is not what it should be, and cannot do what it is supposed to do? It should then come back to the four “E” principles laid out in this project. Firstly, believers have to come back to the study of discipleship in Gospels and Acts, read through to see how Jesus and

¹⁷ Putman, *DiscipleShift*, 49.

¹⁸ From the translator’s preface, J.B. Phillips, *Letters to young churches: a translation of the New Testament Epistles* (London: Macmillan, 1960).

¹⁹ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Loc. 2155-2157, Kindle.

the early church practiced discipleship, and then follow that way closely. Upon understanding of the whole concept, begin to cry out for the Spirit's anointing, travail to prevail, and not quit until the power comes. With the Spirit's enablement comes power to serve, and to model the life that is delineated in this chapter, to encourage others to press on to the next level, until they reproduce the lives that keep multiplying themselves. Then, stay empowered by the Spirit, and disciples will be able to see lives touched and changed by the Spirit through them. Earley said it well, "God can use you to multiply leaders. But you have to use the power of demonstration. You have to model the habits and characteristics, and you must show them how to do the skills."²⁰

The Ways Paul Exemplified Discipleship (Acts 20:17-35)

Paul was an apostle on fire, a missionary strategist, prolific writer, an outstanding church planter. He was also a passionate disciple maker. Paul's discipleship strategy was patterned after Jesus, which radiated inspiration through exemplary living. He asked Timothy to imitate what he was doing, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." (2 Tim 2:1-2). In 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 Paul urged the Corinthians to imitate him in humility as a servant of Christ, just like children imitating the role model of a father "Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me." Later

²⁰ Dave Earley, *Turning Members Into Leaders* (Houston: Cell Group Resources, 2004), Loc. 293-294, Kindle.

in 1 Corinthians 11:1 he urged them to follow his example of love in dealing with the weaker brothers, so as not to cause them to stumble, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” And again in Philippians 4:17, Paul called upon the believers to follow his example, and not the pseudo persona of the false teachers. These teachers served for selfish gain and ambition.

Colossians 1:28-29 may be considered Paul’s personal mission statement, “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” An analysis of the above finds:

- His **Object** in discipleship- “He is the one” (Christ)
- His **Method**- “proclaim, admonishing and teaching”
- His **Attention**- “Everyone”
- His **Approach**- “With all wisdom” (from God)
- His **Purpose**- “Present everyone in Christ”
- His **Goal**- “Fully Matured” (disciples)
- His **Attitude**- Work tirelessly (“strenuously contend”)
- His **Dependence**-Power of the Spirit (“all the energy Christ...works”)

Ogden said, “We see that the apostle Paul adopted the same goal and methodology in his ministry that Jesus modeled. Paul’s version of the Great Commission is his personal mission statement, ‘We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works within me’ (Col 1:28-29). Paul is so passionate about making disciples that

he compares his agony over the maturity of the flock to the labor pains of a woman giving birth (Gal 4:19).²¹

Acts 20: 17From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. 20You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

22“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

25“Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. 26Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. 27For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

32“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. 34You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

A study of Acts 20:17-35 will find Paul exhibited the following characteristics as a model disciple of Christ:

²¹ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 20-21.

Transparency

“You know how I lived the whole time...” (Acts 20:18)

“You know that I” (Acts 20:20)

Concerning transparency, a legitimate question to ask is, “Is it safe for the pastor to be transparent before his congregation?” And if he does that, “How far should he go? Would it backfire?” One thing we do know, politicians spent millions of dollars to advertise their best image and accomplishments before the television sets and media. They will not get elected if they practice transparency. On the other hand, they will not shrink from exposing the flaws of their enemies. Many times it was this “forced” transparency (via media leaks) that brings their enemies downfall. Sanders said, “Most pastors are leery of allowing the flock to get close enough to see their faults. In so doing they open up themselves to scrutiny. Scrutiny leads to rejection. Rejection leads to a performance review. A performance review can lead to being voted out. So, intimacy is not a part of most church/pastor relationships. The average church member is offered every manner of program to replace intimacy. So in that light most pastors only open up to other pastors. And sometimes even that is not safe.”²²

There is a purpose to being transparent, and there is a reason for doing so. Keeping the purpose firmly in mind will help achieve the desired effect. Putman gave a timely word of caution when he counseled, “Note that a leader must encourage transparency for the right reasons. Sometimes people share simply for the sake of being sincere or authentic, or because it is a value of the group and they want to feel included and affirmed. But that doesn’t go anywhere

²² Michael Saunders, *Discipleship: What Happened?* (Ebook, 2012), 34, Kindle.

if the heart behind it is not being transformed. The reason to be transparent is to take the next step and be the kind of person Jesus wants you to be.”²³

Breen highlighted the role that culture played in practicing transparency, for when transparency is not received with the right attitude of maturity, it becomes judgmentalism, “In a culture where our disciples look to our example and where our own pride often gets the best of us, we find ourselves running away from the sins and faults of our lives and toward the goal of fixing the problems in the lives of others. This is the picture that many of us paint rather than simply becoming authentic in our relationship with God.”²⁴ Jesus questioned His disciples, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matt 7:3).

That being said, it is healthily beneficial for the church to practice some level of transparency. Paul did that. A pastor too ought to encourage that through pulpit sharing. Transparency breeds trust and realness among the body of Christ. Without that, religion becomes formalism and floats on superficiality. On the surface, everybody looks calm and collected, but deep within there is dirt and dead bones (Matt 23:27). Transparency has to begin with the leadership to provide a safe environment. Waggoner said,

But it begins with the leaders. What kind of environment do we create? Do we model transparency? Do we reveal our true feelings, joys, needs, and struggles? This is another example of cultural seepage. Secular society portrays leaders as always having on their “game face.” Always confident. Always tough. Always armed with the answers. Never revealing need or vulnerability. On the one hand, you understand that people like to follow confident leaders, but confidence does not have to exclude transparency. In fact,

²³ Putman, *DiscipleShift*, 193.

²⁴ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture* (3DM, 2011), Loc. 852-855, Kindle.

certain levels of transparency and vulnerability can foster confidence because they lead to trust.²⁵

Humility

“I served the Lord with great humility and with tears....” (Acts 20:19)

“....we must help the weak....” (Acts 20:35)

A Christian minister once said, “I was never of any use until I found out that God did not intend me to be a great man.”²⁶ When people get in touch with Christians, they need to sense humility in them before they will be willing to lower their ears to listen to the story of this lowly carpenter. Paul modeled humility while in Ephesus, it was not faked. Christians there all knew about it. He stayed with them for three years. He began with, “you knew” (Acts 20:18) in his talk, and straightaway his message turned to “I served the Lord with great humility and tears” (Acts 20:19). That showed how much Paul valued humility, for his sole aim was to exalt the risen Christ. Chan said, “A sure sign of the Holy Spirit’s working is that Christ is magnified, not people. Self-glorification is something many of us struggle with. While my pride is still a struggle, God has been teaching me to see things from His perspective. As a younger man, much of me craved God’s power in my life because I wanted the attention. Now I want God’s power because I don’t want the attention.”²⁷ Dave Earley observed, “Young disciple makers need to see

²⁵ Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), 246, Kindle.

²⁶ P.L.Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland: Texas Bible Communications, 1996), 572.

²⁷ Francis Chan, *Forgotten God*, Loc. 996-999.

you in action. They often learn much more from your model than your message.”²⁸ Putman shared,

When I became a follower of Jesus as a young teenager, the distance from my head to my heart was very short. Today our world has shifted. The road to meaning is littered with many different ideologies and worldviews. Today's young people are as likely to have a Hindu worldview as they are a Christian one. However, at the same time, they are more likely to have a blending of worldviews rather than one or the other, largely because of the blending of cultures. And in America, this is especially true as our country becomes more and more the ethnic melting pot of the world.²⁹

Acts 20 recorded the ending of Paul’s third missionary journey. By any standard, he could be considered successful, not just in terms of the terrain that he covered or the number of churches he started, more so, he was respected as the real deal, a true servant of God. He could re-visit any places he wanted and feel welcomed. He was so popular that the Jews jealously tailgated him, causing trouble wherever he went. If Paul were a modern pastor, no church committee would have objected to doubling his salary and benefits. But he said, “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” (Acts 20:34-35).

How did Paul view success? Success did not change his philosophy of ministry. He continued to serve with humility and helped the weak (probably these people had no cash). Success did not change his lifestyle; he still believed that “It is more blessed to give than to

²⁸ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is . . . : How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), Loc. 2809-2810, Kindle.

