

## **ABSTRACT**

# **BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY: DEVELOPING AN INTENTIONAL, MISSIONAL, AND REPRODUCIBLE DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN ROMANIA**

by

Adrian Vlad

Out of the climax of my own personal struggles, the project represents an attempt to bring a major biblical theme to the forefront of an incomplete discipleship model that has had lasting negative impact on the flourishing of Romanian Pentecostalism in the twenty-first century.

Over forty years of communism has badly affected the way Pentecostal Christians are living their faith both in and outside the church. Once all elements have been taken into account, the project posits a way forward by creating a new discipleship model with an emphasis on developing reproducing disciples not codependent ones.

This research has revealed five significant findings. Firstly, a substantial number of churches do not possess a well-defined discipleship curriculum. Secondly, the primary barrier to reproducing discipleship is the presence of a busy Christian population in churches that focus more inwardly. Thirdly, Pentecostal churches located in Romania lack effective strategies for missional discipleship. Fourthly, the Romanian Pentecostal churches have a pressing need to introduce small group concepts into the vision and culture of local churches. Finally, a crucial mindset shift from programs to purpose is essential.

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PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN ROMANIA**

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By

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter identifies the lack of a healthy, reproducing discipleship model as the main problem in today's Pentecostal church in Romania. Three factors lead to an incomplete model of discipleship: Communism, the Orthodox Church, and faulty denominational leadership. The researcher provides a rationale that stems out of personal experience that research supports. Included in the chapter are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants as well as a description of the collection and analysis of the data.

#### **Personal Introduction**

Growing up in a Pentecostal context in Romania, prior to and soon after the fall of communism, has had a significant impact on my life. I have witnessed families being liberated from the spirit of fear and unbelief during numerous worship services. The spirit of fear and unbelief was instilled in the hearts of many by intolerable and atheistic communistic leaders. God was present in the midst of our suffering faith community, transforming hearts, touching lives and healing the sick. The church was steadfast in prayer and fasting and in meeting frequently in underground house meetings as well as formal Sunday services, whenever they were authorized. I have also experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in so many ways: sanctification, spirit filling, supernatural gifts, and others. Blessings upon blessings have been poured into my life because of the

faithful and holy men and women who hoped in God and His message, the Bible, despite enormous trials, suffering and persecution.

Although Tertullian's most famous adage about the persecuted church is controversial in some circles (Lee 18), Romanians have witnessed firsthand that persecution strengthened the church. A wide variety of testimonies from former communist spies have been archived as a testimony for Jesus. As Christian brothers and sisters bravely died or endured severe hardships for the faith, many onlookers and scorned converted becoming passionate believers and advocates for Jesus. There is however another side to the story as well, which is the *raison d'être* for this dissertation.

The forty plus years of communism have really scarred the Pentecostal denomination in more ways than one can imagine. Since the focus of my dissertation is on discipleship, the one thing that I cannot say the Pentecostal church has significantly taught me well is in discipleship, especially intentional, missional, and reproducing discipleship that involves passing on to others that which I have seen and heard. Certain convictions, coupled with dramatic experiences in the pastoral field, have led me to a place of reckoning, personally and professionally, concerning discipleship. George Barna's conclusion of the many years of research on discipleship in diverse churches in America is just as relevant in the Romanian context: "Almost every church in our country has some type of discipleship program or set of activities. Stunningly few churches have a church of disciples" (*Growing True Disciples* 21).

The lack of intentional discipleship models and/or training prior to the fall of communism - December 1989 - can be somewhat excusable since all foreign Christian literature was strictly forbidden. And they were not willing to change their stance on the

matter either. As a matter of fact, the former communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, made sure Christians knew what dire consequences would follow for any leader who attempted to smuggle Christian literature in Romania. Beside the former prohibition, Romanian gifted leaders and authors who attempted to write significant Christian theology were harassed and marginalized. Any illegal writings were confiscated and burned.

In this harsh political climate, no solid theological and/or biblical literature on discipleship was written or smuggled in the country. Perhaps a few books made it but they were not widely circulated. Consequently, much of our discipleship was sporadic, unintentional, and without a proper goal in mind. This was in the past.

The lack of healthy discipleship models and/or training in the present is inexcusable, however. More than thirty years have passed since the fall of communism, and nothing has changed in the way discipleship is being done. Pastors and key lay leaders still serve with and in the old paradigm. The results are discouraging, to say the least. I am one of the pastors, like John the Baptist, that believes there is a way forward and I am making my voice heard in the wilderness . . . and beyond.

The topic of discipleship is especially important to me because, in the last couple of years, I have moved from an unofficial ministerial position to an official key leadership position in the local church – senior pastor. Unfortunately, my own lack of experience in the area of discipleship, coupled with the lack of a healthy biblical discipleship model offered by our denominational leaders, has significantly reduced the local church's impact in society as well as the number of new converts. Sadly, this has been a problem that Romanian Pentecostal leaders have failed to deal with as democracy

was slowly establishing in the country. We are talking about the early 90s. The great opportunity to lay a solid biblical foundation in the area of discipleship was lost. Other issues seemed to be more pressing. Thirty plus years later we are still struggling to grow healthy disciples. Reproducing disciples. Thirty plus years later, pastors and key church leaders are still reserved to make the necessary shift from Sunday-centric oriented churches to disciple-oriented churches.

I believe the Lord has commissioned me for such a time. Reviving key practices of discipleship used by our founders as well as adding several key components to the discipleship model - components that have been ignored – is part of my ongoing vision for the renewal of our denomination.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A chronic challenge is facing the Pentecostal church in Romania. Romanian Culture is rapidly changing, aligning itself to a post-Christian, western-European secular worldview. Membership in many local rural churches is stagnant or even declining, due to large groups of youth migrating to the West. In addition, denominational leaders and senior pastors are not doing anything to change the trajectory. They feel scared, overwhelmed, and unprepared to face the challenges of a post-Christian society. Therefore, they hold on to what naturally worked in the communistic context: a Sunday-centric discipleship model that is becoming more and more irrelevant and ineffective.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of the research was to explore the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania and develop a missional, intentional, adult-member, reproducing discipleship model for future implementation.

## **Research Questions**

This research study attempted to answer three basic questions, and by so doing, find out whether the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination is missional and reproducing.

### **Research Question #1**

What is the current prevalent model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania?

### **Research Question #2**

To what extent is the current discipleship model missional, intentional, and reproducing?

### **Research Question #3**

What are the best ways to expand the current discipleship model so that it becomes more missional, intentional and reproducing in its approach?

## **Rationale for the Project**

The overarching issue investigated is how discipleship was viewed in the early days of Pentecostalism, and why have the reproducing aspect as well as the missional aspect have been ignored when they are clearly implied in Scripture.

Christianity, according to the 2011 census, represents roughly 97% of the nineteen million residing in Romania. Out of the 97%, 85.9% are Christian Orthodox. The Pentecostal church is fourth, right behind the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Church. Nearly 2% of Romania's population is Pentecostal. With such percentages you would think Christian values and virtues would be evidenced in every area of society. Many Pentecostal Christians are living nominal lives, just like their Orthodox and Catholic



counterparts. They are not engaging society in meaningful ways and are not impacting it with the Gospel by words or deeds. Corruption, abortion, human trafficking, and other issues that promote injustice and the destruction of other human beings continue to be sorrowful issues hurting Romania, even though the Pentecostal church has had thirty years to change the direction the country is heading. Brandon Hatmaker is right to highlight that “when Hollywood is viewed as doing more to feed the hungry and fight human trafficking than the church, we need to take a hard look at what we’re doing and ask if it’s enough” (ch.5). If the Pentecostal church were to disappear from our local community, not too many people, besides the faith community, would notice or care. Hatmaker rightly critiques the church’s sorry impact saying that the mere act of filling our churches does not suffice; rather, the imperative lies in effectuating transformation within our global community. The success of the church ought to be measured by the extent to which society and culture are altered (ch.9).

Another issue observed in my pastoral work across the country is that most of our current discipleship models create dependency, not trust and release. It is a rigid model and very much dependent on its initiator. Consequently, the codependent disciple always falls short of his or her potential (Hatmaker, ch.6). In the end, it just creates more codependency and the multiplication process ceases. The reproducing principle of discipleship gets marginalized and overlooked. The focus is pointed towards the individual and not what he or she leaves behind. The end is similar to the end of Joshua’s reign: “Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them, who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel” (NRSV, Judges 2:10).

God's plan in Genesis was to fill the earth with sons and daughters who were capable to represent Him faithfully. The commandment articulated in the creation narrative, which instructs humanity to "be fruitful and multiply" in order to populate the earth alludes to this. Humanity's endless rebellion paved the way for the Incarnation, for the awe-filled moment when God entered creation to redeem it. God's whole plan was not fulfilled at the cross or even in the resurrection. God's initial plan is to be continued by the church. In the same manner, God commanded human beings in the garden of Eden to be fruitful and multiply, Jesus commanded his disciples through what is known as the most succinct and clear instruction of Jesus, the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20).

The task of making reproducing disciples is dynamic, interactive, ongoing and ultimately challenging in modern day society (Blomberg). In *Missional Moves*, Rob Wegner and Jack Magruder spell it out bluntly: "Every follower of Jesus should be a reproducing follower of Jesus. And every church should be a reproducing church" (ch.9). Should the church falter in this endeavor, where replicating discipleship doesn't take precedence as its core DNA, the consequence will be a loss of vision, members, prophetic voice, and societal influence. Change must happen swiftly.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

To fully understand the issues behind the incomplete model of discipleship passed down from one generation of Romanian Pentecostals to the other requires the explanation of various specialized terms. These are defined below:

### **Missional Disciple**

A missional disciple is God's instrument that fulfills the divine mission in the world. A missional disciple's life is patterned after the incarnational model, whereby God sent His son, Jesus, to redeem all of creation. A missional disciple of Jesus is concerned and reaches out to all of creation. In the missional model is creation care, social and justice concerns, as well as soul spirituality.

A missional disciple is to be an agent of the Kingdom of God and is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. As society becomes increasingly secular and at times anti-Christian, a missional disciple engages the world by going out rather than reaching out (Hirsch).

### **Reproducing Discipleship**

Discipleship is a concept frequently plagued with terminological imprecision due to the many definitions found in specialized literature. Theologians, missiologists, pastors, and specialized laity give a plethora of definitions. This project zeroes in on the reproducing aspect of discipleship. Robert Gallaty's definition of discipleship specifically addresses this issue, hence the reason for borrowing it throughout the dissertation.

According to Gallaty, "discipleship is intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to replicate faithful followers of Christ" (21).

### **Intentional Discipleship**

Intentional discipleship focuses on the goal and process of discipleship. It is proven that “discipleship does not happen simply because a church exists... It occurs when there is an intentional and strategic thrust to facilitate spiritual maturity” (Barna *Growing True Disciples* 47). Intentional discipleship means that a person encounters Christ and freely chooses to follow Him with the intention of going on a path, a journey that requires sacrifice and total devotion. This means that the call to evangelize cannot be separated from the necessity of intentional discipleship (Weddell ch.2).

### **Communist Romania**

After the Bolshevik-inspired faction won control of Romania's Social-Democratic party in 1921, the Romania Communist Party was founded (Cioroianu 21–22). Three years later the party became illegal and many of its important leaders, who were not in prison, were sheltered and trained in Moscow, waiting for the ripe time to inaugurate a proletarian revolution. Initially the party had a minor influence in the greater scheme of Romanian society due to a number of factors, of which three are more important. First, Romania in the first quarter of the twentieth century lacked a strong industrial arm, which resulted in a relatively small working class (Crowther 46). Second, the Marxist ideology had little impact on early twentieth century Romanian intellectuals (Verdery 156). The intellectual elite were enamored more by French liberal ideology and politics. Third, there was an anti-national policy that severely affected the image of the party (Frunzã 38–48). Consequently, there was a major push to drive the party underground and make its activities illegal until 1944.

From 1948 to 1965 the Communist Party merged with a wing of the Social Democratic Party to form the Romanian Workers' Party. By the early 50s, most Social Democrats were out of office and replaced by Communist sympathizers. In 1965, Ceaușescu ascended to power and the name of the party officially changed to the Romanian Communist Party. His reign lasted over thirty years with a surprising downfall. On December 22, 1989, Ceaușescu and his wife, having fled the party's headquarters, were captured by the authorities in Targoviste tried, and publicly executed. The Romanian Communist Party did not formally dissolve, it just simply disappeared. Despite its disappearance, many former Communist's political actors played an important part in what followed in the greater political Romanian scene.

### **Romanian Pentecostalism**

Coincidence or not, in the same year the Communist party was founded (1921), the Pentecostal movement was birthed. As a consequence, according to a Romanian historian, the Communist party throughout its reigning years influenced the history, organizational structure, and a part of the theology of the early Pentecostal church (Croitor 3). Another distinctive mark of Romanian Pentecostalism is its sober nature in worship, a mark left by the Orthodox Church, from which many of its members come.

To be considered a member of the Pentecostal church, one must be water baptized no earlier than the age of 16. This minimum age is considered to be the point that a person is mature enough to make important decisions. Only in exceptional cases, a person can be baptized at an earlier age.

Regarding its organizational structure, the most important and basic unit of the Pentecostal denomination is the local church. Two or more counties make up a regional

community. Together all the regional communities make up the Pentecostal denomination.

### **Delimitations**

Developing a Romanian Pentecostal discipleship model that is missional, intentional, and reproducing comes with certain delimitations. The aim of the research was to understand how discipleship is carried out in the Romanian Pentecostal denomination, which is very different than other Pentecostal models in the West. Eastern Orthodoxy has had a major influence on the way Romanian Pentecostals worship and live out their Christian faith in the public square. Beyond the influence of the Orthodox Church, the Romanian Pentecostal movement began at the same time the communist movement took its first step on the Romanian political stage. With the rise of communism came many restrictions on religious minorities. One of the immediate effects is the lack of relevant Romanian Christian literature on discipleship. The limited number of writings on the topic of discipleship come from the West and, as a result, very few of those consider the specifics of eastern cultures, worldviews, and spirituality.

The researched focused strictly on the reproducing aspect of adult church members trying to create a working model that fits with this age category. In Romanian Pentecostals churches, members of the church are considered only those that have professed their faith in their water baptism and are at least 16 years old. A healthy, reproducing, and missional discipleship model for children or teenagers requires different cognitive and behavioral approaches.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

This section presents relevant literature that has been helpful in researching how the Pentecostal church can develop, implement, and sustain a discipleship model that is intentional, missional and reproducing. Vasilica Croitor has written a ground-breaking book on the Pentecostal faith in the communist era. His work was consulted in the early stage of the literature review. Croitor explains why pastors still function under the old paradigm as Sunday-centric oriented churches, rather than moving forward towards disciple-oriented churches. When it comes to intentional discipleship two authors were consulted, George Barna and Sherry Weddell.

The most notable authors speaking on the issues of multiplication are Dave and Jon Ferguson, Bobby Harrington, Robert Coleman, Jim Putman, and Bill Hull.

Alan Hirsch has written extensively on the missional aspect of the Gospel. He is a valuable source of inspiration to rely upon when thinking about creating a new model of discipleship.

### **Research Methodology**

This project looked at historical influences on the Pentecostal model of discipleship and discovered a present-day lack of a healthy reproducing and missional discipleship model. With these historic influences in mind, the study went on to develop a relevant Romanian Pentecostal discipleship model that includes all aspects – missional, intentional, and reproducing - with the hope that it can be implemented beyond the local church and influence the key denominational leaders of Romanian Pentecostal churches.

## **Types of Research**

This study utilized pre-intervention research methods with a focus on discipleship. The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods to measure the efficacy of discipleship in Romania, before, during, and after Communism. The primary instruments used were personal interviews for pastors who ministered during the communist regime and beyond and questionnaires and surveys for other leaders who have gained enough experience in the ministry, particularly in the area of discipleship.

The quantitative research provided a system of inquiry based on three key words: missional, intentional, and reproducing. The purpose of the qualitative approach was to capture information relating to essential, internal, experiential, and learning characteristics or other noticeable factors that might be useful for developing a healthy discipleship model.

## **Participants**

Participants in this study met predetermined criteria. They were Pentecostal senior pastors with at least fifteen years of pastoral ministry, from five different regions. The research also targeted larger cities where Pentecostalism has had at least twenty-five to thirty years to develop. The goal was to see how these churches and its key leaders evolved both prior to the fall of Communism and post Communism.

Another group of participants selected were key leaders in the church who had little exposure to Communism because they were born right before or after the fall of Communism. The reason for selecting a younger generation was to understand how discipleship was passed down to them by the older generation of leaders and how well they understand the missional and reproducing aspect of discipleship.



**Instrumentation**

The project used a pre-intervention qualitative and quantitative research approach utilizing a questionnaire, surveys and interview methods to gain a better understanding on the prevalent model of discipleship and how it enables reproducing discipleship and missional living.

This research design enabled the discovery of themes that were common among senior pastors and key ministerial leaders who were interviewed.