²⁹ David Putman, *Breaking the Discipleship Code: Becoming a Missional Follower of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), Loc. 926-929, Kindle.

receive.” And success would not have changed the way he wanted to be treated (there was no need for black belted body guards); he still served with tears, beckoning people to repent and believe the gospel message. Paul showed by his life what true humility is! Smith said, “All of this shows us that if we want to make disciples of Jesus, we must invest our time and lives in a similar fashion. We must be willing to invite people into our lives even when it is inconvenient. We give away our time and experiences to others in order that they will grow in their faith in Christ and learn what it looks like to follow Jesus. We invest in others because he invested everything in us!”³⁰

Sacrifice

“... In every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me”(Acts 20:23)

“I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me....” (Acts 20:24)

“These hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions” (Acts 20: 34)

Jim Elliot “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”³¹

Disciples can learn a great deal from the cedar tree. The cedar tree is a fitting description of the Christian life. It grows by dying. As it develops, burly and beautiful, putting forth new boughs and leaves, the old ones drop off to give strength to the new ones. Paul modeled sacrifice in his ministry. Just as Jesus came to serve and gave His life as a ransom for many. Paul would

³⁰ Brandon D. Smith, *Make, Mature, Multiply: Becoming Fully-Formed Disciples of Jesus*(GCD Books, 2014), 55-56, Kindle.

³¹Author unknown, “Jim Elliot Quotes,” Brainy Quote.
http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jim_elliot.html (accessed March 23, 2015).

rather be giving than receiving, “These hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions” (Acts 20:34). Nobody could accuse him of greed or sloth. Since he spent so much of his time travelling, and in order to save much of his precious time in saving souls, Paul could have demanded that a private \$65 million luxurious cruise ship³² (in today’s calculation) be bought for him and his team for the missionary journeys. But Paul served with integrity as shown in his liberty to give and reluctance to get. He sacrificed for the sake of the gospel so that it remains a “free” gospel. He could have asked but rather did not. This is in marked contrast to some of the modern, prosperity fazed mega church pastors and Christian TV celebrities. To them, what Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters....” (Matt 6:24) does not ring true in the capital rich world of today. Wealth stored in Christians’ pockets is better than treasures locked in the Devil’s safe, they say. Stott commented on the need for responsible lifestyle, “So the call to a responsible lifestyle must not be divorced from the call to responsible witness. For the credibility of our message is seriously diminished when we contradict it by our lives. It is impossible with integrity to proclaim Christ’s salvation if He has evidently not saved us from greed, or His lordship if we are not good stewards of our possessions, or His love if we

³² Rev. Creflo Dollar asked for the money from his followers and church members to help fund a new \$65 million Gulfstream G650 private jet that he said would help him "safely and swiftly share the Good News of the Gospel worldwide," but he is under bombardment, Christian musician Kirk Franklin said, “When a pastor wants people to buy him a private plane while a missionary in Somalia bathes children with sores, that’s a shortage of character,” the musician wrote in an article published on Pathos. "When I camouflage my 'greed' to look like 'needs,' that’s a shortage of character.” Read more: Shawn Schuster, “Christian Artist Kirk Franklin Calls Creflo Dollar’s Character into Question,” Gospel Herald Entertainment. <http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/54894/20150325/christian-musician-kirk-franklin-calls-creflo-dollars-character-into-question-for-65-million-private-jet-campaign.htm#ixzz3VRxiQd6T> (accessed March 23, 2015).

close our hearts against the needy. When Christians care for each other and for the deprived, Jesus Christ becomes more visibly attractive.”³³

Though it was prophesied that hardships and imprisonment awaited him, he continued to serve faithfully, for he saw his life as belonging to Him who called him. His world view radically changed ever since he met the Lord on Damascus road. Ordinarily, when people respond to God’s call, they will ask this important question, “What do *I* get Lord?” But Paul only asked a simple, selfless question, “Who are *you* Lord?” (Acts 9:5). To Paul, that was the all-important question, the only one that he needed to ask. Once he made sure “Who” he was, the rest just fell into place. There was no price too great for him to pay, there was no journey too far and perilous for him to take, and there was no turning back. Chan said, “The phrase crucifying the flesh is not exactly a friendly, appealing group of words. I think this is because God wants us to be clear on what we are getting into. He wants us to know that His gift of the Holy Spirit is really not for our own pleasure or purposes. The Spirit is meant to lead us toward holiness. The Spirit is here with us to accomplish God’s purposes, not ours.”³⁴

Love’s magic number is three sixteen, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” (John 3:16) “*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*” (1 John 3:16). “Gave...laid down life....” These words do not seem appealing to today’s self-centered, “it is more blessed to receive” generation. Nevertheless, without self-giving, there could be no life building, no true discipleship and

³³ John Stott, *The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Loc. 689-693, Kindle.

³⁴ Chan, *Forgotten God*, Loc. 1094-1096.

fruitfulness. *“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12:24).*

Why is sacrifice important in discipleship, and what does sacrificial living lead to? An article by an anti-Christian journalist in an Indian newspaper tells the story. On the conversion of large numbers of tribal people in India to Christianity, he attributed the success of Christianity with these people to three reasons: (1) Christian workers went to places where no one else would go. Even government census workers did not bother to go to remote tribal villages in the mountains (they simply wrote down estimates). But Christian evangelists not only went to these places, they even lived among these people. (2) Christian evangelists handed over leadership of the churches to locals very soon and thus empowered the people. (3) Christianity is a “cheap” religion. By that the author meant that it did not cost the people a lot in order to get the services of a Christian minister.³⁵ A sixty million private jet is not exactly cheap.

Diligence

“You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions...” (Acts 20:34)

“...have taught you publicly and from house to house...” (Acts 20:20)

“...only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me...”
(Acts 20:24)

“... For three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”
(Acts 20:31)

34 Ajith Fernando, *Acts (The NIV Application Commentary)*(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 573, Kindle.

“Too many people stop looking for work when they get a job.”³⁶

The Scriptures above showed Paul modeled diligence in the Ephesians church. He worked diligently with his mouth, “for three years I never stopped warning ... night and day” (Acts 20:31); he worked hard with his feet, walking to places, “from house to house” (Acts 20:20); he worked unceasingly with his hands, to support himself and his workers, “these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions” (Acts 20:34). Though Paul very much depended on the Spirit, he valued diligence. Hull stressed the importance of hard work when he said, “God opposes earning but urges effort. God doesn't want us to try to earn salvation through the practice of any set of disciplines. But that doesn't mean he opposes all effort. In fact, some of the great passages in the New Testament extol effort:

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: running to get the prize
- 2 Corinthians 11:23-29: working hard, facing dangers, laboring, toiling, and losing sleep
- Galatians 4:19: suffering pain as severe as childbirth
- Philippians 3:12-14: pressing on and straining
- Colossians 1:29: laboring and struggling with all energy
- 2 Timothy 2:1-7: being strong, enduring, competing like an athlete, working as hard as a farmer.

Like the old saying goes, "You can't steer a parked car." God honors and urges us to put forth effort when it comes to spiritual training and growth.³⁷

Paul later in his letter to the Ephesians church explained the nature of this labor, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach

³⁶ P. L. Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, 1996), 713.

³⁷ Bill Hull. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 198-199, Kindle.

unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph 4: 11-13).

The word “equip” (from Greek “καταρτίζω”) speaks of the nature of this labor in relation to building of the body of Christ. Hull explained it well,

The word translated “prepare” in Ephesians 4:12 is katartismos, which can mean “to set a broken bone, mend a frayed net, furnish an empty house, or restore to mint condition.” Setting a broken bone implies putting people back together again. Mending a frayed net communicates working with discouraged, tired, and burned-out people. Furnishing a house means giving them the equipment they need. Restoring to mint condition could refer to helping people get well from a variety of debilitating injuries inflicted by life. The word katartismos communicates a multidimensional restoration of God’s people in order to prepare them to be ministers. All the above activity is discipling and part of the Great Commission.³⁸

In commenting on the discipleship sloth of the American churches, Hull said “This has led a generation of Christians to believe that following Jesus in discipleship is an option— it’s not necessary for salvation but is helpful only if you really want to be serious. And being the lusty creatures we are, we most often have opted for a cheapened gospel, one that is easy to live out because we don’t confront character and community issues in the body of Christ. This has led, then, to a lack of distinction in life and practice between Christians and non-Christians. And when the distinction disappears, the two become one.”³⁹

³⁸ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Loc. 2591-2598, Kindle.

³⁹ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, Loc. 172-176.

Integrity

Integrity is defined as, 1. Adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty. 2. The state of being whole, entire, or undiminished. 3. A sound, unimpaired, or perfect condition.⁴⁰ Paul model integrity as shown in Acts 20,

“...you know how I lived the whole time...” (v.18)

“You know that I have not hesitated...” (v.20)

“In everything I did, I showed you” (v.35)

In relating to the Gentiles, Paul showed his consistencies in manner and message. He openly opposed Peter for his hypocrisy in his behavior of eating with the Gentiles (Gal 2:11-13). Jesus said, “Let your yes be yes, and your no, no” (Matt 5:37). In Psalm 78:70-72 the psalmist gave praise to David as Israel’s shepherd by employing a poetical style called parallelism. First, he stressed that David shepherded Israel “with integrity of heart.” Then he followed with a parallel statement, “with skillful hands he led them.” Note that it began with “integrity of heart.” It showed its importance in leadership and discipleship. When skills, talents and/or charisma overtake integrity of heart, scandals will soon follow. Foss said, “Leadership is always an inside-out affair. A leader’s capability to lead is directly related to her inner integrity and character....in this age when the skepticism of our followers is the first hurdle of leadership, the inner courage and conviction, the values and beliefs, and the being of the leader will be tested again and

⁴⁰ Author unknown, “Integrity,” Dictionary.com. <http://dictionary.reference.com> (accessed March 23, 2015).

again.”⁴¹ Lewis Smedes quipped, “... Integrity must be our middle name.”⁴² Abraham Lincoln showed that he was a man of integrity in leading a nation, “I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, and I have lost every other friend on earth. I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me.” And again, “I do the very best I know how; the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing it to the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me will not amount to anything. If the end brings me out all wrong, then a legion of angels swearing I was right will make no difference.”⁴³ What powerful words!

Integrity is an indispensable commodity to anyone wanting to serve God. This is especially needful for the “compound eyes” of today’s media saturated society. The digital age has brought about a radical change in lifestyle. The information corridor used to travel at snail’s pace, but nowadays it is going at supersonic speed. Everything and anything can be known instantly in almost any part of the world as it happens, just like a live NFL football final. There’s no way to hide, good or bad, “For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open” (Mark 4:22). Gallaty offered timely advice,

The information age has birthed a generation of young people who can spot a fake a mile away. People today want to know you care about them before they listen to what you have to share. Integrity is expected. With today’s generation, you must earn the right to share the gospel by developing a relationship with them. In the past, the church has viewed lost people as projects. We must reject this attitude and see people the way Jesus sees them, approaching them as Jesus approached them. Jesus Christ, without any sort of

⁴¹ Michael W. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* (p. 37). (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 37, Kindle.

⁴² Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 134.

⁴³ P. L. Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, 1996), 618.

evangelistic spiel, shared the gospel through relationships. He met people where they were and cared about them for who they were.⁴⁴

Integrity is crucial, for trust is based on integrity. You can trust a person who has proven to be honest and trustworthy. Without the trusting relationship, a pastor cannot lead the church forward. Shepherding God's flock is like navigating through rough waters, passengers need to trust the captain to navigate the ship to the destination. Without that, the ship will be tossed back and forth in the open sea. Stott lamented on the superficiality and lack of integrity on the church scene, "There is superficiality of discipleship everywhere, and church leaders bemoan this situation. A leader from South Asia wrote to me recently that although the church in his country is growing numerically, 'there is a huge problem with lack of godliness and integrity'. And similarly an African leader has written that although he is well aware of the rapid growth of the African church, 'this growth is largely numerical...the church is without a strong biblical or theological foundation of her own.'"⁴⁵

Guidelines for Selecting and Training Future Leaders

1. Choose a Model

There needs to be a model in place for equipping the saints for ministry in FHL. She is transitioning into a Cell Group church. At the moment it is a church with small groups, she hopes to transition into a church of small groups by the end of the year. By then, everyone in FHL will be assigned to a cell group (at the moment, less than two-thirds of the church population belongs

⁴⁴ Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Bloomington: CrossBooks, 2013), 132, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Stott, *The Radical Disciple*, Locations 301-304.

to a cell group). About four more cell interns will be chosen during the next three months for this effort. Training is going on now on Tuesday night. The catch word for FHL cell groups is *relational*. The DNA that these groups intend to inculcate includes, “empowering, equipping (exhorting), encouraging, and exemplifying.” Through cell group ministries, FHL hope to fulfill the priesthood of all believers. Dempsey said, “The small-group model that focuses on developing every person has the best chance of accomplishing the mission.”⁴⁶

2. Keep It Simple

It is important to keep this in mind so as to chart a smooth and clear path for ministry effectiveness in FHL. Geiger and Rainer in their work “*Simple Church*” mentioned the symptom that occurred in many churches which they called ministry schizophrenia. It happens when church leaders try to blend different church models by picking the best elements from each. However, each model carries its philosophy. More often than not, these philosophies collide, “The church is unsure of who she is. Programs and ministries move in a multiplicity of directions....No one really knows what to expect.”⁴⁷

Since FHL is a Chinese church, relationship will not only be built on a person to person basis, more so, from household to household. And since the ministry survey also highlighted a few members’ concern about “cliques” occurring in church, believers that come back for worship services will be taught to observe a simple fifteen minutes rule: that the first fifteen minutes after the worship service is to be given to people who are not from the same cell group.

⁴⁶ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...*, Loc. 3925-3927.

⁴⁷ Eric Geiger and Thom S. Rainer, *Simple Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 21-22, Kindle.

FHL shall be organized according to the following core values of the four “E”s. Each dot represents a department.

Chart 11: Core Values of FHL according to the 4 “E”s

Empowerment Core Values	Exhortation Core Values	Encouragement Core Values	Exemplification Core Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • Spirit Baptism • Evangelism/mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching(Word) • Worship • Training (see chp.2 chart) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting • Soul Care • Benevolence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability⁴⁸ • Stewardship • Social Works

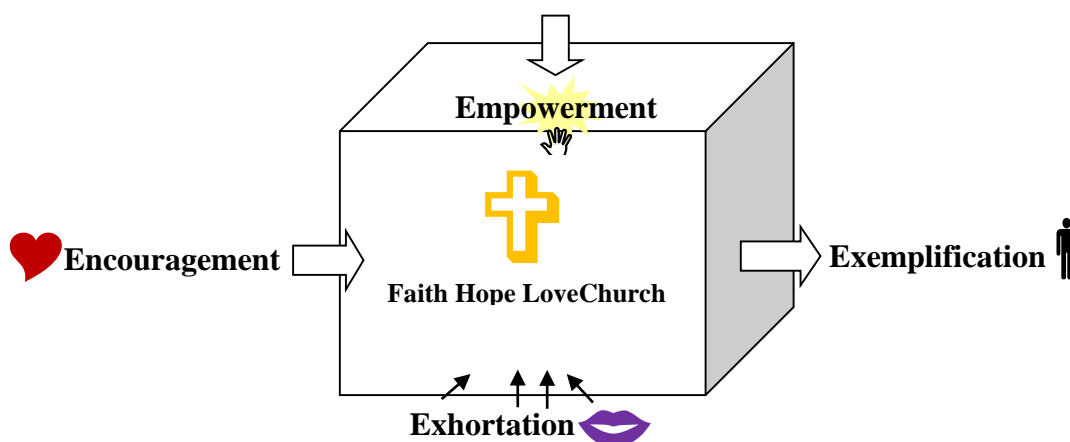
Note:

- ❖ Each “E” (Empowerment, Exhortation, Encouragement, and Exemplification) will have an elder/overseer appointed by the pastor.
- ❖ The Church Board shall consist of two representatives from each “E”, one of which shall be the overseer.
- ❖ The Lead Pastor shall be the Chief Inculturator of the above values

In the shape of a square, the ministry of FHL looks like this:

⁴⁸ Hull said, “If we have not taught obedience and encouraged it through accountability, we have not disciplined.” *The Disciple-Making Church*, Loc. 389-390.

Chart 12: Ministry of FHL in a Square



- ❖ The shape of a square shows they are equally important aspects of ministry. Though they each play a different role.
- ❖ As the arrow direction of empowerment shows, the empowerment of the Spirit is from above. It empowers the hands that serve. Disciple's attitude toward the Spirit is one of dependence.
- ❖ Exhortation is at the bottom, for the Word of God is the foundation of Church life and ministry. It's ministry of the mouth. The four smaller arrows speak of the four functions of God's Word delineated in 2 Tim.3:16: "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training."
- ❖ Encouragement is the ministry of compassion, represented by the heart. The arrow is on the left side pointing inwards, signifying disciples receive positive strength and energy as a result of connecting with Christ and the community of believers.

- ❖ Exemplification is the exemplary living that exudes from the disciple-maker, to positively influence each other, and the community at large.