**Data Collection**

The process of data collection included identifying the participants, designing instruments and different protocols, obtaining permission, and collecting the data. An official email went to all participants seeking their consent. Survey questionnaires were sent by email to all key ministerial leaders and semi-structured interview questions were conducted face-to-face.

**Data Analysis**

The collected data was coded to discover themes of words, phrases, and events and their frequency of occurrence. The results from the questionnaires and interviews were tabulated into a matrix according to the research questions. All of the data was used to make general observations regarding the effects of Communism and the Orthodox Church on missional, reproducing discipleship, the main purpose of the research.

**Generalizability**

The missional and reproducing discipleship model developed was for the Pentecostal church. The model can have application in broader denominational and even international contexts, but implementing the specifics of the discipleship model may miss

certain specific characteristics typical of eastern European spirituality. In general, eastern Europeans hold on dearly to traditional beliefs and practices held by their ancestors. Therefore, the time element in reproducing discipleship may be different in other contexts where faith beliefs and practices have not been cemented.

### **Project Overview**

Chapter two presents the literature relevant to the topic of discipleship formatted in three subtopics: Biblical and Theological, Historical, and Discipleship Aspects. The research first, explored the impact of Communism and the Orthodox Church on the Pentecostal movement, and second, justified the need to return to a biblical and theological model of discipleship and posit a way forward.

Chapter three explains in detail the methodology used to obtain the necessary information needed for the project. The data collection method employed a qualitative approach using one-on-one open-ended interviews to obtain the data needed to research the current prevalent discipleship model.

Chapter four covers the major findings of the qualitative pre-intervention for the Pentecostal church. It presents data from the survey, the questionnaire, and interviews that correspond to the research questions.

Chapter five presents the discipleship model that posits a way forward for the Pentecostal church in Romania.

## CHAPTER 2

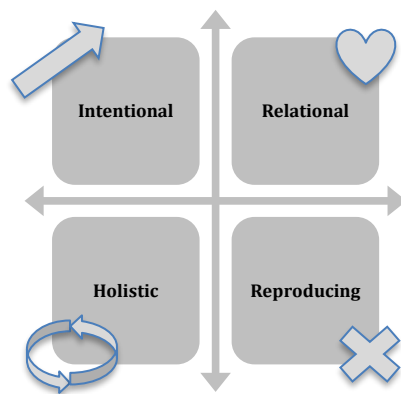
### LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

The first section explores the biblical foundations of discipleship in an effort to identify the missing aspects of discipleship in the Romanian model. The second section examines the theological foundations of discipleship. The third section looks at the historical context to gain a better understanding of the actual prevalent Pentecostal discipleship model found in Romania.

#### Biblical Foundations

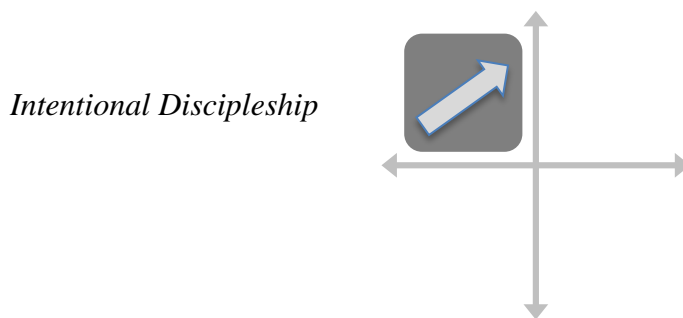
Biblical Foundations examine the origin and essential components of discipleship and disciple-making in the Old and the New Testament. Discipleship is not a New Testament invention or a postmodern way of passing on essential life values. Discipleship envisions a holistic notion of humankind's restoration in accord with God's divine plan from the beginning of time. This section examines scripture in relationship to four key components of discipleship. After careful reflection, I personally prepared all the models, graphs and tables.



**Fig. 1.1 Four components of a biblical discipleship model.**

## Intentional Discipleship

In almost all cases where discipleship is noticeable in Scripture, the intentional factor appears. In some cases, God seems to be author of the initiative while in others the discipleship process is initiated by mature faith leaders. Whatever the case may be, the intentional aspect is clear, a statement with which a prolific author Bill Hull would agree (Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*).



**Fig. 1.2. Discipleship with purpose.**

In the Old Testament, intentional discipleship can be found in at least three different eras: the patriarch era, the Mosaic era, and the prophetic era. First, in Abraham's case, a more familial case, God is the one who bets on Abraham's intentions even to the point of exclaiming: "No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." (Gen. 18:19). In the second case, a strategic leadership example, God explicitly commands Moses to pour himself into the life of Joshua for the young boy was eventually going to lead Israel into the promised land (Num. 27:18-22), becoming the next national hero. Even in the prophetic case, Elijah is instructed to anoint Elisha as the next succeeding prophet for Israel (1 Kings 19:16). Some erudite voices hesitate to call such relationships discipleship

models, but other scholars disagree and actually provide a fair amount of evidence to show that Elisha's relationship to Elijah had the essential ingredients of an exemplary discipleship model. Among them are Edward Young (93) and Flavius Josephus (202).

In the New Testament, intentional discipleship examples abound. Jesus as well as His chosen apostles following the old yet familiar paradigm of training the young or the up-and-coming generation. Jesus, the Rabbi, calls and appoints twelve Jewish men "to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3:14b-15a). In Bill Hull's book, *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker*, this calling of "come and be with Me" marks an important stage in the lives of the disciples:

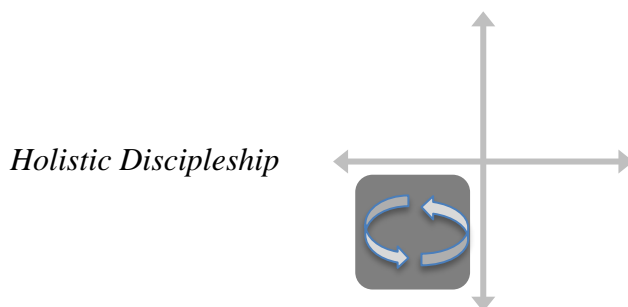
After they had gone through the process of being established in the basics of ministry, the disciples were ready to actually be with Jesus, taking part in the mission of spiritual harvesting. It would not be a four-month stint this time. This time it would be for life! During the come and be with me phase, Jesus' trainees made the critical transition from established disciples to equipped laborers. This period required total investment, for nearly the entire group of men would eventually die for the cause. (145-46)

Towards the end of his earthly life, right before his ascension, Jesus wants to make sure his disciples do not miss the point, the wider scope of the mission of God, hence the explicit command to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Interestingly, the only imperative verb in verse 19 is the one that commands the disciples to make disciples. Bill Hull concurs: "But it is interesting that the action of the text here does not center on *going*. The verbs *go*, *baptizing*, and *teaching* are all subordinate to the action of

the main verb in this passage—the command *to disciple* or (from the Greek) *make disciples*” (*Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker* 23).

Christ’s disciples, according to Luke’s account, acted in obedience and made Jesus’ last words their first priority. As a result, the number of disciples multiplied exponentially (Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31;11:21, 24; 12:24). As the saying goes, God is in the business of multiplication, not addition. Luke also highlights the role of the family in the process of intentional discipleship: “He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately” (Acts 18:26).

### **Holistic Discipleship**



**Fig. 1.3. 360 degrees discipleship**

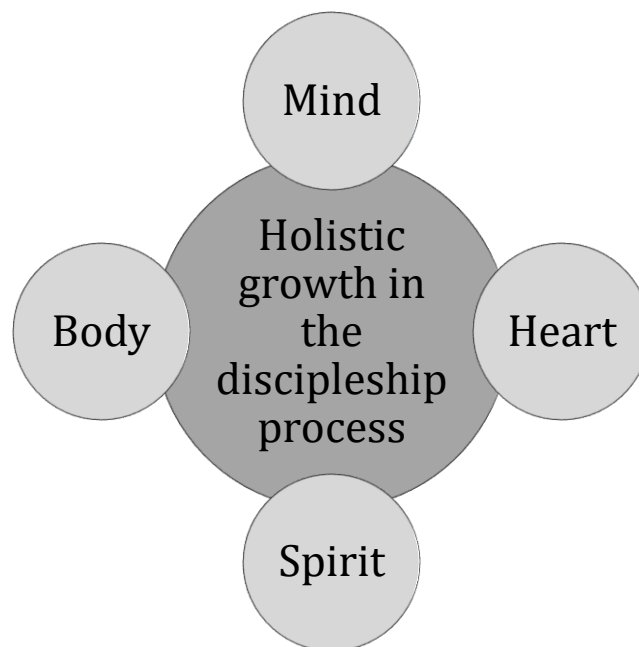
A general consensus among New Testament scholars is that Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God more than anything else during his earthly ministry. N.T. Wright has written extensively on the subject matter, especially in his book, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Scot McKnight concurs. In two different volumes, the author connects the Story of Israel to the Story of Jesus in terms of the Kingdom of God with Jesus as King (*The King Jesus Gospel; Kingdom Conspiracy*).

In addition, the work of George Ladd is of seminal significance in comprehending the New Testament, particularly with respect to the substance of Jesus' teachings regarding the kingdom of God. Ladd's seminal work establishes the centrality of the presence of Christ's kingdom within the church while avoiding the conflation of the two entities. Consequently, Ladd's contribution provides crucial insights into the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church, thereby enhancing the understanding of the New Testament's theological and ecclesiastical dimensions.

The gospel of the Kingdom is all inclusive and all embracing. The process of making disciples has for its telos bringing the Kingdom of God in our midst through the hard work of transformation: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor. 5:17). A holistic approach to discipleship is envisaged because, as Ronald Sider points out, the aim of a 360-degree discipleship model is not just to help humanity be a little kinder, be drug-free or financially independent, but to invite it into a process of holistic transformation by the Spirit (77). In the excellent commentary on Leviticus, the scholar Gordon Wenham argues that God's call to holiness reveals a holistic spirituality. Indeed, God is interested to see humanity forgiven because the "[Jewish] rites teach that no man, however holy, can approach the presence of God without appropriate atonement being made" (361). But prior to Leviticus chapter 16, Wenham rightly argues that God's concern stretches far above the spirit realm. The Mosaic Law brings a whole message to a whole person, to a whole community. In Leviticus 11, God is interested in their diet. In Leviticus 13 and 14 He is concerned for their hygiene, cleanliness, and physical health.

Later, He cares for the quality of their relationships (Lev. 18). This is what Kim Hammond and Darren Cronshaw call shalom spirituality (89–90).

In the New Testament, there are a few key passages that point to a holistic approach to discipleship, as exemplified by Jesus and later taught by the apostles. Luke provides in chapter two another word-painting in which the work and progress of long years is depicted. If not careful, the brief statement “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor” (Luke 2:52) can easily be overlooked at a first glance. Looking at the verse from a discipleship lens reveals at least four areas of growth, all of which make up for an integrated approach to spirituality. This one small verse has the fundamental seeds of holistic spirituality: the intellectual seed, the physical seed, the spiritual seed, and the relational seed. There is something for the mind, for the body, for the heart, and for the spirit, as the figure below shows.



**Fig. 1.4. Holistic spirituality.**



Jesus throughout his ministry - through his preaching and behavior - demonstrated that God the Father is concerned for the whole being, for the whole community. He preached the good news and also addressed justice issues (Luke 4:18-19). Hughes says that discipleship is only complete when there is harmony between words and deeds (8). Jesus taught the disciples to pray in a shared manner, not “My Father,” but “Our Father”. Not “my bread,” but “our Bread”.

Another important New Testament passage is found in 3 John 2: “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.” This verse has caused all types of controversy, but that is beside the point. The essence of the verse is to keep in harmony both the material and the immaterial, the body and the soul. It also addresses “split-level Christianity” in which the Christian faith interacts with the ultimate life issues like sin and salvation but disregards secondary issues (Hiebert and Shaw). Holistic spirituality, in the eyes of Jesus’ main witnesses, the Twelve plus apostle Paul, means that every component of life is brought under the Lordship of Christ including worldview, values, priority, and behavior.

### *Worldview*

A disciple’s worldview changes as the narrative of Scripture becomes clear. The biblical stories mark his or her character to the point that he or she affirms that God is the source of life and all blessing. He is the sovereign God, and Lord of all created. David Dockery, the former president of Union University – Jackson, Tennessee – wrote the following about the importance of adopting a Christian worldview:

A Christian worldview is not just one’s personal faith expression, not just a theory. It is an all-consuming way of life, applicable to all spheres of life. [ . .

.] A Christian worldview has the stamp of reason and reality and can stand the test of history and experience. A Christian view of the world cannot be infringed upon, accepted or rejected piecemeal, but stands or falls on its integrity. Such a holistic approach offers a stability of thought, a unity of comprehensive insight that bears not only on the religious sphere but also on the whole of thought. A Christian worldview is not built on two types of truth (religious and philosophical or scientific) but on a universal principle and all-embracing system that shapes religion, natural and social sciences, law, history, health care, the arts, the humanities, and all disciplines of study with application for all of life” (Dockery)

### *Values*

Few, if any, can argue against what has become obvious within an increasingly secular world: attacks on the church, and implicitly, on Christianity, are rampant. Secularized institutions and non-profits have become extremely vocal – some radical – in believing that Christian ideas, institutions, and values have lost their social significance. The fight to restore the Christian values in the hearts and minds of the newly converted disciples is fierce but worth it.

Christians must ensure that in the discipleship process, new converts are taught scriptural truth regarding values and lifestyle including the unconditional love of God and neighbors, loyalty in marriage, wise stewardship, and sacredness of life. The unconditional love of God and neighbors is observed in the following text:

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him,  
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,

and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matt. 22:36-40).

According to Osborne, the Jesus creed parallels the Old Testament Shema and has tremendous resonance with New Testament Christian ethics. It is the essence of Christian spiritual ethics, and ultimately defines the Christian life lived within an agape context (Osborne 826).

Another Christian value is loyalty in marriage. This value is found in the first gospel.

Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Matt. 19:3-6).

With the ever-increasing number of couples divorcing within a secular, post-Christian society, Jesus’ words become the rule of thumb in the discipleship process. The need to emphasize loyalty in marriage is acute. It is important to note here that Jesus responds to an intimidating question by quoting from the book of Genesis, the creation principle, which according to Jewish hermeneutics, was the highest end of authority (Osborne 700).

Right next to loyalty in marriage we find another important value: wise stewardship. At its core, Christian stewardship is the recognition that our possessions, whether material or intellectual, are a gift from God. As we journey with God throughout this ephemeral life, we recognize that it is by sheer grace that we have been given time, talents, possessions, and money in order to bless our neighbor and make this world a better place. At least two parables tackle the issues of stewardship: The parable of the ten pounds (Luke 19:11-27) and the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

A final Christian value is the sacredness of life. The sanctity of life stems out of the truth that human beings are created in the *imago Dei*. Consequently, a disciple of Jesus respects human beings of all colors, all races, and all status. Furthermore, he or she fights for the rights of unborn babies, for the rights of the underprivileged, the oppressed, and for the rights of the poor and downtrodden.

### *Priorities*

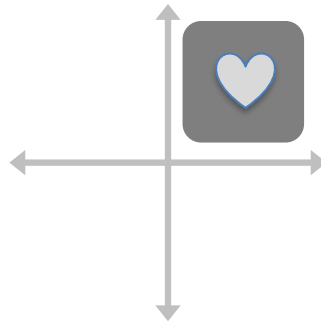
Understanding and embracing the correct priorities for a new Christian is vital for salvation and holistic growth. Even after serving in ministry for several years, Christians still tend to fight with "misaligned priorities." Jesus warns his disciples of the tendency of getting their priorities mixed in one of the most famous speeches, the Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed, your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:31-33).

### *Behavior*

While it is true that Christians should not teach converts a legalistic gospel, Christianity *per se* does have superior behavioral standards. It most certainly involves a radical life change (Acts 2:47; 4:32-34). Loving one's neighbor unconditionally, even to the point of risking one's life, becomes the norm, not an auxiliary command. Denying oneself and taking up the cross for the sake of Jesus and His mission is an inward reality with outward behavioral consequences.

### **Relational Discipleship**

#### *Relational Discipleship*



**Fig. 1.5. Heartfelt discipleship.**

In essence, biblical discipleship, especially seen through Jewish eyes, presupposes a priori, a relational context. This is the context whereby the spiritual mentor pours himself into the life of the disciple(s). In a Hebraic understanding of discipleship, or spiritual formation, the relational aspect is never absent. It is a *sine qua non* condition. A knowledge of the reality of the Hebraic term *yada* is first grounded in a covenantal, relational knowledge of God, which obviously extends to all matters of spiritual formation. It is true that the idea of discipleship was widespread in the Greco-Roman world, as many sophists and philosophers were itinerant, going to and fro all throughout

the Mediterranean. But the predominant worldview in monotheistic circles was colored more by its use in Jewish rabbinic training (Longenecker; Krallmann 31–34).