3. Empower a Future Team of Leaders

Some leaders in FHL have been serving in the church leadership team since its inception in 2002. Many are tired. In view of this, the author has already given consent to two leaders to take a break for 2015, with the hope that they will return refreshed for next year. There's a need to keep training new leaders. They shall be put through the process as given in chapter two. She will utilize the training method used by Jesus as outlined by Hull, "the show-how training model that Jesus used with his disciples: I do, you watch; I do, you help; You do, I help; You do, I watch; You do, someone else watches."⁴⁹

The final stage (exemplification) of the training module looks something like this:

⁴⁹ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, Loc. 3523-3526.

Chart 13: Final Stage of Discipleship Training in FHL⁵⁰

Months	EXEMPLIFICATION	
13-18	<p>Qualities:</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Humility</p> <p>Sacrifice</p> <p>Diligence</p> <p>Integrity</p> <p>Process: Mentoring</p> <p>Result: Leader/Multiplier</p> <p>(2Tim. 2:2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intern becomes a New (Cell) Leader • Personality Test (Appendix 4, in Chinese) • Lesson 401, using Joel Comiskey's <i>How to Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting</i>. • Lesson 402, using Joel Comiskey's <i>Home Cell Group Explosion</i>. • Leaders will need to exemplify the qualities listed on the left. • Leaders expected to multiply after 18 months by using the same model to train others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goal: 4 generations (2Tim. 2:2)

4. Strategizing Church Ministry (People-Based /Gift-Based⁵¹)

Church ministries will be organized along the four “E” principles of this project, and shall mostly be done by cell groups. These church ministries are represented by four important members of the body: hand, mouth, heart and feet.

Empowerment- Ministries of the Hand

Exhortation- Ministries of the Mouth

⁵⁰ Please refer to chapter two, Chart 1: Every Disciple's Journey in FHL, for the detail plan.

⁵¹ Michael W Foss asserts “Gifts-based ministry transforms the task of caregiving from the job of a pastor to the call of spiritually gifted and trained lay ministers....The pastor and staff become equippers for God's gifted and called people to more effectively engage in the ministry of the kingdom of God.” *From Members to Disciples: Leadership Lessons from the Book of Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 5, Kindle.

Encouragement- Ministries of the Heart

Exemplification- Ministries of the Feet

All ministries are expected to embrace and align to the core values of the four “E”s (see p.24). Only leaders who have been proven in that particular “E” area will be selected to lead.

This is how it looks when the twenty-eight spiritual gifts⁵² listing are organized according to the four “E” principles.

Chart 14: Classification of Spiritual Gifts According to Four “E”s

Empowerment	Exhortation	Encouragement	Exemplification
Power Gifts (hand)	Speaking Gifts (mouth)	Compassion Gifts (Heart)	Helping Gifts (Feet)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Faith • Healing • Miracles • Discerning of spirits • Apostle • Intercession • Deliverance • (Evangelist) ⁺ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophecy • Teaching • Words of Wisdom • Words of Knowledge • Tongues • Interpretation of Tongues • Pastor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercy • Comfort • Evangelist • Missionary • Hospitality • Worship • (Pastor) ⁺ • (Giving) ⁺ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service • Giving • Helps • Administration • Celibacy • Voluntary poverty • Martyrdom

Note: See also appendix 11 for the complete gift listing. Those with (+) was repeated elsewhere.

In concluding this chapter, the insights of Foss will be helpful,

Whatever organizational plan that requires, in any given setting, there are some clearly identifiable elements of the model. First, it will be led by a leadership team of mature disciples. Second, it will be gifts-based ministry. Third, it will be designed for the best

⁵² C. Peter Wagner, *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts: The Easy-to-Use Guide That Helps You Identify and Understand Your Unique God-Given Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), Loc. 366-367, Kindle.

and quickest deployment of Gods' people in ministry within and beyond the congregation. Fourth, it will recognize that its authority before the world is in the Bible—not in its institutional identity. Last, it will be a people of prayer and active engagement in the world. Let the institution be shaped by its mission. Only in this way will our churches be churches ... and not clubs.⁵³

⁵³ Foss, *From Members to Disciples*, 8.

CONCLUSION

In concluding the “Spirit-Empowered Discipleship in Acts”, let it be said from the onset that all the “E”s are important for discipleship. The movement of the first “E” is from top down, signifying the endowment of power from above. Without the Spirit’s empowerment, discipleship is doomed to fail. This empowerment rightfully extends to every sphere of Christian life and ministry. Only by this disciples can be effective witnesses, for they are in fact people of the Word and Spirit. The coming of the Spirit enlivens the Word ministry, and revitalizes the believers. The fire of the Holy Ghost sets hearts ablaze for the Great Commission. Christians from all walks and traditions need this Holy Ghost fire.

The Holy Spirit is God’s good gift to the church (Matt 7:11). He is powerful in His workings and gentle in His ways. He will not force His will and ways into people. He is active where people are hungry and desperate for Him. Those hungry shall be filled, and they will never be the same once they experienced His life transforming power. The early church, including saints like Peter, Stephen, Barnabas and Paul were prime examples.

The teaching on the Holy Spirit must be balanced between doctrine and experience. The Church of Jesus Christ needs to have both. The “Him” that we researched on must become the “You” who is endearing to us. Disciples must not only know the Spirit in their head, they must also experience Him in their hearts and lives. Believers should respect their church traditions, but also need to be opened to “let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7, 11, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Discipleship models can be helpful, only when disciples in the process learn to tap into the resources available to them through the empowerment of the Spirit. Know that each model comes with strengths and weaknesses. The modeling process ought to keep adapting to changing church situations to bring out its best. Methods and means must not replace the mandatory. In this case, the Spirit is the mandatory.

Exhortation is the foundation for discipleship. It is the upward aspect of building disciples' lives through the disciplines of the Word. The early church "devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching" (Acts 2:42). God's Word was preached daily in the temple and at home (Acts 2:46). The apostles of the early church had a theology for preaching as well as a theology of preaching. Their preaching was found to be simple, uplifting, Christ-centered and authoritative.

Every preacher of the Word today needs to strive to be the preacher that people must listen to. Preachers that are filled the Spirit and full of His Word will attract crowds. Their ethos stands behind their message, their pathos compels as well as exhilarates, and their logos is the sure foundation for faith in Christ Jesus. And as they stand to speak, they proclaim God's Word with such conviction and power that listeners will pop their mouths open and ask, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) Listeners' hearts will be touched with deep contrition. Such a living Word exposure will bring about transformation in the listeners' lives as they experience the "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16) of God's inspired Word.

True preaching seeks to express and not impress, to exalt Christ and make Him known. It appeals to the hearer's reason, conscience, imaginations, emotion and will. It does not speak above people's head, or under-estimate people's intelligence. Good preachers also know how to

deal with the tensions of preaching: the tension of selectivity, objectivity, integrity and practicality. Timely messages from the eternal Word of God are spoken in a relevant manner.

True preachers are faithful, faithful to God who called them, as well as faithfully delivering God's Word to His chosen people, rightly handling the Word of truth. They believe faithfulness shall bring forth fruitfulness one day, for God is true to His promises, "Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy" (Ps 126:5).

Encouragement is the inward aspect of discipleship. It is the positive energy that is infused into the process. People need encouragement, that's natural. Acts shows the psychological aspect of how discipleship should be done as well, i.e., by focusing on the positives of discipleship, the encouraging factors. Disciples in Acts were confronted with many challenges, but they chose not to be discouraged. The word "discouragement" was not in their dictionary, you cannot find that word in Acts. Encouraging one another has been their pattern of conduct, very much a part of their everyday lives. They lived by faith, and were sustained by grace, they were skilled at appropriating the divine resources. Faith and grace to them are communal. They were intentional and inspirational in their relationship with each other, while remaining transformational in focus. Each individual was important but not embracing individualism. Discipleship to them was a process of growing and maturing together. When faced with trials and tribulations, they knew the Spirit as "παράκλητος," the helper, advocate and comforter. They could rely on Him to carry them through thick and thin.

There is a need for more encouraging messages from the pulpit today. The Gospel message deals with the root issue of sin, but it is also good news of hope and salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the tone of the message needs to be re-tuned. The messengers of God

throughout history had always given hope, even during the darkest times of God's judgment. Hope is encouragement in the future tense.

On the practical level, discouraging factors in church need to be dealt with, so that disciples can channel their energy upwards, looking to Christ as "pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:2); and inward to strengthen the weary and the weak (Heb. 12:12). Encouragement is necessary to evangelize and edify, it is the energy to fulfill the Great Commission.

Disciples are followers, learners and imitators of Christ, and invite others to do the same. This "sameness," talking about the final "E", exemplification, is the litmus test of discipleship. It is the exemplary living that exudes from the disciple makers to show others the way. Exemplification is important, for discipleship is not about information but transformation. Transformation cannot be achieved via information alone, but by modeling, life influencing lives. Modeling has proven to be the most effective way of learning. In a sense, it brings discipleship closer to home, for lessons are caught rather than taught. What is caught normally retains.

Exemplification was Jesus' way. Whatever He taught He showed. Wherever the disciples went, He went before them. Discipleship in the early church was built upon the foundation of the apostle's teaching, empowered by the Spirit's presence, and activated by the community of believers. Exemplification is the basis for reproduction, reproducing others just like them.

Discipleship in FHL church must turn from an information/program/known base model into transformation/people/action base in order to succeed. Real transformation comes through modeling demonstration and experience as Paul has shown: in transparency, humility, sacrifice, diligence, and integrity.

Discipleship that embraces the four “E” principles as delineated in this thesis project could expect to see the Spirit’s transformation effected in the lives of the believers. It is built solidly on the faithful exhortation of God’s Word, constant encouragement of others to walk and experience the Jesus’ way, and modeling lives that befit such calling. Every church that practices the four principles as laid out in this project should have a fair chance to succeed. The principles given can also be used to bring transformation in pastoral ministry. The concepts shared in each chapter can stand on their own. It can also serve as a good base to launch into further investigation, e.g. exhortation on chapter three may serve as an excellent independent chapter to further explore on preaching.

APPENDIX 1

Occurrences of the word “disciple/disciples” in Acts

1. [Act2:6](#) And when this sound came to their ears, they all came together, and were greatly surprised because every man was hearing the words of the **disciples** in his special language.
2. [Act6:1](#) Now in those days, when the number of the **disciples** was increasing, protests were made by the Greek Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were not taken care of in the distribution of food every day.
3. [Act6:2](#) And the Apostles sent for all the **disciples** and said, It is not right for us to give up preaching the word of God in order to make distribution of food.
4. [Act6:7](#) And the word of God was increasing in power; and the number of the **disciples** in Jerusalem became very great, and a great number of priests were in agreement with the faith.
5. [Act9:1](#) But Saul, still burning with desire to put to death the **disciples** of the Lord, went to the high priest,
6. [Act9:10](#) Now there was a certain **disciple** at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias! and he said, Here I am, Lord.
7. [Act9:19](#) And when he had taken food his strength came back. And for some days he kept with the **disciples** who were in Damascus.
8. [Act9:25](#) But his **disciples** took him by night and let him down from the wall in a basket.
9. [Act9:26](#) And when he came to Jerusalem, he made an attempt to be joined to the **disciples**, but they were all in fear of him, not taking him for a **disciple**.
10. [Act9:36](#) Now there was at Joppa a certain **disciple** named Tabitha, that is, Dorcas: this woman was given to good works and acts of mercy at all times.
11. [Act9:38](#) And because Lydda was near Joppa, the **disciples**, having knowledge that Peter was there, sent two men to him, requesting him to come to them straight away.
12. [Act11:26](#) And when he had come across him, he took him to Antioch. And they were with the church there for a year, teaching the people; and the **disciples** were first given the name of Christians in Antioch.
13. [Act11:29](#) And the **disciples**, everyone as he was able, made a decision to send help to the brothers living in Judaea:
14. [Act13:52](#) And the **disciples** were full of joy and of the Holy Spirit.
15. [Act14:20](#) But when the **disciples** came round him, he got up and went into the town: and the day after he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.
16. [Act14:21](#) And having made a number of **disciples** through the preaching of the good news in that town, they went back to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch,
17. [Act14:22](#) Making strong the souls of the **disciples**, saying to them that they were to keep the faith, and that we have to go through troubles of all sorts to come into the kingdom of God.
18. [Act14:28](#) And they were with the **disciples** there for a long time.

19. [Act15:10](#) Why then are you testing God, by putting on the neck of the **disciples** a yoke so hard that not even our fathers or we were strong enough for it?
20. [Act16:1](#) And he came to Derbe and Lystra: and there was a certain **disciple** there named Timothy, whose mother was one of the Jews of the faith, but his father was a Greek;
21. [Act18:23](#) And having been there for some time, he went through the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, making the **disciples** strong in the faith.
22. [Act18:27](#) And when he had a desire to go over into Achaia, the brothers gave him help, and sent letters to the **disciples** requesting them to take him in among them: and when he had come, he gave much help to those who had faith through grace:
23. [Act19:1](#) And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having gone through the higher country, came to Ephesus, where there were certain **disciples**:
24. [Act19:9](#) But because some of the people were hard-hearted and would not give hearing, saying evil words about the Way before the people, he went away from them, and kept the **disciples** separate, reasoning every day in the school of Tyrannus.
25. [Act19:30](#) And when Paul was about to go in to the people, the **disciples** did not let him.
26. [Act20:1](#) And after the noise had come to an end, Paul, having sent for the **disciples** and given them comfort, went away from them to Macedonia.
27. [Act20:30](#) And from among yourselves will come men who will give wrong teaching, turning away the **disciples** after them.
28. [Act21:4](#) And meeting the **disciples** we were there for seven days: and they gave Paul orders through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.
29. [Act21:16](#) And some of the **disciples** from Caesarea went with us, taking a certain Mnason of Cyprus, one of the early **disciples**, in whose house we were to be living.

APPENDIX 2

羅馬書救恩之路 Romans Road to Salvation

<p>羅馬書 Romans 1:20 自從造天地以來，上帝的永能和神性是明明可知的，雖是眼不能見，但藉著所造之物就可以曉得，叫人無可推諉。</p>	<p>問 Ask:那為何人無法自動認識神呢?</p>
<p>3:10 就如經上所記：沒有義人，連一個也沒有 3:23 因為世人都犯了罪，虧缺了上帝的榮耀；</p>	<p>問 Ask:既然世人都是罪人，結果又怎樣?</p>
<p>6:23 因為罪的工價乃是死；惟有上帝的恩賜，在我們的主基督耶穌裏，乃是永生。24 如今卻蒙上帝的恩典，因基督耶穌的救贖，就白白地稱義。</p>	<p>問 Ask:為何神這樣恩待罪人呢?</p>
<p>5:8 惟有基督在我們還作罪人的時候為我們死，上帝的愛就在此向我們顯明了。</p>	
<p>約 Jn.3:16 「上帝愛世人，甚至將他的獨生子賜給他們，叫一切信他的，不致滅亡，反得永生。17 因為上帝差他的兒子降世，不是要定世人的罪，乃是要叫世人因他得救。</p>	<p>(若他還猶疑 if he still doubts God's love)</p>
<p>羅 10:9 你若口裏認耶穌為主，心裏信上帝叫他從死裏復活，就必得救。10 因為，人心裏相信就可以稱義，口裏承認就可以得救。</p>	<p>問 Ask:這是你的心願嗎?</p>
<p>得救的 ABC of Salvation</p> <p>A – Accept 約 1:12 凡接待他的，就是信他名的人，他就賜他們權柄作上帝的兒女。</p> <p>B– Believe 約 3:16 (上面)</p> <p>C—Confess 10:13 因為「凡求告主名的，就必得救。」</p>	

APPENDIX 3

「屬靈恩賜問卷調查」

Spiritual Gift Survey

提示 Tips :

這不是考試，所以沒有錯的答案。這份「屬靈恩賜調查」^註包含有 80 條敘述，其中有些是反應具體的行動；另外一些則是用來描寫特徵；還有一些就是信念上的告白。選出一項您覺得最能表現出您自己的特色，然後，將那項數目字寫在左邊的空白位置上，每一條敘述都要寫下來。記住，這不是考試，所以在每一條敘述上、請不要花費太多的時間去考慮；您的立即反應通常會是最好的回答。請回答每一條敘述，不要跳過任何的敘述。在做此問卷時，請不要尋問其他人、他（她）們是如何回答的（也就是說他（她）們的答案是什麼）、或者是他（她）們認為您應該如何回答（也就是說您的答案應該是什麼）。依照您自己的作答速度來填寫這個問卷。

您可以從以下的 5 種項目中、選出其中一樣來回答：

5 --- 這真是我的特徵 / 對我來說、這就是真實的描述 4 --- 『大部份的時候』這就是在說我的特性 / 真實的描述

3 --- 這『常常（大約是 50 % 的狀況）』是我的特性、或是真實的描述

2 --- 這『有時候（大約是 25 % 的狀況）』是我的特性、或是真實的描述

1 --- 這不是我的特性 / 對我來說、這不是真實的描述

1. 我有能力能夠有效率地將各種想法、資源、時間以及人員組織起來。
2. 我願意研讀並且預備教導的事工。
3. 我能夠將上帝的真理運用到特定的場合中。
4. 我有上帝所賜予的能力來幫助別人、使他（她）們能夠在信心上有所成長。
5. 我擁有一種特殊的能力、能夠傳達救恩的真理。
6. 在有需要的時候，我有能力能夠做重要的決定。