A systematic accumulation of knowledge and the formation of skills, whether spiritual or not, takes place in the context of a devoted relationship between people. Old Testament models like Moses and Joshua (Exod. 24:12-14) and Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21) are the most visible. Others, less visible but nevertheless meaningful, are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Transitioning to the New Testament examples include Jesus and the Twelve (Matt. 4:18-21), Paul and Timothy, and Barnabas and Mark. Paul over the course of time mentions in his epistles more than thirty different relationships he developed (McCallum and Lowery 22).

Discipleship is a first and foremost an issue of imitation, a matter of following in someone's footsteps. Paul weaves this as an underlying theme like a red thread throughout his letters. Even apostle Peter encapsulates this truth when he writes: "Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). Historical records indicate that in antiquity, rabbinical figures engaged in extensive periods of mentorship alongside their pupils, wherein they imparted not only their personal ethos but also their interpretations of sacred texts, as well as methodologies for disseminating these teachings. Parallels can be drawn to the instructional model of Jesus, who similarly partook in prolonged cohabitation with his disciples. The progression of discipleship during this era constituted a comprehensive metamorphosis of the novice into a proficient rabbi, marked by the seamless transmission of the mentor's multifaceted repertoire encompassing moral fiber, erudition, principles, and sagacity (McCallum and Lowery 433-440).

The relational factor is often underestimated and marginalized in a contemporary Romanian Pentecostal discipleship scheme. This is ironic since Romanians are known for their more extrovert temperament, relational knack. Brandon Hatmaker rightly critiques a non-relational model of discipleship with these words:

We know we have good news. But that doesn't automatically mean we are good news. Knowing the difference matters. When someone doesn't share our priorities and doesn't really know us, forcing them to listen to us may not come across as good news. When we don't have the relational context or trust with someone who knows our heart and our motive, there are times when our words can do more damage than good. (ch. 5)

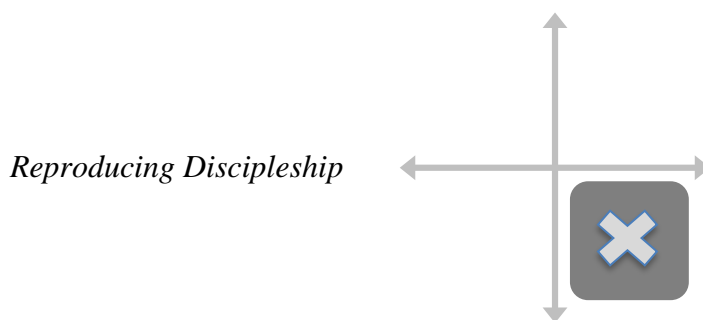
Robert Gallaty in *Growing Up* believes in relational discipleship so much so that he provides a substantial amount of space in motivating believers to find avenues for building authentic friendships in the scope of winning people for Jesus (200-235).

Scripture offers at least four reasons for the importance of the relational aspect:

1. It provides a framework for personal development for all involved in the apprenticeship process.
2. It creates the right context for fellowship, and the mentor becomes vulnerable in this process with his or her life being like an open book for the disciple.
3. It offers the possibility of personalizing the discipleship process with person, adapting it to the specific needs of the apprentice, in a peculiar context and situation.
4. It gives ultimate importance to individual responsibility, that is, it gives the apprentice the possibility to practice the things learned.

The act of instructing individuals en masse, while essential, falls short of adequately equipping leaders because the sporadic assembly of congregants for discipleship proves insufficient (Robert Coleman 11). Indeed, the development of individuals into leaders represents a formidable challenge that demands sustained, intimate investment, akin to the care that a parent provides to their offspring. Such a process cannot be achieved through institutional or didactic means, for the upbringing of children cannot be delegated to surrogates. The example of Jesus highlights that effective leadership formation is contingent upon the proximity of the mentor to the mentee (Volkmer 173).

### **Reproducible Discipleship**



**Fig. 1.6. Multiplying discipleship.**

The principle of multiplication is one of the most necessary, and usually most often forgotten, ingredients in the process of discipleship. The training of the disciples for their spiritual maturity aims both at their resemblance to Christ and their ability to multiply, that is, to pass on the gospel message. Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson observe that “apprenticeship is not about finding people who can help us do tasks more effectively. We’re not talking about preparing people to simply replace us so we can move on to something else. At the heart of biblical apprenticeship is a mindset of



reproduction: reproducing our leadership so the mission will be carried on to future generations” (ch.4).

God’s plan in Genesis, as noted in the previous chapter, was to fill the earth with sons and daughters who were fully capable to represent Him in a meaningful and productive way. This is implied in the command found in the creation narrative “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth.” (Gen. 1:28). The New Testament replica to the Genesis narrative is found in the Gospel of Matthew 28:18-20. In order to fill the earth with born again and Spirit-filled human beings, Jesus explicitly commands the eleven disciples present in Galilee to go all throughout the world with the clear scope of making disciples by way of preaching, teaching, living, baptizing, healing and so on.

The Old and the New Testaments provide clear teaching on reproducing discipleship. It is the biblical model given for how to teach our children and grandchildren the holistic faith that others have patiently shared with us. Genesis 18:19 shows the transgenerational character of multiplication: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob’s sons. Evidently this does not mean that our salvific experience is passed on automatically. Every generation must accept the call of discipleship personally and volitionally. However, when it comes to discipleship, it is the telos to have spiritual grandchildren, as Harvey Herman correctly observes (47). Equipping must be done in such a way that it entails from the very beginning an undisputable drive towards reproducing. Another Old Testament passage is found in the Shema, the heart of the Torah. The sixth chapter of Deuteronomy explicitly commands believers to instill within their children the laws of Yahweh. And this is to be done in the most creative and nonformal way possible: “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your

heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:6-7). The ordinances are given within the entire assembly so not just individual families are targeted but also the larger faith community. Psalm 78 reiterates the discipleship command found in the Shema. There is a great responsibility placed on the shoulders of those whose faith has matured in time.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children [...] (Psalm 78:1-6)

Turning to the minor prophets, one key proponent of reproducing discipleship is the prophet Joel, son of Pethuel. Writing almost six centuries before Jesus’ arrival on the stage, Joel writes to his covenantal community of the importance of passing down key events of Israel’s past (Joel 1:2-3). Memory plays an important role in the life of the prophetic community (Hubbard 44–45). It is this gift of the biblical text to which Walter Brueggemann points in his book *The Word That Redescribes the World*. Memory against amnesia, according to the Old Testament scholar, is a wonderful gift that the biblical

prophets turn to in order to move the faith community towards Yahweh who is the sole object of Jewish worship (10). Doxological remembering is a poetical, imaginative shift from a private subject to the sumptuousness of the One True God who plays the major role in the true story of the world (Brueggemann 12). The prophet Joel, right from his prologue, reminds the teachers of the covenant of their discipleship role.

Disciple reproduction was expected in the rabbinic period as well. A biblical scholar and an expert on first-century Judaism, recalls that Hillel, one of the most famous rabbis of the day, raised up over seventy disciples (Riches and Riches 29). His teaching, moreover, was carried on by Yochanan ben Zakkhai, who raised up five other disciples and Rabbi Akiva who is known to have thousands who followed him to learn the Torah (Riches and Riches 29).

Reproducing discipleship is a theme explicitly highlighted in Paul's second letter to his young prodigy, Timothy: "You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well" (2 Tim. 2:1-2). A biblical disciple making model is one that moves past the second, third and into the fourth generation. Passing on the faith is simply not auxiliary to the Christian discipleship model. Sadly, however, as both George Barna and Ken Sidey note, less than a quarter of all church growth in North America comes by a way of conversion (Barna, *Grow Your Church* 132; Sidey 46). Church hopping, or growing through church transfers, is not and should not be the biblical route to growth.

## Theological Foundations

The process of discipleship holds profound implications for an individual's spiritual journey, and its depth is intricately intertwined with the individual's comprehension and application of theological principles, including but not limited to those concerning salvation, holiness, and Spirit baptism. A thorough exploration of these theological concepts and their direct relevance to discipleship is vital to grasp the intricacies of faith formation within the context of the Romanian Pentecostal tradition. In the following section, an analysis of these theological constructs will be undertaken to illuminate their influence on the perspectives and practices of discipleship within the Romanian Pentecostal tradition. By discerning the interplay between theological convictions and discipleship dynamics, we can gain valuable insights into the spiritual formation and growth processes within this faith community.

### Salvation

Danut Manastireanu is a Romanian scholar that has had a wide exposure to Romanian evangelicalism. He has written on the topic of discipleship not as an expert but as one who has an insider's take on the post-communist church. Being raised in a Brethren church, he quickly became aware of the inability of many evangelical churches to fulfill the call to fruitful discipleship and to provide feasible solutions to social concerns. According to Manastireanu, this inability is only partially explained by the pressure of Communist authorities. The other side of the story is theological in nature ("On Discipleship").

Manastireanu believes the root problem lies in a "simplistic and reductionistic understanding of salvation" which highlights the forgiveness of sins as an *event* to the

detriment of the process of discipleship (“On Discipleship”). In short, there is an obsession with conversion: saying the sinner’s prayer, signing a card, making a decision for Christ by raising one’s hand, coming to the altar for a holy experience. This obsession was later fueled by pragmatic and number-driven expectations of Western missionary agencies. Western missionaries concentrated on counting heads because this was the pragmatic and perhaps most efficient way to “prove” the fruitfulness of foreign ministry. In reality, a lot of the foreign evangelistic missionary efforts ended up developing feeble Christians and not strong Christ-followers that enrolled in the long, painful and costly process of discipleship. Cheap Christianity is what Bonhoeffer critiqued in his classic Christian thought work, *The Cost of Discipleship*. According to Bonhoeffer, as the church accommodated to the requirements of society, grace became a common good of a tainted society and as a result, it became “cheap grace”, that is, grace without discipleship, grace without any cost (43–45).

Romanian Pentecostals, in general, have emphasized the need to save souls more than the need to disciple souls because the former was always considered essential and urgent while the latter was marginally touched upon, leaving one with the thought that discipleship was optional. Manastireanu’s comments here are relevant:

If the Gospel is only about “saving souls,” then why bother with more? Producing as many conversions as possible becomes then the need of the hour, the only urgent task of the Church. Such a conclusion, however, I believe is totally wrong from a Biblical perspective. [...] Instead of “holy nation,” we witness the creation of a society where most people have ‘the assurance of salvation’ because they

once said yes to Christ, while living basically like the pagans around them ( “On Discipleship”).

This flawed understanding of salvation has been passed down from one generation to the next and it has had serious consequences: personal, ecclesial, and social. The bottom line is, Christians are not just being saved from, but being saved for a calling that goes beyond the individual. It extends to all of creation.

### **Holiness**

When salvation is rightly understood, it provides the rationale for a robust theology on matters that pertain to both personal and communal holiness. On the other hand, when salvation is understood in simplistic and reductionist forms, then spiritual formation is compromised. It leads to devastating consequences.

First, it leads to a great emphasis on private spirituality over and against public spirituality, and a great concern for personal salvation instead of a cosmic renewal of all creation. This way of viewing the theological doctrine of sanctification shows how much the hyper-individualistic global mentality pervaded the church making even the spiritual practices that were supposed to be communal private. Unfortunately, that is also the case among Pentecostals in Romania.

Personal holiness is the apex of discipleship in Romanian Pentecostalism. If one exercises the spiritual disciplines – those connected directly to the life of Jesus and the apostles including prayer, fasting, giving, serving, and others - he or she is commended and placed in high positions of ministry. Societal involvement and impact are not accounted for. Sadly, this artificial separation has led to a caricature of the church because, theologically speaking, the church is supposed to advocate for personal holiness

and social holiness and for personal and social change. John Wesley's emphasis on social holiness came at a time when personal piety was abundant but not effective and definitely not impacting society (Yrigoyen, ch.4; Eli 3). For Wesley, religion is not humanity's means of escape to a more tolerable heavenly realm; rather he sees a synergistic participation in God's own redemptive purpose to bring holiness and justice to all the earth. In this regard, Wesley spoke loudly against the cruel, inhumane practice of slavery. He advocated for the rights of the poor long before liberation theologians, like Gustavo Gutierrez, articulated the term "the preferential option for the poor" (Gutierrez; Gutierrez et al.). Wesley also was an advocate of women and their right to equal educational and economic opportunities.

Wesley's perspective on social and political issues expands the broader soteriological picture. In this sense, Romanian Pentecostal soteriology needs to be grounded in the Word of God in order to understand salvation in holistic terms. The Gospel needs to be understood both in personal and public terms. It starts by working in the life of the individual, but it should end up renewing all of God's creation. The hyper-individualism that is pervasive among Pentecostal communities needs to be replaced with intentional reciprocal discipleship.

A second issue, besides overemphasizing private spirituality over and against public spirituality, is a greater weight placed on outward holiness instead of inward holiness. Early Pentecostal pioneers were acknowledged as model Christians and commended for the seriousness in which they embraced the Gospel demands of holy living in their mundane lives. In this regard, John Wesley's famous phrase "inward and outward holiness" was kept in a right balance in the lives of the first Pentecostal leaders.

His interpretation of holiness as having an inward and outward foci is his unique contribution to Christian theology and praxis (Mannoia and Thorsen 55–56). Their spirituality had both form and content, and it was meaningful in their context. According to Jemna, sorrowfully, this exemplary charismatic holy living was not transferred from one generation to the next. He writes:

From the point of view of spirituality, the content that gives internal cohesion to the community is weaker and weaker. We are speaking of: a diluted [Pentecostal] experience and a minimalist theology; a literalist biblical hermeneutic and a stricter set of rules with regards to [personal and] community life. To make up for the loss, there is an increasing emphasis on the form of manifestation and on institutional structures. The new leaders seem to be concerned more with this formal dimension. The phrase “let’s hold on to what has been inherited” increasingly refers to [...] elements that were culturally relevant to the epoch of the early pioneers, namely aspects that deal with clothing, music... (Jemna, "Viitorul Comunitatii Penticostale" )

The relationship between inward holiness and outward holiness gradually grew out of balance. It eventually became dysfunctional and, at times, even hostile. In such cases, outward holiness – because it is easier to control - always wins the battle. This is in stark opposition to Wesley’s understanding of the relationship between the two. According to Wesley, inward holiness is an “immutable, invariable state”, whereas, there are many degrees of outward holiness, corresponding to many Christian traditions having love as its core value (Outler 160). The former is non-negotiable, the latter, contextual and relative, depending on cultural and religious factors. This truth, however, was not



properly understood when it was passed down from the first generation of Pentecostal leaders to the next. As a result, the formal bent of second-generation leaders emphasized outward holiness – limiting Christian discipleship thus to strict outward rules and regulations – which sadly led overtime to an impoverishing legalism. Again, Jemna's analysis of the Pentecostal movement is valid:

Due to the inability to manage the constant change of societal dynamics after 1990, legalism, a typical inclination of religious fundamentalists, is an issue that is radicalizing more and more [believers] in the Pentecostal community. This legalist bent grows as a result of the actual crisis faced in Romanian Pentecostalism as a whole and, in particular, as a result of certain local Pentecostal communities that recently embraced certain forms labeled as “liberal” [dancing and clapping of hands in worship services, women wearing pants and no head-coverings] (D. Jemna, "Viitorul Comunitatii Penticostale").

Discipleship is reduced to outdated rules and principles that promote archaic forms of music, dress, and a very sober style of worship. Jemna names it “cosmetic theology” (D. Jemna, "Viitorul Comunitatii Penticostale"). Unfortunately, this legalist approach, coupled with a theologically unsound and biblically inaccurate understanding of discipleship, is creating a lot of tension within many Pentecostal churches. There is much strife within Pentecostal churches due to leaders' inability to distinguish between essential and nonessential issues, between an immutable, invariable state of inward holiness and a relative, contextual, time-bound state of outward holiness.

### **Baptism in the Spirit**

Romanian Pentecostal spirituality focuses on the personal experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit and on certain supernatural gifts, not on the aftermath of the Spirit-empowerment for the *missio Dei*. The experience, similar to other Pentecostal circles, as both Simon Chan and Keith Warrington highlight, is seen as something private, an individual event affecting the personal and private life of the relentlessly seeking believer (Chan 98; Warrington 129-30). Believers initially were encouraged to seek the Pentecostal subsequent experience of Spirit-filing for a couple of reasons: (1) Incorporation into the Christian church; (2) Divine bestowal of supernatural gifts; (3) Divine empowerment for subsequent sanctification. Rarely was Spirit baptism correlated to discipleship and even more rarely was it connected to the church's missional scope. As a result, as Warrington points out, baptism in the Holy Spirit became the goal of Christian spirituality, a sort of "membership card into (the) Pentecostal club" (125). The natural consequence of such a view is that it gave Spirit-filled believers a natural sense of completeness. A second consequence is that there is a "tendency to seek the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in order to speak in tongues rather than to be influenced by the Spirit in one's life and behavior" (Warrington 127).