7. 我能夠敏銳於人們所受的傷害。
8. 我能夠經由透過與人分享我所擁有的來滿足他人的需要、而能夠經驗到其中的喜樂
9. 我享受研讀。
10. 我已能（也曾有過）傳達上帝有關警告與審判的訊息。
11. 我有能力可以察覺出人們（以及行動、運動）的真正動機為何。
12. 我有一種特別的能力、能夠在艱困的情況下、依然信靠上帝。
13. 我有強烈的渴望、能在新教會的建立上有所貢獻。
14. 我會採取行動去滿足實際上的需要，而不只是在談論或是計劃如何去協助。
15. 我能享受在我家裡款待賓客。
16. 我可以調適我自己的引導準則，以便配合那些與我一起配搭的成熟基督徒。
17. 我能夠委任他人、並且指派有意義的事工。
18. 我有能力、而且渴望去教導。
19. 我通常能夠正確地分析狀況。
20. 我天生就有鼓舞別人的傾向。
21. 我樂意採取主動來幫助其他基督徒在信心上有所成長。
22. 我有敏銳的感覺、能察覺到他人的情感，例如，孤單、痛苦、恐懼、忿怒等。
23. 我是個樂意的捐贈者。
24. 我願意花時間去挖掘事實。
25. 我感受到我有來自於上帝要傳達給其他人的訊息。
26. 當一個人是真誠（誠實）時，我能夠分辨的出來。
27. 我是個有異象的人（一種具有清晰心智圖像的合宜功能，是來自於上帝所賜予的），
而且有能力將異象以一種能夠感染別人去將此異象實現的方式來傳遞異象。
28. 我樂意去順服上帝的旨意、而不是去質疑和猶豫。

29. 我喜歡更積極的參與將福音傳到其他地方。
30. 為那些有需要的人們做些甚麼，會令我快樂。
31. 我可以成功的讓一個組群喜樂地去實行它自己組群的事工。
32. 我能夠讓陌生人覺得自在。
33. 我有能力計劃學習方式。
34. 我可以視別出那些需要鼓勵的人。
35. 我（曾經）訓練基督徒、使他（她）們成為更加願意順服的基督門徒。
36. 我樂意去做任何能讓其他人來到基督面前的事。
37. 我能夠吸引那些受了傷的人來我這兒。
38. 我是個慷慨的捐贈者。
39. 我有能力去發現新的真理。
40. 對於一些使得我去表達看法的事件和人們，我有來自聖經的屬靈見解。
41. 當一個人所行的與上帝的旨意一致時，我能夠感受的到。
42. 即便事件看起來灰暗，我依然能夠信靠上帝。
43. 我能夠確定上帝想要一個組群往哪裡去，同時能協助那個組群到達那裡。
44. 我有強烈的渴望、去將福音帶到那些從未聽說過的地方。
45. 我享受去接觸那些在我的教會和社區內的新朋友。
46. 我是敏銳於人們的需要。
47. 我已經有能力去做有功效而且有效率的計劃，以完成組群的目標。
48. 當基督徒伙伴們在面臨困難抉擇的掙扎中時，我經常被諮商。
49. 我思索著如何安慰、鼓勵在我的會眾中的人。
50. 我能夠為別人提供屬靈的方向。

51. 我能夠將福音以一種方式呈現給那些尚未相信的人，而他（她）們會接受主以及祂的救恩。
52. 我擁有一種不尋常的能耐去瞭解那些在患難中的人的感受。
53. 我具有一種強烈的管家意識，是基於認為上帝是擁有萬物。
54. 我能（曾）將直接來自上帝的訊息傳遞給其他人。
55. 當一個人行在上帝的引導下時，我能夠感受的出來。
56. 我不斷地試著行在上帝的旨意中，並且預備為禱所用。
57. 我覺得我應該要將福音帶給那些尚未相信耶穌的人們。
58. 我能敏銳的洞察到別人物質上的需要。
59. 我精湛於安排正面的、準確的行動步驟。
60. 在教會中我喜歡認識新朋友、並且讓他（她）們感到受歡迎。
61. 我能夠用別人能夠瞭解的方式來解釋聖經。
62. 通常我能夠看見問題的屬靈解決方案。
63. 我歡迎有任何機會來幫助那些需要安慰、慰藉、鼓勵與協談的人。
64. 與尚未相信耶穌的人分享福音、我覺得很自在。
65. 我能夠影響別人去達到上帝給予他（她）們的最高潛能
66. 我可以辨識出在他人裡面壓力、困惱的訊息。
67. 我渴望大方地、不做作的地為那些值得的事工、計劃來奉獻。
68. 我能夠將許多事實組織成有意義的關聯。
69. 上帝給我訊息去傳給祂的子民。
70. 當人們在談論他（她）們的宗教經驗時，我有能夠感受的出他（她）們是否真誠。
71. 我能夠享受介紹福音給那些不同文化、不同背景的人。

72. 我能夠享受做一些幫助別人的小事。
73. 我可以提供清楚、不複雜的介紹。
74. 我能夠將聖經的真理應用到我教會中特殊的需要。
75. 上帝透過我去鼓勵別人過個像基督一樣的生命。
76. 我感受到有需要去協助其他人、讓他（她）們在事工上更有果效。
77. 我喜歡與那些還不認識耶穌的人談論耶穌。
78. 我有能耐能夠讓陌生人在我家裡覺得舒適。
79. 我有廣泛的研究資源、而且知道如何保護資訊。
80. 我確實感受的到即使是當一種情況似乎是不可能時，它將會變成上帝的榮耀。

加總您的問卷調查 Survey Findings

請依照以下的說明來加總您的每一項屬靈恩賜：

1. 參考位在空白方格下方的「敘述編號」來對照到您在前幾頁中、在那個敘述所寫下的數字回應（數字 1 到 5）；然後，再把那個數字寫到這個空白方格中。
2. 對每一項屬靈恩賜而言，是將位於同一列的數字全部加總之後，再將總數寫在標示為「總額」的空白方格內。

領導 Leadership	+	+	+	+	=	
	敘述 6	敘述 16	敘述 27	敘述 43	敘述 65	總額
治理 Administration	+	+	+	+	=	
	敘述 1	敘述 17	敘述 31	敘述 47	敘述 59	總額
教導 Teaching	+	+	+	+	=	
	敘述 2	敘述 18	敘述 33	敘述 61	敘述 73	總額
知識 Knowledge	+	+	+	+	=	
	敘述 9	敘述 24	敘述 39	敘述 68	敘述 79	總額
智慧 Wisdom	+	+	+	+	=	
	敘述 3	敘述 19	敘述 48	敘述 62	敘述 74	總額
先知講道 Prophecy	+	+	+	+	=	
	敘述 10	敘述 25	敘述 40	敘述 54	敘述 69	總額

15																
10																
5																
0	領 導	治 理	教 導	知 識	智 慧	先 知 講 道	辨 別	鼓 勵 / 勸 勉	牧 養	信 心	傳 福 音	使 徒 恩 賜	服 務 / 助 人	憐 憫	施 予	款 待

^註此段的屬靈恩賜問卷調查是節譯自『Jesus on Leadership』一書。

Appendix 4

How to Lead God's Word for Cell Meeting¹

Closed Questions versus Open Questions: always try to ask open question.

- Closed questions are those basically with one answer to give.

How to prepare dynamic Questions: Questions not to ask...

<i>The "machine gun" question.</i>	e.g. Give three reasons Jesus asked the apostles who they thought He was, and tell me how you would answer this question?	Problems: It asks more than one question, yet sounds like it's looking for a specific answer. Notice that it's not concise or contestable. When a question gets too complex with sub-parts and various clauses, participants tend to get confused.
<i>The "over-your-head" question.</i>	e.g. What are the 16 fundamental truths of the Assemblies of God?	Problems: This is over the heads of all but the Bible-college trained or pastors in your group.
<i>The "what-did-you-say" question.</i>	e.g. How did you feel when you repeated the good confession?	Problems: Definitely not considerate, and perhaps not complete. Have all your members repeated the good confession? If yours is a new group, is this too personal, too fast?

¹ Materials in this lesson is adapted from: Joel T. Comiskey, *How to Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting.... So People Want to Come Back* (Houston: Cell group Resources, 2011), Loc. 1092-1095.

<i>The “exam” question.</i>	e.g. What three attitudes was Jesus looking for when he asked this question?	Problems: This isn’t a discussion question; it’s a test. It’s looking for one “correct” answer (actually three).
<i>The “ozone” question.</i>	e.g. What was going through the apostle John’s mind as Peter answered Jesus’ question?	Problems: How can anyone really know! It’s incomplete and not very challenging. You could possibly rephrase this question by saying, “If you were the apostle John, what would be going through your mind?”

Questions that Grab the Heart: Examples of questions that generate discussion.

- How do you feel about ...
- Share your experience concerning ...
- Why do you feel this way?
- How would you ...

Questions Worth Repeating

Questions should focus on the main meaning of the passage and its application. Here are four questions that can be used repeatedly with some variation:

- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What seems to be the main point of this passage?
- Can you illustrate this truth from an experience in your life?
- What is God saying to you right now?

Comiskey in commenting on the Natural Church Development said,

Christian A. Schwarz and his team from the Institute for Church Development in Germany have proven that direct application to immediate needs makes the difference between an effective and

ineffective small group. They analyzed responses from 4.2 million people, from more than 1,000 churches in 32 countries. Schwarz concluded that successful small groups must be "... holistic small groups which go beyond just discussing Bible passages to applying its message to daily life.²

² Comiskey, *How to Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting*, Loc. 1093.

Appendix 5

A “Best of” Model³

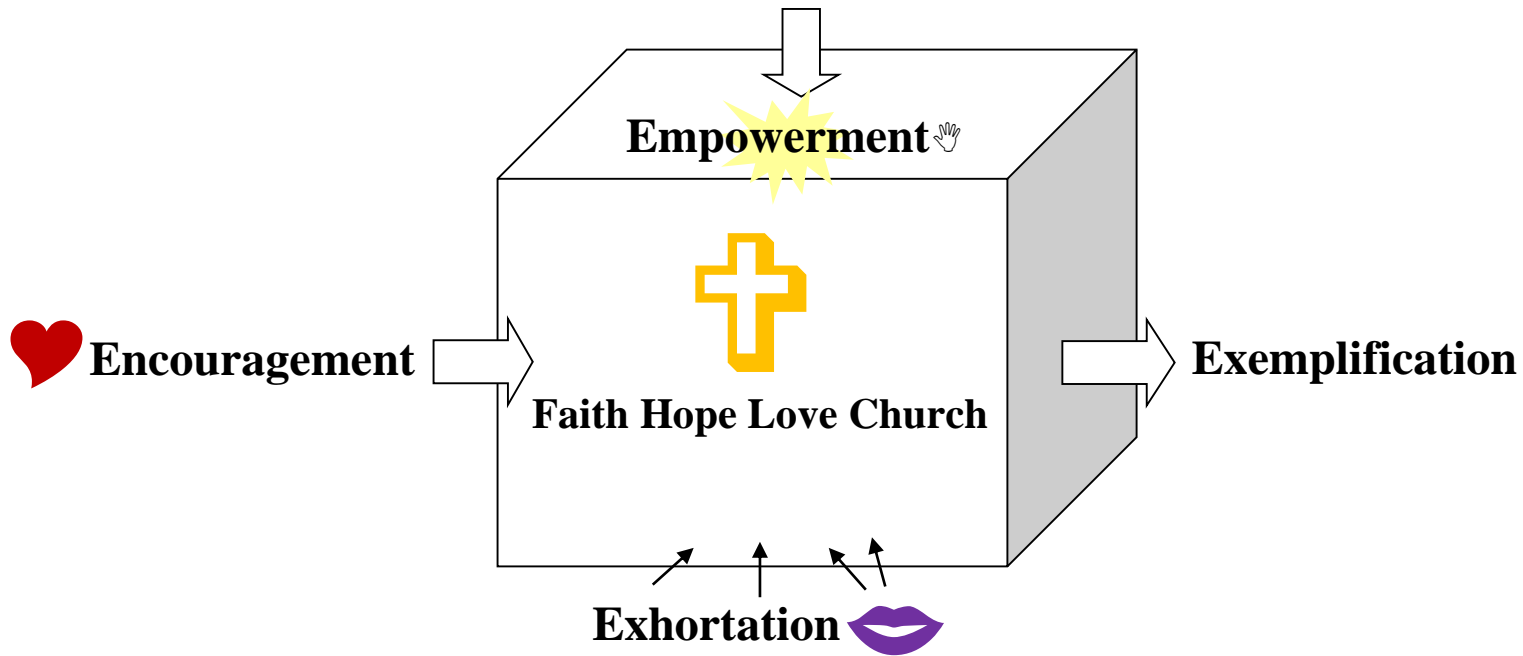
The following is Barna's summary of these five models. These may be the most helpful for application into life and ministry.

- The senior pastor is an irrepressible advocate of discipleship.
- Church membership is granted only when a person covenants to participate in a focused, demanding discipleship process.
- All ministry programs are intimately tied to discipleship outcomes. The number of programs is minimized in order to focus the church's ministry on and through the discipleship process.
- All teaching in the church, from Sunday morning classes for elementary school children through the worship service and other adult teaching venues, is substantively coordinated.
- The church's mission statement serves as a practical tool for identifying necessary ministry outcomes that are tied to an annually updated series of goals that directly relate to the mission statement and to the spiritual state of the congregation.

³ Bill Hull. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Spings: NavPress, 2006), pp. 307-308, Kindle.

Appendix 6

FHL MINISTRY MODEL



Appendix 7: Listing of Spiritual Gifts⁴

Romans 12: 6-8 mentions the following spiritual gifts:

1. Prophecy (preaching, inspired utterance)
2. Service (ministry)
3. Teaching
4. Exhortation (stimulating faith, encouraging)
5. Giving (contributing, generosity, sharing)
6. Leadership (authority, ruling)
7. Mercy (sympathy, comfort to the sorrowing, showing kindness)

First Corinthians 12: 8-10 and 28 adds (without repeating those already listed from Romans):

8. Wisdom (wise advice, wise speech)
9. Knowledge (studying, speaking with knowledge)
10. Faith
11. Healing
12. Miracles (doing great deeds)
13. Discerning of spirits (discrimination in spiritual matters)
14. Tongues (speaking in languages never learned, ecstatic utterance)
15. Interpretation of tongues
16. Apostle
17. Helps
18. Administration (governments, getting others to work together)

Ephesians 4: 11 adds (again, without repeating any of the above):

19. Evangelist
20. Pastor (caring for God's people)

At least five other gifts are mentioned in the New Testament as spiritual gifts:

21. Celibacy (continence) (1 Cor. 7: 7)
22. Voluntary poverty (1 Cor. 13: 3)
23. Martyrdom (1 Cor. 13: 3)
24. Missionary (Eph. 3: 6-8)
25. Hospitality (1 Pet. 4: 9), plus what Wagner considers are to be included,
26. Intercession
27. Deliverance (exorcism, casting out demons)
28. Leading worship (music)

⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts: The Easy-to-Use Guide That Helps You Identify and Understand Your Unique God-Given Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), Loc.316-369, Kindle.

Appendix 8

信望愛不記名事奉調查 FHL Ministry Survey

1. 最弱 Weakest 2. 較弱 Weak 3. 中等 Mediocre 4. 較強 Strong 5. 最強 Very Strong

(請於 3 月 22 日交回 Please return by Mar 22)

➤ 在望愛，甚麼最令你得鼓勵和幫助? What encourages/ helps you most in FHL?