Due to the lack of a coherent theological content, D. Jemna observes that from one generation to then next there seems to be a diluted Spirit baptism experience (D. Jemna, "Viitorul Comunitatii Penticostale"). That is because the process by which the Pentecostal experience has been initiated and preserved within communities has been completely institutionalized. In contrast to early Pentecostal communities, the current emphasis is on technique and on a unilateral human initiative such as repeated words,

certain prayer postures, certain rituals prior to the agonizing prayers, and so forth. This strategy completely neglects the Spirit-dimension, the divine initiative. It is as if God is forced to baptize a believer with the Spirit as a result of human effort. Moreover, this institutionalization of the Pentecostal experience completely removed intentional discipleship out of the scheme. Biblically speaking, however, the life lived in the Spirit is a life lived on the Spirit's mission, which has always been to restore creation by the renewal of humanity.

### **Educational Foundations**

#### **Pentecostalism and Orality**

The rise of the Pentecostal movement in Romania signaled a fresh move of the Spirit among Neo-Protestants. Prior to Pentecostalism, two other evangelical movements, Baptists and Christian Brethren, had made their appearance on Romania's monolithic religious landscape. The Baptist community was the older evangelical community with more than a half a century of experience. Because of their religious fervor and wholehearted desire to preach the gospel, they quickly became known in major parts of the country as the unique evangelical movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century (I. Bunaciu; O. Bunaciu, "Romanian Baptists").

Pentecostalism emerged in the early twentieth century because of a few protestant members who decided to relinquish a certain religious Protestant identity in order to embrace new manifestations of the Spirit, similar to those of the first-century Christians and also similar to those found at the Azusa Revival. Although these supernatural manifestations were viewed from the outside as bizarre and therefore with suspicion,

from the inside they were strongly justified by a literal hermeneutic of the early church's manifestation found in the book of Acts.

In its beginning stages, regarding identity, the Pentecostal community developed as an oral movement in a rural setting. This setting remained predominantly oral for more than half a century. By the end of the nineteenth century, only 22% of Romania's population was literate. In the first years of the twentieth century, more specifically in 1912, the literacy rate grows to 39.3%. Compared to other European neighboring countries, like Bulgaria with a literacy rate of 60.3% in 1926 or Hungary with a literacy rate of 84,8% in 1920, in the literacy marathon Romania was at the end of the pack (Mănuilă and Georgescu).

The Pentecostal community's distinctive spirituality and theology is passed down orally through sermons, testimonies, and exuberant songs, all of which speak of supernatural experiences, Holy Spirit breakthroughs and life-changing encounters. The Pentecostal enthusiastic Spirit-filled worship left a lasting impact on the congregation. This phenomenon, however, is not only limited to the Romanian Pentecostal community. According to John Sims, even in the north-American Pentecostal denomination, Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, for early pioneers, theology and ministry were an exercise of praxis, meaning that ministry and theological training took place in an atmosphere of worship and witness within the local church (101–02). The local church's worship experience became the context whereby the new soteriological family helped congregants exegete their unique story in the light of God's story (Vest and Land 150). In agreement with Archer's doctoral thesis, Romanian Pentecostal hermeneutics took seriously the triadic dialog between the Holy Spirit, the text, and the community (Archer 215-250).

This powerful and atypical religious experience, coupled with a unique ethos, was met with harsh critiques from both the religious and the non-religious contexts. As more people were embracing a modern worldview, a new religious movement that experienced unique manifestations of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, word of knowledge, and others, seemed out of place, totally bizarre. Religious rationalists along with atheist secularists simply dismissed any Pentecostal claims to truth and denied its validity. Danut Jemna sadly notes that

Not only from their appearance, but throughout their history in Romania, before and after the fall of Communism, Pentecostals were subject to sarcasm, contempt, fear and prejudice from most people (there are numerous testimonies in this respect, from the newspapers of the era, to religious literature that consider Pentecostalism a heresy and a threat to mainstream Christianity) (D. Jemna, "Viitorul Comunitatii Penticostale").

This negative attitude did not hinder the community from worshiping and witnessing. As a matter of fact, the Pentecostal movement caught on fire as more and more people from the rural context experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, divine visions, and other supernatural phenomena.

### **The Side Effects of Orality on Romanian Pentecostalism**

#### *Illiteracy of the Evangelical Movement*

Jemna reveals another side to the Pentecostal story that is needed in order to fully understand its idiosyncrasies. With their heavy emphasis on orality as a means of forging a peculiar identity and tradition, Pentecostal pioneers neglected or undervalued intentional efforts to elaborate fundamental theological texts that justified their unique

story as part of the grander God-story. The experiential nature of Romanian Pentecostal spirituality is an overriding factor that was passed down from one generation to the next. Defining and explaining the Pentecostal story in the economy of the Spirit from a theological vantage point, amid a dominant Orthodox religious context, was never an important or urgent task of the early pioneers. A couple of other factors need to be considered.

First, the anemic desire for writing a robust Pentecostal theology, with its distinctive identity, typically was seen not only in the Pentecostal community, but also in all Evangelical faith communities in Romania at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, Pentecostals were “in accord” with their evangelical siblings. Neither the Baptists nor the Christian brethren put much thought into writing theological texts that matched their distinctive identity. With less than a third of the population literate there is little wonder. Even the Orthodox church publicly recognized the illiteracy of the evangelical movement.

Second, many Pentecostals in the early 1920s came from modest educational backgrounds and therefore lacked serious theological training. With more than 80% of Romanians living in poor rural settings and under harsh conditions, education was an expensive and rare commodity reserved for the elite ruling class. Even if there was a felt need for theological work in the growing Pentecostal rural communities, no one was able to step in and fulfill it.

Third, the early pioneer Pentecostal mindset that viewed the words “Pentecostal” and “scholar” as mutually exclusive terms. A recurring biblical argument used was: “As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need

anyone to teach you” (1 John 2:27a). This epistemological immediacy coupled with an expectant apocalypticism made Pentecostals weary of intellectual pursuits. This awkward mindset, however, was found in other Pentecostal circles around the globe. Grant Wacker’s book, *Heaven Below*, chronicles the anti-intellectual nature of early north American Pentecostals, proving that many viewed intellectual endeavors as a waste of time (Wacker, ch.9). Their eschatological and missionary zeal was a major barrier in this sense.

Fourth, for Pentecostals, like their evangelical siblings, the concept of Christian tradition set forth by the Orthodox Church is contested, viewed pejoratively, and ultimately rejected. As a result, there is no understanding of a common theological dogma or creed and little preoccupation for early church or medieval theological writings, which would have been an important starting place. The abuse of the concept of tradition by some Orthodox local churches gave these believers enough reasons to reject everything that stemmed out of the tradition. Their only rule of law and of ecclesial authority was the Bible, *Sola Scriptura*.

The need for Romanian Pentecostals to define their experience appeared intrinsically due to the unexpected explosive growth experienced from 1922 up until the 1950s. By the end of 1922, the first Pentecostal congregation had more than two dozen members. In an article about Neo-Protestant traditions in Romania between 1945-1965, scholar Gheorghe Modoran writes that in 1958 there were roughly 54,000 Pentecostal members. Gheorghe Bradin, the founder of the Pentecostal movement, initially attempted to receive official recognition in 1922, but the authorities ignored his passionate appeals. Although Romania’s constitution stipulated the freedom of all Romanian citizens,

regardless of their religious affiliations, the reality was that the activities of churches other than the Orthodox Church, were met with fierce opposition. This explains why when a Romanian American Pentecostal came to visit and evangelize his homeland, Romania, he was immediately arrested. Such stories led to intensified efforts from Bradin and other key leaders from the city of Arad to persevere in obtaining all the legalities in birthing an official Pentecostal Cult in Romania. As Jemna highlights, Pentecostals were “forced” to write a legal document that contained two important parts: their by-laws and articles of faith (D. Jemna, "Viitorul Comunitatii Pentecostale"). Jemna’s comments regarding the by-laws and articles of faith prove the overarching problem. Instead of starting with a theological construct already formulated by other Protestant faith groups and instead of appealing to historical Christian traditions, like the Orthodox tradition with its rich theological experience, early Pentecostal pioneers superficially wrote something down just so they can move forward with the documents required by state officials.

The negligence of an intentional communal effort to articulate a biblically rooted, theologically sound, distinctive Pentecostal theology was not a problem for the growing Pentecostal community amid persecution but it led to serious problems for future generations. First, up to this day there is no robust Romanian Pentecostal theology available. Only in the last ten years prominent evangelical publishing companies have shown interest in translating key western Pentecostal authors who have spilled a lot of ink on the marks of a distinctive Pentecostal theology. Authors like Stanley Horton, Gordon Fee, Frank Macchia, and Stephen Land have very few books translated, while scholars like James K.A. Smith, and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen have no books translated in Romanian. Part of the problem was that as early pioneers were exiting important



leadership positions, the new generation of church leaders were just as poorly educated, both intellectually and theologically, which meant that the community continued to engage society with a minimalist understanding of theology and ecclesiology. It also continued its emphasis on orality. Although some scholars have meagerly attempted to write Pentecostal theology texts after the fall of Communism in December 1989, it has never been an intentional denominational project. Intriguingly, after Pentecostals became officially recognized in 1950, no serious endeavor has been made to revise its initial minimalist articles of faith, which according to Jemna, proves a lack of theological preoccupation for its identity even to this day ("Viitorul Comunitatii Penticostale").

*Confused Ecclesiology and a Weak Missiology*

Several consequences are the result of such negligence including a confused ecclesiology and a weak missiology. The confused ecclesial model promoted by the Pentecostal community represents a major obstacle in the development of a coherent Pentecostal ecclesial structure that should be biblically and theologically grounded. Pentecostal by-laws foresee a system of ordination of deacons, presbyters, and pastors that is based on certain formal criteria which can be easily influenced by politics and other contested charismatic methods such as prophecy, visions, and others. In reality, the three official roles are mixed and confusing. In addition, because the highest authority in the church is the general assembly, the institutional mechanism by which a member is installed in ministry is numerical support and by adherence to the Pentecostal by-laws and articles of faith. Fruitfulness and the ability to make disciples is ironically not even a general condition for ordination. The result of such negligence is evident in the number of ordained ministers who have no calling and gifts for these ministries yet are placed in

leadership roles because they can fulfill the formal criteria (D. Jemna “Are Biserica Pentecostala”). Moreover, because of a weak ecclesiology, the religious aspect is exaggerated in defining personal identity and church involvement. Consequently, clergy positions and leadership ecclesial positions are considered more valuable and almost always superior to any other profession in the marketplace. Danut Manastireanu, an ex-evangelical Romanian Anglican scholar writes:

Religious activities like prayer, preaching, evangelism, and full-time Christian ministry are sacred and superior in quality to earthly, mundane activities like cooking, pursuing a secular profession or political career, or the pure manifestation of artistic creativity, unless it is an effective means of Christian ‘propaganda.’ (“On Discipleship – Answers to Questions”)

Manastireanu’s comments are valuable because they not only point to a weak ecclesiology but also to a weak missiology, which leads to the next point.

Romanian Pentecostal missiology is inwardly focused and predominantly based on religious activism within the church walls. A great portion of the life of a Pentecostal community is centered on what happens within the church and not what transpires outside the church services. A healthy fruitful church is determined by the number of public gatherings of all sorts inside the church: three or four public liturgy services in a week, prayer meetings, bible studies, choir rehearsals, band rehearsals, worship rehearsals, youth nights, children services, and so forth. Even evangelism is seen through the eyes of a special evangelistic service hosted in a church building most of the time whereby friends and family are invited to hear an evangelistic sermon and exuberant singing and perhaps are led to “make a decision” for Christ. The Great Commission to

“Go into all the world and make disciples” becomes the Great Invitation to “Come to our church and get saved.” The Church is not on a mission to make disciples of all nations and to redeem society but rather on a mission to invite individuals to flee the hellish wrath to come by believing in Jesus and by coming out of the world into the new family of God. Without an inherited solid ecclesiology inherited, Pentecostal communities are left alone in the arduous process of deciding what does the mission of God in the world look like, and most churches fail to impact society in any way, shape, or form.

The effects of a poor theology, according to Jemna, are also seen in the dualist worldview professed by the Pentecostal community to this day (“Viitorul Comunitatii Penticostale”). Danut Manastireanu argues that this dualistic and Platonist approach to life is typical of all evangelical movements (“Evangelical Denominations”). Jemna sees that the life of a Pentecostal is defined by belonging to two separate realities, by living in two distinct worlds – the religious and the non-religious or the secular. The latter is generically known as “the world” and as such it is viewed as evil and under the reign of the devil and his angels. The believer is from the world but not of the world and as such there is a clear line of demarcation drawn in the sand. The religious life receives detailed attention while the secular life, the day-to-day life, in general, is neglected. In the “world”, Christians are left alone and strongly encouraged to resist any societal pressure to conform. The Osijek Declaration of 1991 is a desperate cry of Eastern European leaders to rediscover the church’s role in society:

In the new situation, the Eastern European churches are facing new challenges.

They need not only to adapt their commitment to evangelism in creative ways that respond to the new conditions, but also to rediscover their responsibility for socio-

economic realities. They need to place their ‘theology of martyrdom’ within the broader concept of uncompromising Christian discipleship in all the spheres of life (The Declaration of Osijek).

Societal involvement has remained largely unaddressed in pulpit discourse, a neglect rooted in the early Pentecostal community's prevailing view that engagement in the marketplace lacked virtue. This omission reflects the historical values of the movement's inception, prioritizing spiritual and ecclesiastical concerns over active participation in wider society. This doctrinal focus has led to a gap in discussing societal involvement from the pulpit, shaped by the Pentecostal tradition's historical and ideological context.

### **Historical Foundations**

#### **Pentecostalism Growing Up Under Communism**

Vasilica Croitor is a Romanian pastor and important emerging leader in the Pentecostal community. He has written a groundbreaking book on the Pentecostal church during the Communist era from 1947 to 1989. In his book, Croitor writes that in 1921, the same year the Communist party was founded, the Pentecostal movement was also birthed (3). This is not good news for the newly found religious movement because according to the author, “the entire history of the Pentecostal church is marked by the role played by the Communist Party throughout the country, starting with the interwar period” (3). Interestingly, on certain occasions, Pentecostal leaders were even accused of being instruments in the hands of Communist leaders. For example, Orthodox Archbishop of Arad, Grigorie Comsa, in a petition sent to the prefect of Arad in 1926, accused Pentecostal leaders of working alongside Communist leaders (Comşa 103–07). As Croitor highlights, the accusation mentioned above, along with other similar allegations,

has undergone extensive scrutiny and rigorous investigation. This process of meticulous examination has ultimately resulted in an unequivocal refutation of the claim.

Consequently, both the specific accusation and other similar assertions have been proven to be false (3).

When the Communist party took over the country's leadership, one of the very first things they required was a unity between the diverse Pentecostal movements that were present in major areas of the country. Prior to the Second World War the first movements of separation appeared within the greater Pentecostal movement, due to doctrinal issues of foot-washing, speaking in tongues and others. Consequently, by 1938 there were four separate Pentecostal groups: (1) Apostolic Church of God with its headquarter in Arad; (2) Christians Baptized with the Holy Spirit (CBHS) with its official address in Bucharest; (3) Disciples of Jesus Christ with its official address in Bucharest; (4) "Shakers".

To receive official recognition, the government required consensus and unity of the Pentecostal churches. Knowing this, between 1948 and 1950, the year of official recognition, key Pentecostal leaders such as Gheorghe Bradin, Ion Jiloveanu, Constantin Caraman and Alexandru Izbasa, intensified strategic campaigns to unite the three groups in religion and in global politics. Uniting them was an important step forward giving the church a certain privileged numerical status, but unification was not without some negative consequences (Berindei et al. 89). As mentioned earlier, Gheorge Modoran shows that Pentecostalism grew from 3,061 in 1948 to 53,691 in 1958 (Modoran).

Even though the Pentecostal church enjoyed a certain amount of religious freedom, in the early 50s, that status soon vanished. Anti-Christian, anti-religious

political policies followed the loss of status. Representatives of the Department of Cult, in collaboration with the *Securitate* - the secret police of the Socialist Republic of Romania - were directly involved in the activities of the Pentecostal cult. Communist policy attempted, and in many ways succeeded, to take the activities of the churches under strict control, through a number of regulations and restrictions. Laszlo Foszto and Denes Kiss present the following restrictions and regulations (Fosztó and Kiss 54):

- the regulation of the number of religious services
- the denial of religious education for children
- the dissolution of choruses and orchestras
- thematic control of the church services
- swamping of the clerical personal with administrative tasks
- restrictions on mobility
- dissolution of communities through administrative reorganizations
- controlling the permits (authorizations) of the preachers
- replacing “disobedient” leaders with loyal ones

As a result of the state’s involvement and due to their anti-Christian, anti-religious political policies, there are a couple of issues that directly or indirectly affected Pentecostalism in relation to discipleship.