神話語傳講 God's Word 1 2 3 4 5

教牧關懷 Pastoral Care 1 2 3 4 5

信徒問禱告 Church Prayer 1 2 3 4 5

信徒問關懷 Member's Care 1 2 3 4 5

門徒訓練 Discipleship 1 2 3 4 5

佈道見證 Soul Winning 1 2 3 4 5

讚美敬拜 Praise & Worship 1 2 3 4 5

小組時間 Cell Group 1 2 3 4 5

週三晚造就 Wed. Night Class 1 2 3 4 5

主日學 Sunday School 1 2 3 4 5

接待 Welcoming 1 2 3 4 5

探訪 Visitation 1 2 3 4 5

音響設備 Sound System 1 2 3 4 5

青少年事工 Youth Ministry 1 2 3 4 5

教會和信眾溝通 Communications 1 2 3 4 5

教會宣傳 Church Publicity 1 2 3 4 5

初信跟進/關懷 Newcomers Follow-up 1 2 3 4 5 領導者榜樣 Leader's Example 1 2 3 4 5

會後茶點 Refreshment 1 2 3 4 5

崇拜後相交 Fellowship After Worship 1 2 3 4 5

聚會所舒適 Church Premise 1 2 3 4 5

泊車問題 Church Parking 1 2 3 4 5

教會地點 Church Location 1 2 3 4 5

崇拜需翻譯 Dual-Language Service 1 2 3 4 5

崇拜時間 Worship Time 1 2 3 4 5

教會方向 Church Vision 1 2 3 4 5

我最希望在教會看到的是 The thing I would like most to see happen in Church is

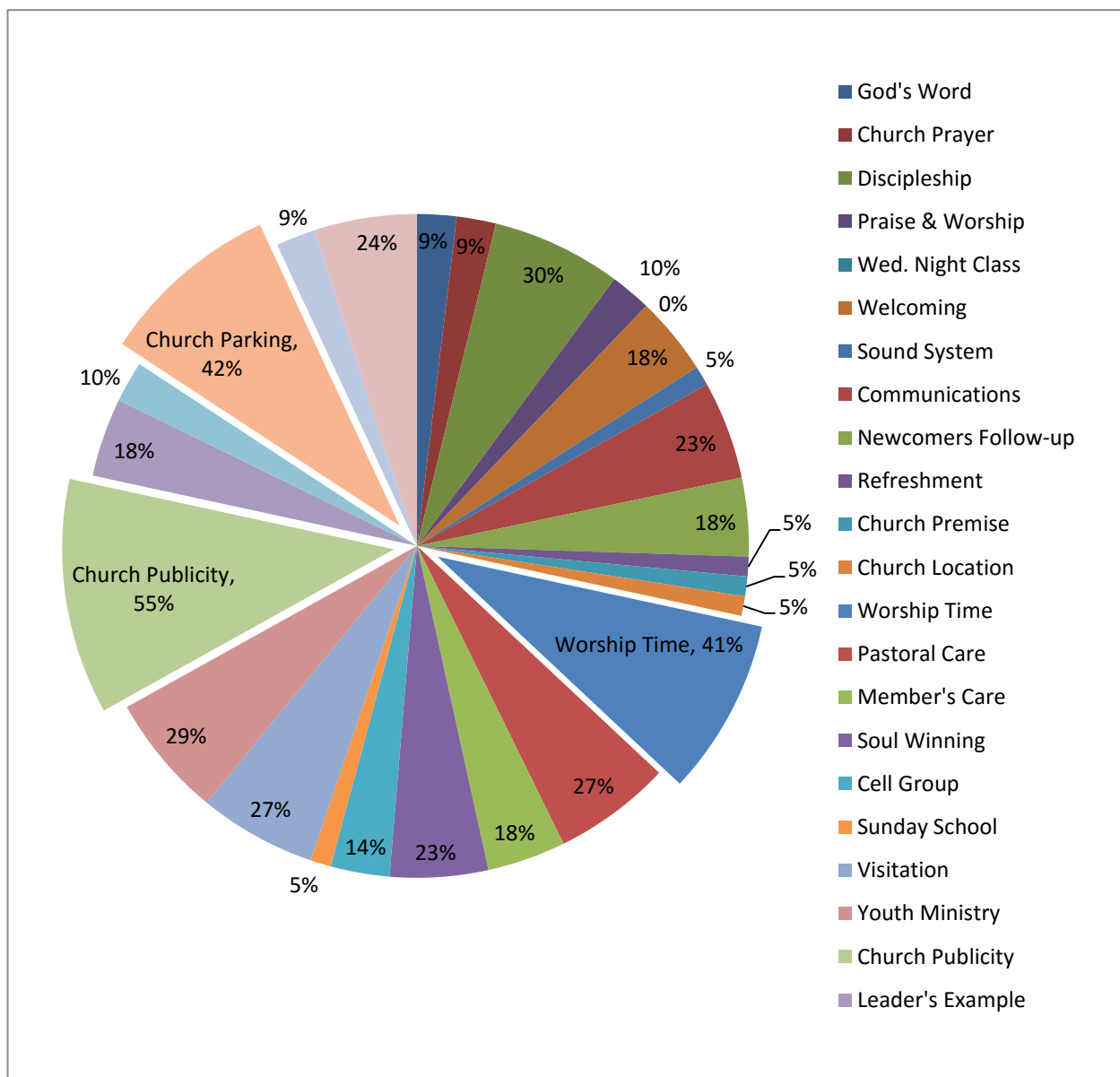
我最不希望在教會看到的是 The thing I dislike most to see happen in Church is

Appendix 9

Top 3 Discouraging Factors (weak areas)

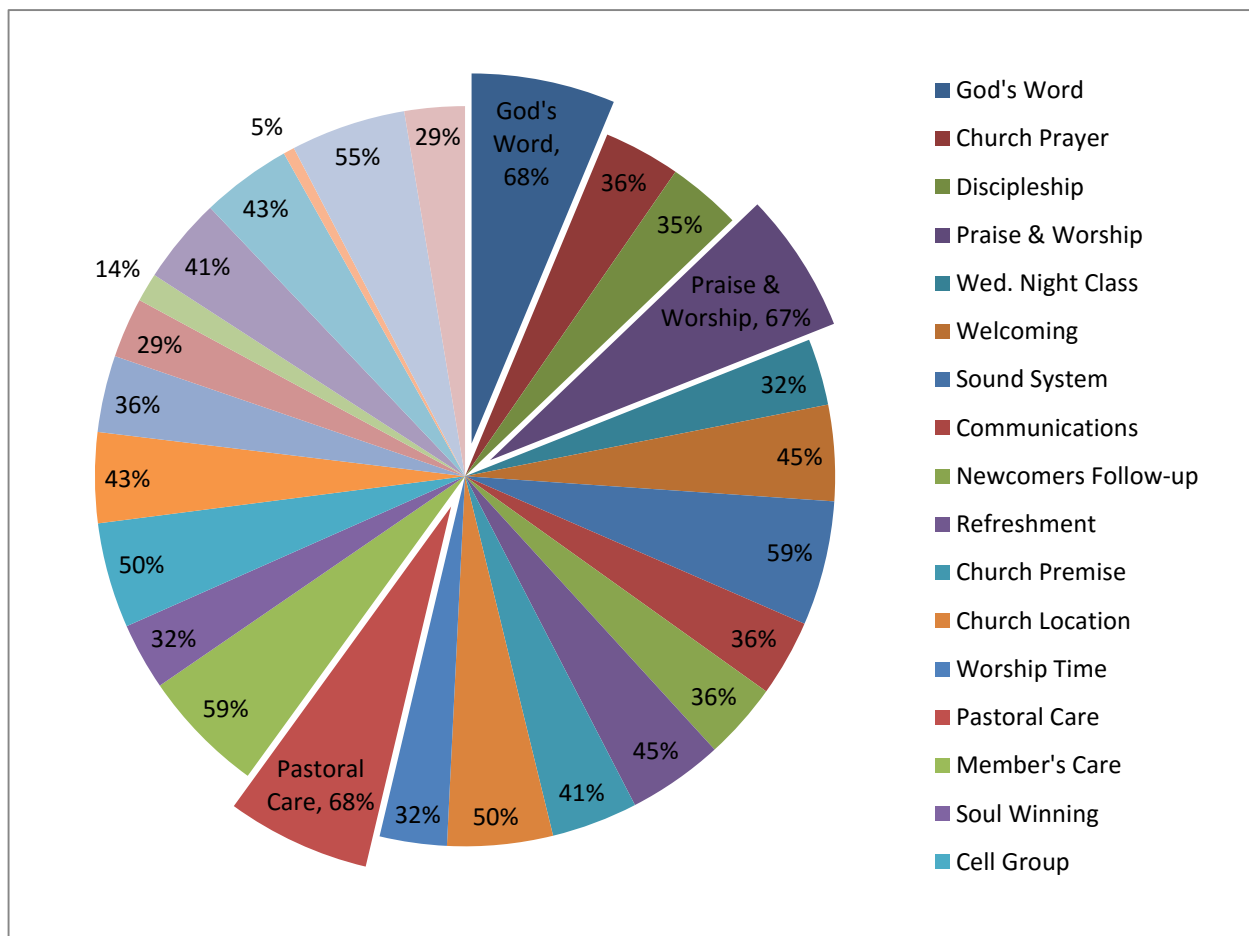
Total Survey Returned: 22

1. Church Publicity 55%
2. Church Parking 42%
3. Worship Time 41%



Total Survey: 22
Top 3 Encouraging Factors (strong areas)

1. God's Word 68%
2. Pastoral Care 68%
3. Praise and Worship 67%



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