#### *Limited Access to Theological Writings and Specialized Training*

In the year 1928, a pivotal gathering was convened in Păuliș, Arad, during which the Pentecostal community deliberated upon a comprehensive reorganization of the Pentecostal Church. A central objective of this assembly was to persevere in their endeavors to secure official recognition for their religious movement. As a tangible

outcome of the resolutions adopted in this meeting, the first publication entitled *Glăsuț Adevărului*, “The Voice of Truth” was disseminated in January 1929. This seminal magazine was printed in Brăila, with Ioan Bododea serving as its editor. Subsequently, in March of the same year, the periodical underwent a name change and came to be known as *Cuvântul Adevărului*, “The Word of Truth” (Rusu and Tarnovschi “Pentecostals in Romania”). It initially sold around 1,400 copies (Burgess and Maas). Bododea also supervised the *Sunday School Lessons*, another monthly publication that sold around 800 copies. Almost ten years later, due to a failed attempt to receive recognition as an official religious association the Romanian government forbade the publication of “Word of Truth.” It was not until the autumn of 1953 that the Pentecostal church began republishing their main periodical, this time with a changed name, *Buletinul Cultului Penticostal*, “Bulletin of the Pentecostal Church”. Regarding the corpus of additional literary works, it is reported by Codreanu that Bododea made significant contributions as an author, encompassing notable titles such as "Pilot Report," "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," "The Spiritual Gifts in the Light of the Scripture," and "A Study in Revelation." (Burgess and Maas 214).

Another important figure that distinguished himself in writing was Eugen Bodor. Bodor, a Pentecostal pastor, faced legal repercussions in 1961, receiving a five-year prison sentence subsequent to being accused of mysticism and being perceived as a societal threat. Bodor “was probably the most qualified Pentecostal worker before and after WWII [...] Bodor edited and printed several works, including a Romanian songbook, *Constitution of Assemblies of God for the Pentecostal Fellowship, Principles of Faith of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Romania*, and *The Apostolic Faith*” (Burgess

and Maas 214–15). Sadly though, the official Pentecostal leaders met Bodor's studies and theological writings with suspicion and as a result, his influence diminished as the years went by (Şandru 88–89).

A general scouting of the theological works written prior to the rise of Communism shows that Pentecostals, in comparison to the other evangelical groups, had very few theological sources to work with. Beyond the orality factor studied earlier, Croitor highlights another major factor for the lack of theological resources:

From the birth of the Romanian Pentecostal movement, in 1921 and up until 1944, when the communist powerfully took over the leadership of the country, the Pentecostal Church had very few moments of peace from state officials. [...] Under such circumstances, in the first twenty years of their existence, it was natural to see all Pentecostal energy spent on developing survival techniques. There was not enough time, nor enough resources to develop efficient leadership structures, bible schools or theological manuals for potential leaders, let alone the necessary peace of mind to articulate a robust Pentecostal theology (24).

In the 1930s, European evangelists that travelled to important cities in Transylvania noted that there was a shortage of trained leaders in Romania (Burgess and Maas 214).

After World War II the Communist forcefully settled in place as the sole political authority in the country and their whole game plan changed. Their military support came from the Soviet Union, the Red Army (Tismaneanu 26). Having the Bolshevik support, between 1944 and 1948 - a revolutionary stage - the Romanian Communist Party practically neutralized all religious opposition. Their anti-religious measures became visible and aggressive, especially against church leaders. They banished the *Word of*



*Truth* periodical for seventeen year before Pentecostals were finally allowed to republish their periodical, under a different name however. This was just the beginning of a series of anti-Christian, anti-Pentecostal measures.

The regime censored all religious publications, from periodicals to brochures and other sorts of religious writings. They forbade unauthorized writing and printing of religious books, foreign or indigenous. If caught with Bibles or other religious materials at hand, severe disciplinary actions were taken:

- confiscation of all religious materials;
- costly fines;
- public humiliation;
- imprisonment;
- forced labor in inhumane conditions; and
- intentional stripping of job ranks.

All these drastic measures made it nearly impossible to have theological manuals and formally trained leaders.

After fifty-five years of malnourished existence, theologically speaking, that the Pentecostal Church was allowed to start a formal training school. Thus in 1976, the Ministry of Education, under tight restrictions approved the building of the first Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Bucharest. The good news was received alongside the bad news. The Seminary opened but it was going to operate under strict political supervision. Consequently, only a few students were allowed to undergo formal theological education. According to Bianca Rusu and Daniela Tarnovschi, the Seminary in Bucharest “brought out one class of graduates every four years; the number of students

was gradually reduced from 15 in 1976-1980 to 10 between 1980-1984, and then 5 in 1984-1988, when the Department of Cults approved the admission of three students every year” (Rusu and Tarnovschi 20).

### *Ill prepared and Compromised Leadership*

From a leadership perspective, even though the Pentecostal movement was born in times of peace - between the two World Wars - first-generation Romanian Pentecostal leaders did not establish solid leadership structures. The lack of a solid infrastructure caused many problems and the matter only got worse after the rise of the Romanian Communist Party because of the party’s policy that restricted access to leadership training for both secular and religious. Croitor documents a surprising statistic based on a study done by the Ministry of Cults in 1974 (26). The study reveals the training level of Pentecostal pastors at that time:

- Four pastors did not have 4 elementary classes.
- One hundred and nine pastors had elementary training ranging from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Four pastors had finished middle school.
- Twelve pastors had finished technical schools (up to 10<sup>th</sup> grade), some high school.
- One pastor had a bachelor’s degree.

On a positive note, such poor educational training was not an obstacle for the newly found movement since the emphasis in those days was not on education but on holy living. In the 1920s, almost 80% of the population lived in poor rural settings, and less than 50% were literate as long as the battle was fought over the incarnation of the

Christian faith and living their biblical values, first-generation Pentecostal leaders were well prepared to convince their neighbors of their higher ethic and of the privileges of being born again and Spirit-filled (Croitor 25). As a result, in the struggle to spread the good news of the Gospel to as many as possible, in the first two decades Pentecostals won over a huge crowd of sympathizers from the marginalized communities with little or no educational background.

On a negative note, such poor educational training eventually proved to be a major weakness in the confrontation with the Communist propaganda. Croitor writes:

In order to resist the aggressiveness of communist propaganda, it was necessary for educated people to understand the meaning of all the radical changes that were transforming the whole nation. The ability to understand democratic values, to detect the traps set forth by communist authorities, to avoid problematic situations apparently without exit, to possess a well-articulated system of values [...] is found in the life of a spiritually mature person, both educated and informed (26).

Many things drastically changed in 1944. The Communist plan concerning the Pentecostal church was masterfully executed. On the frontline of the Pentecostal movement the party placed leaders with poor education or leaders who could be easily enticed by financial privileges and especially leaders who relished on a higher status. From the beginning, Communists perceived Pentecostals as easy prey. It was enough to promote one from the low status of a simple farmer to one of nobility (Croitor 26) and soon you had a compliant leader. Intentional flattering, coupled with a privileged status, caused all sorts of moral failures and countless compromises. Vasilica Croitor provides examples of key leaders who collaborated with the *Securitate*.

Gheorghe Bradin, the first president of the official Pentecostal movement, was ill prepared for the leadership position he received, thus making him an easy victim of shrewd *Securitate* agents. Bradin was a simple man with no knowledge of foreign languages, which hindered any meaningful contact with the greater Pentecostal movement. More importantly he had no experience in politics. If he did, he probably would have been imprisoned. Pavel Bochian, the next president known for his long tenure, had finished only six elementary grades and according to Croitor “worked long hours on the farm, until the very day he was called to the governing structures of the Pentecostal cult, in 1951” (27). Eugen Bodor, unlike Bradin and Bochian, was more educated, and had some formal biblical and theological training in Germany and Poland. His education enabled him to foresee potential pitfalls of communistic intermingling with the Pentecostal church. Bodor nevertheless was perceived as a controversial figure and often preoccupied for personal gain. Exploiting his personal financial weaknesses, the Communists were able to win him on their side (Croitor 188-92).

The poor educational training of many pastors, the low economic status, and the naiveté of many of its leaders at the executive level left the Pentecostal movement exposed. Consequently, Pentecostals never did enjoy a strong, theologically trained visionary executive team. Due to the compromise of many of the leaders discovered over time, a strong sense of mistrust and betrayal infiltrated the struggling church. Dishonesty birthed a fear of any healthy form of accountability. The lack of integrity led to a lack of intentional, missional and reproducible discipleship. After all, once individuals were at the hand of the *Securitate* they could do little, except to play the musical piece offered.

The brave and out-spoken leaders were left voiceless, and the church was left mission-less.

The Communists influenced the leadership of the Pentecostal Church for approximately 40 years in order to constantly distort the principles of the Pentecostal faith and practices, rearranging the church organizational structure based on communist precepts. [... this] led to the compromise of the mission of the Church, which was always to be the salt and light of the world (Croitor 34).

The erosion of courageous and vocal leadership left a void in the Pentecostal Church, coinciding with a mission-deficiency, which leads to the next point.

*A “Hidden” and Missional-Less Christianity*

The Securitate infiltrated agents in every Pentecostal region. These specialized staff were able to understand the activities of the churches. From the beginning, the vision of the Communists was to drastically reduce the impact of the mystical, dynamic, and growing Pentecostal church. The vision was carried out in several ways.

First, they envisioned a clear limitation of the church’s impact through austere religious policies and legislative changes. These new laws restrained the religious life of the community. Alexandr Soljenitin in one of his poems perfectly portrays this new of life: “You can pray, freely, / But ... just so God alone can hear” (32).

The church was forced into isolation. This lead naturally to an embedded tension described elsewhere by Craig van Gelder. Pentecostal believers knew that the vast majority of God's labor in the world happens through the endeavors of laypeople outside the church walls, yet most of the church’s energy and budget focused on what happened within the church (Gelder, ch.4).

Pentecostals were allowed to worship only in legal houses of prayer (Croitor 64). With such austere measures in place believers had no other choice but to gather secretly, under closed doors, closed curtains, in the woods or up in the mountains. Many clandestine and informal house gatherings were centered on prayer and singing. This was the heartbeat of the church. It was only in the early 1980s that a foreign parachurch organization by the name of Biblical Education by Extension (BEE) was able to creatively, daringly, and illegally train Romanian leaders in discipleship based on informal methods.

Second, to reduce the time for any meaningful discipleship, church leaders were given orders to fulfill administrative roles on top of their pastoral roles. In reality, according to Fosztó and Kiss, they were “swamped with a lot of new administrative tasks, they had to make a lot of financial reports” (54). To have a legal baptism officiated in the church, a list with potential candidates was made and sent to an official from the Department of Cults. Church member transfers, church building permits, church authorizations, and important church activities including evangelism, baby dedications, prayer vigils had to be reported as well. Little time was left for discipleship.

A third method used to reduce the church’s missional impact was through the dissolution of communities through administrative reorganizations, which meant a drastic reduction of church leaders (Fosztó and Kiss 54). The diabolic plan aimed for the closure of approximately half of the Pentecostal churches. In the midst of reorganization many dynamic and visionary pastors who were capable of mobilizing the church were replaced by a lesser number of weak and subservient leaders (Croitor 52). With a few authorized

pastors serving a great number of churches, Croitor concludes that most of them spent most of their time “distributing the Lord’s Supper” (52).

As marginalized and undereducated communities, the range of expertise needed in society was relatively narrow. The Marxist-secularist-communistic ideology totally precluded any religious contribution as adequate for the public sphere. Any intermingling in societal affairs by the Pentecostal community was repressed, condemned, and fined. It became a voiceless community for the wider society. Pentecostalism grew up with and passed on an erroneous perspective, in believing that the church should not mix in societal affairs. It tragically developed as a community that emphasized spirituality within the community, with no desire to take its spirituality into the public realm. In other words, there was no missional aspiration.

### **The Historical Influences of the Orthodox Church on the Pentecostal View of Discipleship**

Romanian Evangelical religious freedom was characterized not only by a fierce struggle against the communist regime from 1945 and beyond but also by stern opposition and persecution from the dominant Orthodox Church (O. Bunaciu, "Nine Baptists"). These two fronts, the Romanian Communist Party, and the Orthodox Church, on some occasions united but on other occasions they came into conflict for communism was not simply another politico-economic system. It also emphasized an atheistic Marxist philosophy. According to Vasile Talos, Marxism embodies a comprehensive worldview that offers individuals a comprehensive framework of understanding across all aspects of life. Furthermore, it rejects the legitimacy of alternative perspectives in any domain.

Described as a secularized vision of the Kingdom of God, Marxism is perceived as the realm of human dominion rather than a divine one (Talos 23).

Opposition from the historical monopoly of the Romanian Orthodox Church characterized the years prior to the rise of Communism. The social influence of Orthodoxy in the beginning of the twentieth century cannot be overstated. Religion was very much a part of the Romanian culture. In 1877 the Prussian prince Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was invited to reign. Accepting his new role, he became King Charles I after the 1877-78 Russian-Turkish War, the war that ended the Ottoman ruling (Lakatos 7). National independence was followed by the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1885. Ever since, the Orthodox Church boasts that Orthodox Christianity is the essential element of the “Romanian soul.” As such, it serves as the guardian of faith and culture. Religious affiliation is deeply connected to national identity. Hence, to be Romanian means to be born into the Orthodox faith (Volf 1–23). Presently, the Orthodox Church continues to be considered by the majority as the national church, while Evangelicals are perceived as being estranged from the spirit of the Romanian nation and culture (Manastireanu, “Evangelical Denominations”; Fairbairn, ch. 10). In such a paradigm the understanding of Christian life takes on a different route.

In contrast to the evangelical tenet, *Sola Scriptura*, the Orthodox believers focus their attention upon The Church, based on Paul’s teaching which defines the Church as “the pillar and bulwark of truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). According to Jude 3, it is to the Church that the holy Apostles entrusted the faith. With such a biblical base, what is essential to Orthodox discipleship are the Church’s “services, Liturgies, Prayers and Sacraments, Fasts, Confessions, Feasts” (Arakaki). Robert Arakaki summarizes it best:



The Orthodox convert sees himself a part of the Liturgical and Sacramental community of the Holy Spirit. Rather than changing or reforming her into a new-and-improved Church, the Orthodox disciple is changed by Her, in the ancient Liturgies and Traditions. Here, the ancient Church calendar is prominent as the life of the Christian is transformed in and by the practiced repetition of Her Divine Liturgies, prayers, Sacramental mysteries, sacred fasts and Holy Communion. By these, the world is changed (discipled) in union with the Church, as the cultivation of humility, submission leads to what Orthodoxy call Theosis – union with God (Arakaki).

Such an understanding of discipleship obviously places a high emphasis on the church's liturgies and divine worship services. For the Orthodox, faith is church-focused, church-oriented, church-driven. It is no wonder why Pentecostal churches, in line with their Orthodox counterparts, spend so much time, energy and resources on church services and liturgies. Craig Van Gelder is right in claiming that "such congregations are often conceived of as being primarily vendors of religious goods and services" (Bliese and Gelder 68). Discipleship in this case is perceived as movement to and from a church a service: "going and coming to church". This leads to the next point.

The Orthodox Church highlights the formative role of the church's building. The architecture of the church is seen as a teaching tool in communicating a robust and a holistic Christian ethos. Russian patriarch Herman Konstantinopolsky is credited as the first Church leader to give detailed statement of symbolics of the Christian building in relation to liturgy. In the words of Konstantinopolsky "the church is the terrestrial sky in which God lives" (183). The vital importance of church buildings is another aspect where

Romanian Pentecostalism has been influenced by the traditional church. Manastireanu rightly argues that:

One of the most concrete manifestations of this tendency is the fact that in Evangelical circles a lot of effort is currently directed towards building new church buildings. Such a concentration on "brick and mortar" is easy to understand since for decades communists prevented the building of necessary facilities, except with great difficulty and at the price of many compromises. However, the size of the buildings constructed today often exceeds the present and even the foreseeable needs of the congregations. (Manastireanu, "Evangelical Denominations")

Even to this day there is an obsession with church buildings. Important denominational leaders bemoan the fact that most Pentecostal churches cannot afford to hire a full-time pastor because their money is tied up in the expensive cost of maintaining church buildings and annexed facilities.

### **Research Design Literature**

The analysis and study of how to develop an intentional, holistic, and reproducible discipleship model for the Pentecostal churches in Romania considered both a qualitative and quantitative approach. "Data collection," according to Sensing, "is a critical issue [...] If not done well, the whole process will be jeopardized" (Sensing, *Qualitative Research* 90). Regarding the qualitative aspect, in Creswell eyes, the telos of research questions is to learn from the participants (17). To complete the study, however, a quantitative aspect will be added in order to measure the current model of discipleship.

The semi-structured interview tool was used in the qualitative section to learn from the participants what is the current prevalent model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania. Unlike the highly structured and the unstructured interviews, the task of the interviewer is to assess when to probe an answer for more depth and when to guide the conversation in another direction.

Data was also collected using two quantitative research methods. The reason for the probing was not only to understand to what extent the current discipleship model is intentional, holistic, and reproducing, but also to find the best practices in order to change the actual model. In the end, the scope of the research was to produce “culturally specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation, and ongoing health of institutions like churches” (Sensing 58).

### **Summary of Literature**

Discipleship is God’s method to bring holistic restoration to His creation. The Great Commission reminds us of the God-given task which was given back in Genesis: “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth [. . .]” (Gen. 1:28). The Old and the New Testament reveal at least four aspects that should be included in a healthy model of discipleship: intentional, holistic, relational, reproducible.

Looking at the Romanian Pentecostal discipleship model considering what is discovered in Scripture, one finds the former model incomplete, at best. Over forty years of communism coupled with a lack of solid biblical teaching on discipleship left deep wounds in the theological soul of the Romanian Pentecostal. Highlighting the forgiveness of sin as a one-time event to the detriment of an ongoing process of discipleship, leaves the Christian with a simplistic and reductionistic understanding of salvation.

Communism also forced its way into the church by highlighting a private spirituality over and against public spirituality. Sadly, this artificial separation has led to a caricature of the church because, theologically speaking, the church is supposed to advocate for personal holiness and social holiness, for personal and social change.

The good news is that there is a way forward. Things are not lost forever. Over the last ten years several movements have called for a shift in discipleship and for a radical turn back to the ethos of first-century discipleship, especially with a specific emphasis on small-groups and multiplication.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter addresses the research methodology used in this project. It describes the nature and purpose of the project, the participants, and the instruments utilized in the extensive research. Following the introductory section, the research questions are brought to the forefront. Next, it sets forth the ministry context, followed by a discussion of the participants, an important section of the research that includes the selection criteria, a brief description of the general characteristics, and the ethical considerations taken into account all along the project. These details make the study more reliable and valid.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

Over forty years of communism coupled with a lack of solid biblical teaching on discipleship have affected the way Pentecostal Christians live their Christian faith both in and outside the church. Many churches have awakened, at least in part, to their astounding decrease in membership, since December 1989, and to their lack of prophetic relevancy in society, causing ecclesial and denominational leaders to respond in different yet surprisingly similar ways in hopes of reversing the trend. Despite all efforts, there is a lack of intentional discipleship and Barna is right in concluding that “Almost every church in our country has some type of discipleship program or set of activities. Stuningly few churches have a church of disciples” (*Growing True* 21).

The Sunday-centric discipleship model seems to carry on despite its ineffectiveness and irrelevancy. Hollywood is indeed viewed as doing a whole lot more in making this world a better place, in speaking out against injustices, and in tackling

global issues like climate change, racism, starvation, and human trafficking. What made me tackle this research project was the sad reality that if the Pentecostal church were to disappear from the map, not too many people would miss it or care to bring it back. The issues investigated throughout the research phase zero in on the reason the reproducing aspect as well as the missional aspect have been ignored when they are clearly implied in Scripture.

God's original intention in Genesis was to fill the earth with sons and daughters who were capable of representing Him faithfully. This is implied in the command found in the creation narrative "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth [. . .]" (Gen. 1:28). Furthermore, the vision is translated into the Great Commandment, spoken by Jesus right before His ascension. It then is carried throughout the book of Acts by the Twelve, by Paul and the seven deacons. Luke is intentional in highlighting the discipleship aspect, especially in the summary narratives:

- Acts 2:41-42, 46-47

"So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [...] Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

- Acts 6:7

“The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”

- Acts 9:31

“Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.”

- Acts 12:24

“But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents.”

- Acts 16:5

“So, the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.”

The purpose of the research was to explore the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania and develop a missional, intentional, adult-member, reproducing discipleship model for future implementation. The hope is that the trend of decreased membership is reversed, that churches would be revitalized and live to see healthy growth among their congregants and have a significant impact in society. If the church fails at this task, if reproducing discipleship is not its main focus, then everything is lost. The vision is lost, membership is lost, the prophetic voice that cries in the wilderness is lost, impact in society is lost. Something needs to change, soon.

Reviving key practices of discipleship used by the founders of the Romanian Pentecostal church as well as adding to the discipleship model several key components

that have been ignored is part of the ongoing vision for the renewal of the local churches and the Pentecostal denomination that inspired this research.

### **Research Questions**

For a healthy exploration of the subject and in order to arrive at reliable conclusions, three research questions were developed and further analyzed in the next chapter. A description of each research question follows.

#### **RQ #1. What is the current prevalent model of discipleship in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania?**

The goal in developing the semi-structured interview was to discover whether or not influential leaders wrestled with the issues that are constantly brought up to the forefront: dwindling membership, lack of relevancy, biblical illiteracy, and so forth. The interviews started with questions that had a more personal feel. These tackled the issue of discipleship in the lives of the interviewees and in the churches in which they grew up. As interview progressed, the purpose was to identify the common traits of the current prevalent model of discipleship using feedback from qualitative instruments. The goal was to understand the way pastors are handling the issue of discipleship. Is it confused with the evangelistic event? Is it a process with next steps clearly communicated?

#### **RQ #2. To what extent is the current discipleship model intentional, missional, and reproducing?**

The purpose of this question was to offer a baseline understanding of what Romanian Pentecostal pastors consider a healthy discipleship model emerging in our postmodern. To arrive at an objective conclusion, a researcher-designed discipleship survey was distributed to Pentecostal pastors from the Pentecostal Regional Community



of Bucharest (PRCB). The PRCB includes over sixty pastors from different three different ethnicities: Rroma, Hungarian, and Romanian.

Question 1 addressed the missional aspect of the discipleship model. To get a better picture of what was meant by the missional focus the question was divided into smaller units, each covering another image of the term missional: creation care, social justice, systemic issues like human trafficking, and orphans. Question 2 introduced the intentional aspect into the conversation. Again, to make it, more comprehensive the question was divided into smaller units. It envisioned the issues of process versus events, next-steps, and the vision or mission statement. Question 3 elicited pastoral evaluation of the issue of multiplication.

**RQ #3. What are the best ways to expand the current discipleship model so that it becomes more missional, intentional, and reproducing in its approach?**

After evaluating the current state of the Romanian Pentecostal discipleship model, it was important to allow pastors to give their input on how to expand the model so that it is more faithful to Scripture. To obtain constructive feedback, the pastors from ProLider, a Romanian leadership network, received a discipleship questionnaire. The qualitative instrument covered three sections. The first one explored constructive and meaningful ways in which the discipleship model can be healthier in its missional approach. Every section had two questions:

- (1) What would they do to expand the discipleship model?
- (2) What practices would they leave behind?

The second and the third section addressed the intentional and reproducing aspect, each following the same format as in the first section.

### Ministry Contexts

Mark Branson and Juan Martinez said that the church worldview requires a deeper understanding of and appreciation for context, including ethnicities and cultures (Branson and Martínez 75–77). This broader understanding is desired if one wishes to become more capable of wise and successful leadership in the Southeast part of Romania, especially the four regions that were included in the research.

Romania is rich in historical places, people, and events. Its importance is due to its strategic geographic location. Because it is an old crossroad of ancient trading routes, many important events have taken place in the city. During the reign of Mircea cel Batran - Mircea the Old 1386 – 1418 - Targoviste was the capital of the Wallachian voivodeship. One of many significant battles fought against the Ottoman Empire in Targoviste was led by Mihai Viteazu (Michael the Brave), the Prince of Wallachia (1593-1601). Constantin Brancoveanu, the Prince of Wallachia between 1688 and 1714, decided to move the capital to Bucharest and in the next decades the city lost the fame it once had (Stoicescu 412–13).

During the latter half of the 19th century, the Romanian provinces experienced a significant cultural resurgence, coinciding with a broader process of national affirmation. As discussed by Ramona Stanciu, this transformative period witnessed a fervent commitment to revitalizing cultural heritage and nurturing intellectual growth (147). Literary luminaries, artists, and thinkers emerged as influential figures, contributing to the burgeoning cultural movement that celebrated Romania's history, language, and traditions (Stanciu 148). Educational also institutions played a pivotal role in nurturing a new generation of enlightened minds, while artistic expressions depicted the nation's

identity through visual representations (Stanciu 149). Throughout this epoch, the Romanian provinces served as interconnected centers of creativity, fostering a collective journey towards the renaissance of Romanian culture and identity.

In the city of Targoviste, Ioan Heliade Radulescu (a Romantic and Classicist poet, essayist, memoirist, short story writer, newspaper editor and politician) received national accolades. Besides Radulescu, the contribution of some intellectuals is evident in the public-school domain as well. Several primary and secondary schools opened towards the latter half of the nineteenth century (Petrescu, et al. 137–138). The emphasis on formal education led to a restoration of the academic life in the area.

From a religious perspective, Romania is one of the most significant cultural and religious centers of South-eastern Europe. Shrines of Romanian-Orthodox heritage, such as the Princely Churches, the Stelea and Dealu monasteries which are among the oldest monasteries in the nation, and the Metropolitan Church testify to its impact. During the reign of Radu cel Mare (1495 – 1508), a monk by the name of Macarie brought the first printing press to Dealu Monastery (Vlasie 43–45). As a result, the early printed works in Romania are found at this monastery, and it is no surprise that the first three books are religious: the Divine Liturgy (1508), the Octoechos (1510) and the Gospels (1512).

The Orthodox Church continues to be a strong bastion. Over thirty Orthodox Churches continue to hold liturgy services in Targoviste. In one of his Easter sermons, Nifon Mihaita, the archbishop of Targoviste, said that the city has more churches than any other Romanian town of comparable size. It also has two important monasteries. Roughly 89% of the city's population is Orthodox, according to the last official census (INS). There is a small evangelical presence. In a crowded small city of roughly 80,000

people, all Evangelicals combined - Pentecostals, Baptists, Christian Brethren, Evangelical Church - represent a little over 2% of the population. Strangely, there are over fifteen evangelical churches in Targoviste.

With reference to ethnicity, 90% of the city's population is Romanian, 3.7% Roma (Gypsy), 1% Bulgarian, and less than 1% Hungarian, based on the last census (INS, *Tab8*). One issue that needs further clarification is the problem of ethnic affiliation within the Gypsy (Roma) community. The number of gypsies living in Targoviste is considerably higher, but some eschew declaring their ethnicity. A case study done by Mihaela Preda, a lecturer at the University of Bucharest, explains the historical, social, and cultural causes. In Preda's opinion, because in 1940 part of the Gypsy population was deported in Transnistria, Auschwitz and other terrifying concentration camps, there is a collective memory that nurtures the dormant thought that such an experience might repeat. Also, a social factor that makes Gypsies reluctant to declare their true ethnic origin, often becoming self-defensive. Preda believes that "a negative exogenous perception has made the Gypsy feel stigmatized and associated exclusively with antisocial behavior" (153). Brian Howell, in *The Concept of Culture*, exemplifies three types of ethnocentrism discovered by many anthropologists: (1) xenophobia; (2) cultural superiority; and (3) tacit ethnocentrism (Howell and Paris 33–34). Based on the dialogues I have had over the years with Gypsy community leaders, all three types of ethnocentrism are evident in the ministry context.

Economically speaking, Romania has been famously known for its oil and coal extraction industries ever since the nineteenth century. Agriculture also played a major role. During the interwar period, the economy of many cities had steady growth, having

mills and many smaller factories built. The explosive growth of the cities came in 1970, in the wake of a massive national industrialization communist plan. It was part of Nicolae Ceausescu's strategy to increase the country's GDP. Thus, in 1970, the construction of the Special Steels Mills (COS) began. The mills had over 10,000 workers. Other big factories were constructed several years later: ROMLUX was the biggest lighting factory in Romania; UPET was an important factory; and SARO a lathe factory. According to my father, who arrived in the city in the early 70s, the population of Targoviste exploded due to many Romanians arriving from all over the country in search of work. There was a universal optimism for a bright future.

After the fall of communism, because of many uninspired directorial decisions and an increase in corruption at the national level, the industrial sector of the country plummeted. Smaller cities felt the blow rapidly. Local economies shattered. In the last twenty-five years, thousands, if not tens of thousands, of factory workers were laid off and left wondering if the city had any future. The optimism of the 80s and early 90s is gone. An almost incurable pessimism and a deep hatred for politicians and corrupt company directors penetrated the city in unprecedented ways. Annually, hundreds of young adults flee the area in search of a better and brighter future in the West. Most of the small percentage who choose to stay in Romania are caught up in the urbanization swirl. Once they finish their mandatory education, the overwhelming majority moves to bigger cities such as Bucharest, Cluj, or Timisoara to receive better training and increase their chances of earning higher revenue. Targoviste, in closing, is on the brink of losing the notion of a middle class since most workers are paid a little over the minimum wage. The economic, political, and educational climate is depressing.

The religious climate Pentecostal churches is distinct Orthodox churches. Pentecostal churches offer two worship services, along with a concurrent children's ministry. There is a morning service that blends traditional and contemporary singing and an evening service that is predominantly contemporary. The average size church is around 140 members.

The demography of those attending Pentecostal churches is broken into three categories: age, sex, and social status. First, regarding age, 50% of the participants are between 25-50 years old, 30% are 25 years old and under, and those over 50 make up roughly 20% of the participants. Second, In terms of sex, 65% are female, 35% male. Third, regarding social status, 5% of the congregants are upper class, 40% middle class, and 55% lower class.

Members of Pentecostal churches come from diverse social and religious backgrounds. Some grew up in nominal orthodox families, while others joined the church despite virulent threats from ultra-conservative orthodox siblings. Some are poor evangelical Christians that began their faith journey in other evangelical churches including the Christian brethren, Baptist, and Evangelical Church.

The culture of the Pentecostal movement and, implicitly, the leadership patterns have changed over time. This is the natural leadership course of organizational life, as Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn point out in *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*: "Change in organizations is pervasive because of the degree and rapidity of change in the external environment. The conditions in which organizations operate demand a response [...] These dramatic changes have affected almost every sector of the world" (9). According to the authors, there are four major culture types:

1. The Hierarchy (Control) Culture;
2. The Market (Compete) Culture;
3. The Clan (Collaborate) Culture; and
4. The Adhocracy (Create) Culture (Cameron and Quinn 41–51).

Critically reflecting on Pentecostalism in Romania, the overwhelming majority of churches went from an original clan (collaborate) culture towards a hierarchy (control) culture. The dominant theme that stood far above the rest was the theme of “familiarity” and more specifically, “family.” Since the same families met for weekly worship, shared values and vision, cohesion, participativeness, and a sense of “we-ness” permeated the faith community. In the midst of persecution, brothers and sisters in the faith reaffirmed their loyalty to Jesus and each other. They seemed more like extended families than an institutionalized church. Worship services were spontaneous. Preaching was less formal. Because it was difficult to obtain an official ordination for pastors, church leaders were perceived as more mature fellow sojourners, guides, and spiritual parents. The churches experience a keen sense of teamwork, deep laity involvement and a corporate commitment to the mission of the church.

After the fall of communism and as the church matured and grew to a considerable size, the church culture and its leadership development patterns visibly shifted, towards a hierarchy (control) culture. The family feel began to fade as the churches began to enforce formal rules such as dress codes, worship etiquette, official vs. non-official church members, and other similar rules as more non-evangelical families began to attend. Worship services lost the spontaneity they once had and cherished. At the same time services became more effective by starting and finishing on time and more

reliable by avoiding content-less preaching, and the services flowed more smoothly. Much of the emphasis in leadership was on creating a robust hierarchical institution that was respected both inside and outside the church. Clear lines of authority became visible, and decision-making procedures were set in place. Official ordination, a three-step process moving from deacon to presbyter to pastor, became the way the church confirmed its clergy. The pastoral office built at the entrance of the new buildings played a key role in establishing a formal relationship between the specialized clergy and the laity. Accountability mechanisms were set in place to ensure a stable, efficient, and highly consistent liturgy. Church leaders in this newly created culture performed as skilled coordinators and excellent organizers.

In the former clan culture as well as in this hierarchical culture there was an internal focus. As long as churches remained Sunday-centric, inward-focused and missional-less, local authorities did not intervene. Vasilica Croitor highlights this truth in his book on the Pentecostal church during the communist regime (62-66). Communism disappeared in the meantime; the inward-focus church model did not.

### **Participants**

This section highlights the criteria used to select the participants in the study. In addition, it provides an explanation of the participants and closes out with a discussion of ethical considerations in selecting them.

#### **Criteria for Selection**

For the semi-structured interviews, since this research looked at the current model of discipleship used in every major Pentecostal region in Romania, I asked Pentecostal male pastors from five different regions to participate. All of them have served in the ministry for



at least thirty years. This means that all of them had served even while Communism was alive and strong. Following Sensing's guidelines, I purposely selected "people who have awareness of the situation and meet the criteria and attributes that are essential to your research" (83). Initially I considered raising the bar higher, interviewing pastors with at least thirty-five years of experience, but I was concerned that I would not find some of them still alive. That is because, in Romania, most ministers are fully ordained towards their early to mid-30s.

The results of the discipleship survey (DS), led to the selection of pastors from the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest (PRCB). Because of the nature of my ministry role in the regional community, I was aware of more than thirty pastors who met the criteria. These pastors were from three different ethnicities: Roma (gypsy), Hungarian, and Romanian. Their social and educational status also ranged from low to high. These realities help build on the concept of maximum variation, which, according to Sensing, increases the value and generalizability of any common perspectives that emerge regarding the research in question (85).

For the third research question, the participants chosen for the study were pastors involved in the ProLider network. ProLider is a Christian Pentecostal Romanian non-profit that was birthed by 15 pastors in 2015. Its purpose is to build a network whereby literature, financial resources, and spiritual support are offered for ongoing holistic growth - intellectually, spiritually, pastorally. Its mission is to reach out to every Pastor in the Pentecostal denomination for the purpose of leading relevant, dynamic, and relevant churches. I was personally acquainted with all of the pastors since I am the part-time coordinating staff of ProLider. Most of the pastors met the criteria listed above.

## **Description of Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of all males from the Pentecostal denomination. Since the research focuses on the way Pentecostals have passed on the faith, I have engaged in the research project older Pentecostals who have had enough experience to see discipleship through different lenses. Why males only? The constitution and by-laws of the Pentecostal denomination does not allow women to be ordained in any way. Women have been allowed to study theology with the intent of getting involved in social ministries. They also play a prominent role in teaching children in almost every Pentecostal church that has a distinct Sunday School department. However, they are not to even think about the ordination of women to the priesthood, or even about the restoration of the female diaconate, despite many ongoing debates on the subject.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The discipleship survey as well as the questionnaire were conducted and collected through the online platform called Google Forms. Before completing the online tasks, participants received an emailed about the nature of the project and about the status of their confidentiality. The email informed respondents that they did not have to write their names on the survey, and they were informed about the protocol of maintaining confidentiality. I explicitly stated that confidentiality would be provided by strictly following the privacy protocols put forth by the online survey tool. The email had a consent form attached, and the participants were kindly asked to read sign, scan and complete the form and send the completed form to my Asbury email account. Also, when accessing the Google Forms link, participants were required to read and agree to the consent form by checking off “Yes” to the following question: “Do you agree to the above terms?”

Before interviewing the pastors who met the criteria for the first research question (RQ#1), I took the following steps. First, two weeks prior to the interview, I sent an email to the ten pastors explaining the purpose of the research project and the way in which confidentiality was ensured. The consent form needed to be signed, scanned, and sent back to my Asbury email account. Each pastor was assigned a code (letters A – J) for the purpose of reporting data. Second, before the interview, I verbally obtain consent to proceed and to audio record the interviews by reading out loud a compact form of the consent. In addition, all the interviews were conducted on ZOOM, a private online platform. Finally, once the interview was over, I made it explicitly clear that the hard copies of the interview were kept in a locked office and that the audible recordings would be later transcribed. All the virtual data was stored on a password protected and encrypted cloud storage service. The data was stored only for two years upon the completion of the project.

### **Instrumentation**

The project uses three different researcher-designed instruments: a semi-structured interview (DSI), a survey (DS), and a questionnaire (DQ). All three instruments were designed by the researcher. The pastoral interview was a qualitative semi-structured tool used to receive an honest evaluation of the discipleship model that is prevalent in the Romanian Pentecostal denomination. My intention was to understand the way older leaders see discipleship in an ever-changing context, which could then be compared with the more specific evaluation gained through the discipleship survey. The tool was used to answer RQ #1.

The discipleship survey (DS) was very specific, addressing the key issues of the research: missional, intentional, and reproducing. Each topic received further evaluation

to ensure better feedback. The DS was designed as a quantitative instrument, allowing the thirty or so pastors from the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest (PRCB) to circle the most accurate answer in their opinion. The responses ranged from 1 – highly unlikely to 5 – highly likely. The survey included a demographic section soliciting information about age, years in ministry, and the geographic setting in which the pastor served. Following the initial introductory section, the second set of questions were related to the missional section, and they addressed the following issues: (Q1a) creation care; (Q1b) Justice issues; (Q1c) Poverty issues; (Q1d) Systemic issues like human trafficking, orphans, and abortion. The next set of questions deepened the researched understanding on how discipleship is viewed through the lens of intentionality. Q2a evaluate the issue of an intentional process of discipleship. Q2b addressed the topic of clear communication of the next steps. The last question, Q2c, evaluated whether the word disciple is found in the vision statements of the churches. The remaining set of questions focused on multiplication. Q3a further evaluated the number of conversions and baptisms that took place as a result of intentional discipleship. Q3b prompted feedback for the way members are explicitly empowered and required to disciple honest seekers of Jesus. The tool was used to answer RQ #2.

The discipleship questionnaire was a researcher-designed tool that focused on qualitative questions. The goal was to get faithful, dynamic, and relevant pastors from ProLider to come up with different ideas to modify the current discipleship model to make it more intentional, missional, and reproducing. Modifying means that some things are expanded while other aspects of the current model are left behind. Q1a left enough space for leaders to talk about ways of expanding the actual model while Q1b left room

for pastors to be honest about what they would leave behind when it comes to the missional aspect. Q2a and 2b followed the same pattern except now pastors were giving feedback on the issue of intentionality. The third question with its subunits (Q3a and Q3b) focused on the reproducing aspect. This tool was used to answer RQ #3.

### **Expert Review**

Before sending the researcher-designed instruments to any of the expert reviewers, I asked two members of the local church leadership team to give me their feedback. There was a response rubric for each tool used. The format was as follows:

- Is the question necessary?
- Is it redundant?
- Is it clear?
- Is it missing an important piece of information?
- What additional question(s) would improve the research tool?

Besides the two local church leaders, I sent the survey, the questionnaire, and the interview through email to two expert reviewers.

The first was Randy Jessen who teaches Doctor of Ministry classes in Spiritual Formation and Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. He also served Dean of the Beeson International Center from 2006-2009 and most importantly served as the coordinator of my doctoral dissertation.

The second was Corneliu Constantineanu who was the Associate Professor of New Testament and Biblical Interpretation, and Academic Dean at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia. He was also part of the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, Romania, where he taught public theology.

In the email, the expert reviewers received an introductory letter that included the purpose statement, the abstract and the research questions. The request was that they provide constructive criticism within two weeks. Once the response rubric was provided, both expert reviewers provided a couple of minor suggestions. After gathering all of the suggestions both from my colleagues and the two expert reviewers, I made the necessary adjustments and sent the tools back for a final word. In two weeks, all approved the instruments that were later used in the research.

### **Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

In completing the research, I took necessary measures to ensure the reliability and the validity of the instruments used. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach in a pre-intervention study is, according to Sensing, wise because it “allows various perspectives to engage in a critical dialogue that leads to several sets of rich data, resulting in the possibility for deeper understandings” (146). Engaging with instruments that yield both quantitative and qualitative data, I was able to identify the problems behind the current discipleship model as well as develop a set of essential strategies that provide a way forward so that discipleship becomes more intentional, more missional, and reproducing.

The pastoral interviews and the discipleship questionnaire were researcher-designed to fit the qualitative definition of research. Creswell believes that a wise researcher should not use or rely on tools or methods developed by other researchers (185). Along with the expert reviewers the instruments were refined so that they align with the purpose of the project.

The purpose of the survey was to gain a quantitative understanding of the discipleship model found in the Romanian Pentecostal denomination. For the survey I

certified validity by targeting a larger number of pastors from the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest (PRCB). According to Bell, you need a large number of individuals who respond to the same questions. This enables “the researcher not only to describe but also to compare, to relate one characteristic to another and to demonstrate that certain features exist in certain categories” (Bell 14).

### **Data Collection**

This pre-intervention dissertation research utilized a mixed method approach to measure the effectiveness of the prevalent model of discipleship related to three important aspects: missional, intentional, and reproducing.

The research design was beneficial since it helped me discover, understand and organize unifying themes among senior pastors and key ministerial staff members whom I interviewed. The three research tools were designed and sent to two expert reviewers. After editing different portions of the instruments, the documents were finalized, and the IRB application was submitted to the Asbury review board in October 2022 and approved.

I obtained a list of all the necessary information regarding the research subjects including their names, phone numbers, and email addresses. Three weeks prior to the DSI, DS, and DQ being sent, an email notified the participants about the project and invited them to participate. The email explained the scope and nature of the research as well as desire to have a broader understanding of the discipleship milieu amongst Pentecostals in Romania. Each instrument contained an informed consent letter that explicitly asked for a mutual agreement prior to participating.

The week prior to the DSI meeting, I sent a letter to the participants from the different regional communities. The letter pointed out the implication of the research for

later discipleship curriculums and kindly asked for their participation. Participants were asked to allow 45 minutes for the interview.

I started the meeting by expressing gratitude towards those who carved time to help make the research meaningful and informed them that the meeting would be recorded. After the meeting was over, I had the oral conversation transformed into transcript format and filed the document on a password protected hard drive.

For the DS instrument, I selected twenty pastors from the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest. I sent those whom I had chosen an email notifying them that they would receive a survey with a completion date of fifteen days. They were also required to complete an online informed consent form that was part and parcel of the of the research. At the completion of the fifteen days, I collected the survey and coded it for confidentiality. All the information was then transferred to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and the file was locked and stored onto a removable hard drive.

Regarding the questionnaire (DQ), an email was sent to 15 selected leaders of ProLider, an ecclesial leadership organization. Two weeks prior to sending the DQ, I sent an email notifying the participants about the project and invited them to participate. Participants were asked to allow for 25-30 minutes for the completion of the questionnaire. On the scheduled day for the DQ, I sent a Google Forms document by email with the requirement that the questionnaire would be filled out in two weeks. At the completion of the fourteen days, I collected the survey and coded it for confidentiality. All the information was then transferred to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and the file was locked and stored onto a removable hard drive.



All three research instruments (DSI, DS, DQ) were done in Romanian, the native language of the participants. The results were translated in English by the researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative as well as quantitative analysis, in Sensing's perspective, require creativity as well as a hermeneutical spiral of inquiry (194). The task at hand entails organizing the unprocessed data into coherent and meaningful groupings, adopting a comprehensive approach to scrutinize the data, and devising a strategy for effectively conveying the resulting interpretation to others. Swinton and Mowat see the process of gathering and analyzing data as that which brings "order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of data [ . . .]" (Swinton and Mowatt 57).

I brought together all data from the three research instruments. The interviews as well and questionnaire provided qualitative perspectives. The analysis of the discipleship survey provided a quantitative vantage point with the help of several instruments. Finally, all three research instruments were cross-checked by a technique named triangulation. According to Bruce Berg and Howard Lune, triangulation is the scrupulous verification of "the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced a study as possible" (60).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

Roughly eleven years ago, after completing my first post-graduate degree, I humbly entered the complex world of full-time pastoral ministry. While juggling many pastoral duties, some of which could be considered chores, that I realized how ill-prepared I was to disciple the flock that God had entrusted to my care. Then and there that I started praying for leaders, mentors, and other godly people whose lives were dedicated to the goal of discipleship. Meanwhile, God was stirring my heart to study the Bible and theological and discipleship books to develop a working model of multiplying discipleship in the Pentecostal community where I serve. This was a pre-intervention dissertation. The purpose of the research was to explore the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania and develop a missional, intentional, adult-member, reproducing discipleship model for future implementation. The literature review provided insights that I used as I reflected and analysed the research instruments with the intent of finding similarities and differences.

This chapter addresses the evidence phase of the research. It identifies the study's participants, the criteria for selecting them, and statistical measurements from both the quantitative and qualitative instruments. It examines the three research questions, using the qualitative findings from the Discipleship Questionnaire (DQ) and the Discipleship Interview (DSI), as well as the quantitative findings from the Discipleship Survey (DS). Chapter four ends with a list of the major findings presented from the data.

## Participants

The scope of the research was to measure and understand the effectiveness of the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania. The research was completed in four distinct phases that are listed below, but not necessarily in chronological order:

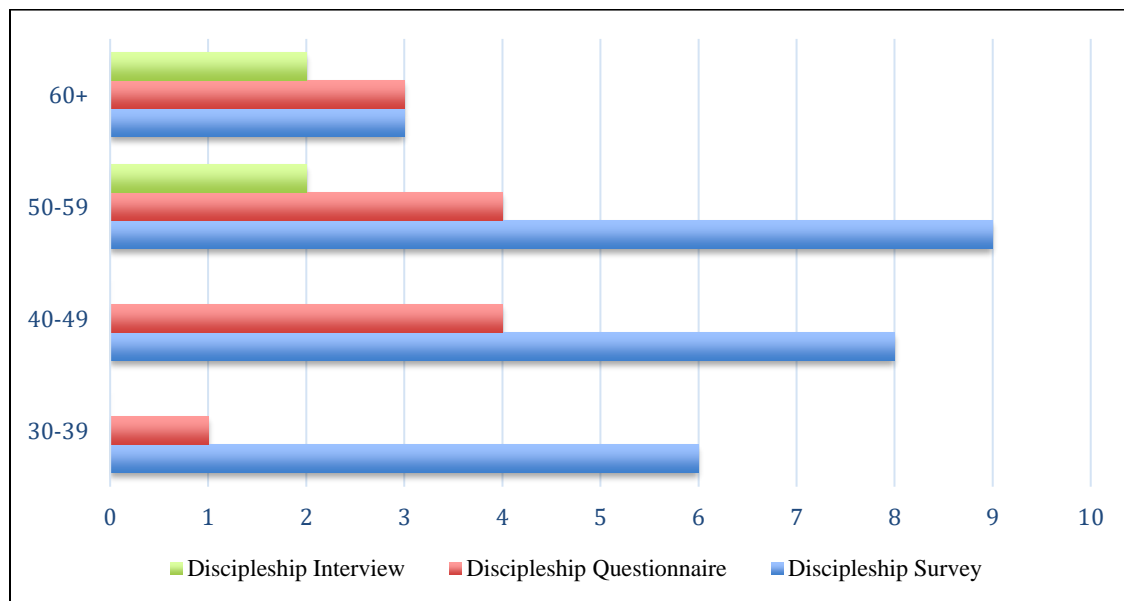
1. Literature review as well as personal observations
2. Online surveys
3. Online questionnaire
4. Online interviews

In the second phase of the project, the quantitative phase, I emailed 54 senior pastors or assistant pastors, inviting them to complete the online survey. It is important to note that, as previously stated, Romania does not have any ordained female pastors, so this was a male-only pastor survey. Most pastors had served in the southern part of Romania for much of their lifetime. Out of the fifty-plus invitations, twenty-six pastors completed and submitted the DS within fourteen days from January 15, 2023 – January 29, 2023. Participants were required to complete all questions, and they could not advance without responding to every question. All participants responded to the best of their knowledge. Out of the three instruments, the DS had the largest input. The average age of the pastors was around 50 years old, and the largest respondent group, with nine participants, was between 50 to 59 years old, as shown in Figure 4.1.

Since the DQ and the DSI were researcher-designed to fit the qualitative phase of the research, fewer respondents were involved. Nonetheless, their input was meaningful and supportive of the literature consulted and discussed in previous chapters.

Two weeks prior to sending the DQ, I sent an email to fifteen ecclesial leaders from ProLider, a Romanian leadership organization, and required them to complete the online questionnaire within fourteen days between January 15, 2023 and January 29, 2023.

Twelve responses came back, with most being completed by pastors from the eastern part of Romania. The average age of the pastors for the DQ was around 52.5 years old, with a tie between two age groups, as shown in Figure 4.1.



**Fig. 4.1. Age group of the respondents.**

Regarding the DSI, three weeks prior to the online meeting, I sent an email to ten senior pastors from every important region where Pentecostalism is present.

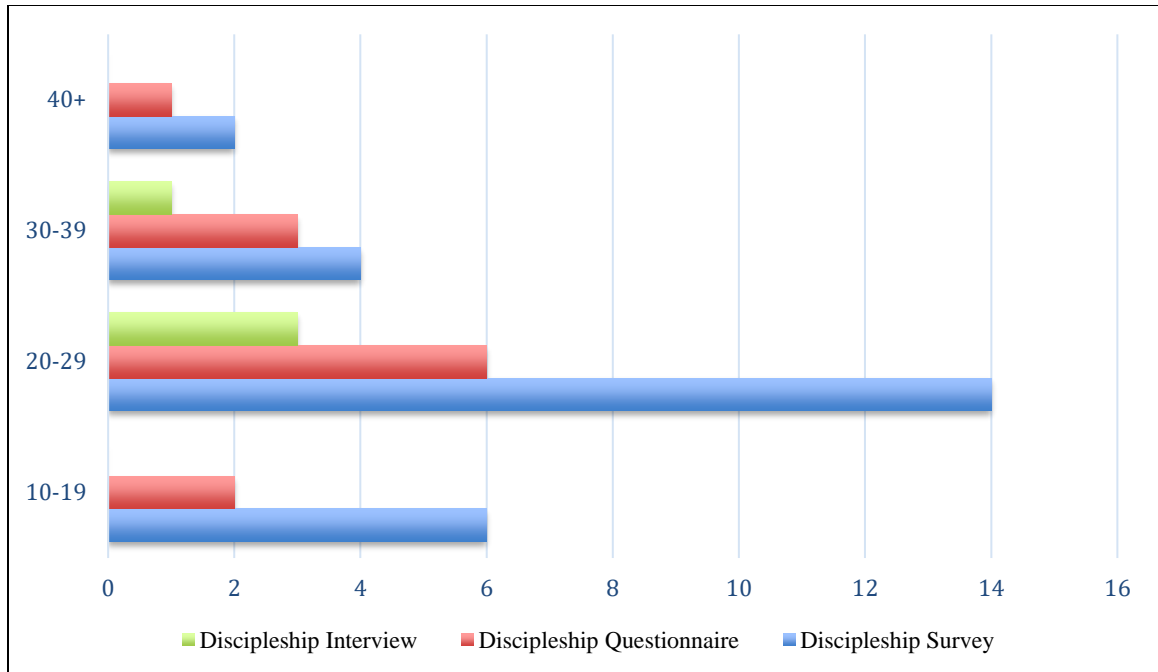
Unfortunately, only four pastors responded. Nevertheless, their expertise and meaningful dialogue during the interviews were valuable. Most of them held important roles in their respective Pentecostal regional communities. Although the level of formal education was not a specific target question, the leaders who participated in the DSI had, for the most

part, received higher education. They all held a bachelor's degree in a field related to ministry.

Regarding their ministerial experience, 14 out of the 26 pastors invited to participate in the DS had served between 20 to 29 years in different churches. (See Figure 4.2.) On average, the respondents for the DS had approximately 26.5 years of church leadership service, which is significant because it means they had ministered and led through one of the most potent periods for Pentecostal discipleship in Romania since its humble beginnings in the early half of the twentieth century. After the fall of Communism in 1989, Romania saw a wave of new participants in church liturgy and mass evangelism, with people hungry for Christian literature, Christian speakers, and Christian Pentecostal worship. Six of the respondents had served the church well before Communism fell, meaning that their analysis on discipleship was wider and broader.

A similar pattern was seen in the DQ phase despite there being fewer respondents. On average, the respondents in the questionnaire phase had approximately 27.5 years of church leadership service, meaning that most leaders invited served in a relatively calm societal milieu, in a free and democratic society where new ideas and paradigms were more likely to be embraced.

Out of the four pastors who agreed to have an online interview, three had between 20 and 29 years of experience. The goal was to receive a broader perspective on the topic of discipleship from leaders who had served prior to 1989, but, unfortunately, only one pastor fulfilled that requirement.



**Fig. 4.2. Years of experience in ministry.**

A couple of errors occurred in the instrumentation. Since all questions were required to be completed, some were vaguely or superficially completed with an asterisk. There is a good chance that the respondent did not want to respond but was forced to answer or that they did not have time to analyze the issue in depth. A couple of respondents wrote with the apology of “rushing a bit due to time constraint”. A second error was that the DS and the DQ did not ask participants to indicate their educational level. It would have been an important rubric to analyze in the light of the topic. The final error occurred on question (Q1d) where the researcher addressed the missional aspect of discipleship and then went on to list a few systemic issues. It would have been better to name and analyze each issue separately.

### **Research Question #1: Description of Evidence**

What is the current prevalent model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania?

To receive an adequate response to the first question, I interviewed four key pastors who had enough ministerial experience and solid theological upbringing that they could speak on behalf of the Romanian Pentecostal Christians. The DSI was a qualitative instrument that began on a more personal level. The first three questions touched upon their conversion story, their spiritual upbringing, and a possible spiritual mentor. It was important to identify key words and people that had a lasting spiritual impact on these ministers and their leadership. The next few questions covered the model of discipleship in which they were immersed. The questions asked if the participants had been intentionally disciplined by an older ecclesial leader and investigated specific discipleship literature that was referred to or expounded upon. I was intentional in trying to find discipleship curriculums that had a lasting impact on the life of the communist and post-communist church. Towards the end of the interview, I asked the “hard” questions in relation to the prevalent model of discipleship found in most Pentecostal churches within the denomination. These questions asked about the validity, health, impact, and biblical or traditional roots of the prevalent model of discipleship.

Questions 2 and 4 of the DSI asked pastors to share their spiritual journey following their conversion and to specifically mention a few practices and mentors that helped them mature in Christ. Out of the four interviews, the following data stood out.

**Table 4.1 – Key People and Practices in Spiritual Formation (Interview)**

<u>Interview question #2 and #4</u>	<u>Mentions</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Bible Education by Extension (BEE)	2	50
Frequent prayer meetings (held in personal homes)	4	100
In-depth personal study of Scripture	4	100
Frequent fasts (couple with disciplined prayer)	3	75
Christian literature (mostly translated)	1	25
Pastors from the West (Europe / USA)	2	50

Every single pastor mentioned as being formative in their discipleship journey: Bible study and prayer meetings. Second on the podium, after these two traditional practices came another familiar practice in Romania: fasting (75 percent). Only one pastor mentioned “the benefit of Christian literature”. According to this pastor, “Christian literature was scarce and expensive, and prior to 1989, it was even illegal to proliferate such ‘heretical teaching’”.

Question 5 of the DSI had participants reflect on their engagement in spiritual mentorship. It asked about specific and intentional discipleship meetings with former senior pastors and church leaders. Surprisingly, there were no two answers alike. Only one pastor mentioned a healthy discipleship journey, which is a relatively low percentage. The rest had sporadic meetings that had no discipleship curriculum, nor any intentional aspects involved.



**Table 4.2 – Intentional Disciple-Making Pastors (Interview)**

<u>Interview question #5</u>	<u>Mentions</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Frequent and intentional discipleship meetings	1	25
Often but not intentional discipleship meetings	1	25
Few but not intentional discipleship meetings	1	25
No discipleship meetings	1	25

The last three questions focused on the health and impact of the prevalent discipleship model in the Romanian Pentecostal church. It looked at the missional, intentional, and the multiplicative aspect of discipleship. Even though this was not designed to be a quantitative instrument, I inserted the questions found in the DS and DQ in the DSI because I wanted to get a better understanding of how these Pentecostal pastors viewed the actual model. Question 9 received a unanimous answer. All interviewees explained in different words the same unfortunate reality: The Romanian Pentecostal churches are falling behind as a church when it comes to tying the gospel to deep societal issues. In the final interview, I mentioned the fact that all previous pastors answered in the same vein. The interviewee chuckled; he was not surprised. The reproducing aspect received a slightly better score. Seventy-five percent of the leaders mentioned that the current discipleship model is "not at all" reproducing. The highest "positive" percentage received was for the reproducing aspect.

**Table 4.3 – Missional, Intentional and Multiplicative Questions (Interview)**

	Question	Not at all (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very (%)
<b>Missional</b>	9. To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <i>MISSIONAL</i> from the perspective of <i>creation care, social justice, and systemic issues</i> ?	100	0	0
<b>Intentional</b>	10. To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania intentional when it comes to making disciples?	50	25	25
<b>Reproducing</b>	11. To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania making disciples that make disciples that make disciples?	75	25	0

### **Research Question #2: Description of Evidence**

To what extent is the current discipleship model missional, intentional, and reproducing?

To receive an adequate response to the second research question, I sent out a survey asking the respondents to evaluate to the best of their ability the three main issues mentioned above: missional, intentional, and reproducing. The first section evaluated the missional aspect, which was divided into four subsections:

1. Creation care
2. Social justice
3. Caring for the poor

#### 4. Systemic issues

Each participant was asked to carefully evaluate their church using the following scale: 1 highly unlikely, 2 unlikely, 3 somewhat likely, 4 unlikely, and 5 highly likely. The quantitative instrument had a second section, which evaluated the intentional aspect of the Romanian Pentecostal discipleship model. This too was divided into three subsections:

1. Is there an intentional process of making disciples?
2. Are next-steps clearly communicated?
3. Is the term "discipleship" found in the vision statement?

The final section used for the DS looked at the reproducing aspect of the Romanian Pentecostal discipleship model. Here the respondents only evaluated two topics:

1. Of those who got baptized in the last 5 years, how many are new converts?
2. Are church members required/empowered to disciple new or potential converts?

Of significant importance was the subject of creation care. It has become one of the most debated topics in political and societal circles. Hence, I was interested in seeing the way in which Romanian Pentecostal churches see the tie between discipleship and the mission of God's people and creation care. Approximately 50 percent of the respondents believed that the Pentecostal church is not doing enough in its missional effort to tackle the issue of creation care. Less than a quarter of the 26 respondents found a satisfactory answer in relation to their local church.

<b>Table 4.4 – Missional Discipleship &amp; Creation Care (Survey)</b>		
<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <i>MISSIONAL</i> from the perspective of CREATION CARE?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS1a)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	7	27
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	6	23
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	7	27
<b>4 - Likely</b>	4	15
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	2	8

When asked about social justice, an issue deeply rooted in the mission of God and His people, the responses received were more intriguing than those in the first subsection (creation care). More than 60 percent of the respondents gave a negative response. They selected "highly unlikely" 5 times or 19% of the total and "unlikely" 43 times or 43% of the total. Less than a quarter of the respondents believed that the Romanian Pentecostal denominations had an adequate discipleship model that intentionally promoted social justice. Only a fifth of the church leaders from the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest believed that their local church promoted the well-being and flourishing of all individuals, particularly those who are disenfranchised or disadvantaged.

<b>Table 4.5 – Missional Discipleship &amp; Social Justice (Survey)</b>		
<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <u>MISSIONAL</u> from the perspective of SOCIAL JUSTICE?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS1b)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	5	19
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	11	43
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	5	19
<b>4 - Likely</b>	4	15
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	1	4

Since most Romanians live in the low-income bracket, question DS1c had participants reflect on their local church’s engagement in caring for the poor and needy. Leaders were asked to what extent is their current discipleship model is tied to one of the most basic things Christ and the apostle taught Christian converts. The following responses were noted: In contrast to the first two questions (DS1a and DS1b), more than 60% of the respondents believed that discipleship is directly related to Christian charity. Most selected “likely” or “highly likely” with 9 or 35% selecting “likely”, and 7 or 27% selecting “highly likely.” Less than 10% of the leaders selected “highly unlikely” indicating that they believed their local church was not doing enough for the unfortunate.

**Table 4.6 – Missional Discipleship & Caring for the Poor (Survey)**

<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <i>MISSIONAL</i> from the perspective of CARING FOR THE POOR?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS1c)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	2	8
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	3	11
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	5	19
<b>4 - Likely</b>	9	35
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	7	27

Christianity has a long and complex history of responding to systemic issues, particularly those related to social, economic, and political inequality. For hundreds of years, Christian theologians have grappled with how to live out their faith in a world that often seems at odds with their values and beliefs. From advocacy and activism to the development of social and political institutions, Christians have played a vital role in working towards social justice and equity. Question Ds1d asked participants to what extent the current discipleship model in the Romanian Pentecostal church is missional when it comes to dealing with and responding to systemic issues like human trafficking and abortion. Unlike all the other questions mentioned above, DS1d received the highest percentage of negative responses. Approximately 70% of the respondents answered “highly unlikely” or “unlikely”. A total of 8 participants or 31% selected “highly unlikely” or 10 participants or 38% selected “unlikely.” In other words, there is little belief that what is being taught and modeled through preaching and teaching in the church has ties to bigger societal systemic issues.

<b>Table 4.7 – Missional Discipleship &amp; Systemic Issues (survey)</b>		
<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <u>MISSIONAL</u> from the perspective of SYSTEMIC ISSUES?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS1d)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	8	31
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	10	38
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	5	19
<b>4 - Likely</b>	2	8
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	1	4

The next important section of the DS focused on the intentional facet of discipleship. There were three subsections with one question each: DS2a, DS2b, DS2c. Based on the literature review, the researcher understood that intentional discipleship is not an auxiliary concept in Scripture. Throughout the Bible, intentional discipleship is a crucial aspect of the Judeo-Christian faith and practice, as it involves not only learning about God (Yahweh and Jesus) but also following him and helping others to do the same. Question DS2a sought to evaluate the way in which the current discipleship model has intentional discipleship processes.

Based on the data received from the previous questions, the plethora of negative responses to the question were not surprising. Out of the 26 respondents, 22 believed their church had no strategy to develop mature Christians or healthy disciples. That is more than 80% of the participants! That means, that 8 out of 10 churches have no or almost no intentional discipling system set in place.

**Table 4.8 – Intentional Discipleship & Processes (Survey)**

<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <i>INTENTIONAL</i>: Is there an intentional process of making disciples?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS2a)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	6	23
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	9	34
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	7	27
<b>4 - Likely</b>	2	8
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	2	8

Another developing question, which built on the previous one, was related to the next steps, an important ongoing aspect in a local church. Since discipleship is viewed as a process, not an event, researcher needed to evaluate the way local churches in the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest communicate the journey towards a Christ-like character and life. If respondents to DS2a had trouble identifying an intentional discipling process, the data from DS2b clearly shows that church leaders' communications with lay church members is fuzzy and vague. Only 2 participants or 8% of the respondents believed their church was articulating the "next-steps" message well. This message highlights that discipleship is an ongoing process that involves constant growth in knowledge, faith, and obedience to Jesus Christ.



**Table 4.9 – Intentional Discipleship & Next-Steps (Survey)**

To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania ***INTENTIONAL***: *Are next-steps clearly communicated?*

<b>Interview Question (DS2b)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	11	43
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	3	11
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	10	38
<b>4 - Likely</b>	1	4
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	1	4

When asked about the local church's vision statement, the results of the DS2c were not just surprising but also ironic, given the answers to the two previous questions. Fifty-four percent of the respondents marked it as "likely" or "highly likely" that the term discipleship is not found in their written or verbal vision statement. That is, 4 respondents or 15% said that it was "likely" and ten respondents or 39% said that it was highly likely that the term was not used. This is far less than those who answered positively to the same question. Only 26% or a total of 7 respondents indicated that it was "unlikely" or "highly unlikely" that the term was not used, meaning that they thought that the term discipleship was found in the vision statements.

**Table 4.10 – Intentional Discipleship & Vision Statement (survey)**

<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <i>INTENTIONAL</i>: Is the term "discipleship" found in the vision statement?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS2c)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	3	11
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	4	15
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	5	20
<b>4 - Likely</b>	4	15
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	10	39

The last section of the DS looked at the reproducing aspect of Christian discipleship. The survey had two subsections with one question addressing the issue of baptism (DS3a) and the other the issue of empowerment (DS3b). The literature review emphasized that one crucial aspect of Christian discipleship is its reproductive nature, which involves multiplying the number of disciples who follow Jesus and continue the cycle of discipleship. This cycle of multiplication results in the growth and health of the church and the advancement of God's Kingdom. Thus, DS3a measured the effectiveness of the discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination regarding baptisms of new converts in the last five years. The purpose was to discover ways in which the previous questions from the former two sections affected, directly or indirectly, the multiplicative characteristic of discipleship. Based on the responses from the 26 participants, the percentage of new-convert baptisms was relatively low. A total of 10 respondents or 38 percent said that only between 10 – 20 % of those who got baptized in the last five years were new converts. The estimate from six other respondents or 23 percent was a bit

higher. They estimated that the 30 to 40% of those who were baptized were new converts.

**Table 4.11 – Reproducing Discipleship & Baptism (Survey)**

<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <i>REPRODUCING</i>: Of those that got baptized in the last 5 years, how many are new converts?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS3a)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>10 – 20 %</b>	10	38
<b>30 – 40 %</b>	6	23
<b>50 – 60 %</b>	5	20
<b>70 – 80 %</b>	2	8
<b>90 – 100 %</b>	3	11

Finally, question DS3b asked participants to reflect on the issue of multiplication as a condition of church membership. The purpose was to discover whether local churches empower and require disciples to make disciples or if discipleship is a mere inward sanctifying journey. The answers were not very surprising. After gathering all the data from the two previous sections, the conclusion was straightforward: More than half of the answers were negative. Seven participants or 27% said that it was “highly unlikely,” and another 7 participants or 27% said it was “unlikely” that the current discipleship model required members to be intentionally investing in non-believers.

**Table 4.12 – Reproducing Discipleship & Potential Converts (Survey)**

<b>To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania <i>REPRODUCING</i>: Are church members required/empowered to disciple new or potential converts?</b>		
<b>Interview Question (DS3b)</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1 – Highly unlikely</b>	7	27
<b>2 - Unlikely</b>	7	27
<b>3 – Somewhat likely</b>	6	23
<b>4 - Likely</b>	4	14
<b>5 – Highly Likely</b>	3	11

### **Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

What are the best ways to expand the current discipleship model so that it becomes more missional, intentional, and reproducing?

The research investigated how discipleship was practiced in early Pentecostalism in Romania and why the missional, intentional, and reproducing aspects have been ignored, even though they are clearly implied in Scripture. After conducting semi-structured interviews with four pastors who accepted the invitation and sending a survey to all pastors from the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest, the research utilized a discipleship questionnaire to receive an adequate response to the final research question. The questionnaire was sent to all pastors from ProLider, asking respondents to expand on the current model of discipleship by focusing on the three main issues mentioned above. Each issue had a positive and a negative assessment, with respondents offered advice on what should be expanded or further explained, and what should be removed, forgotten, or neglected.

DQ1a asked participants to give their advice on how to improve or expand the current Pentecostal discipleship model so that it becomes more missional. One pastor in the 30-39 age category stated that “there is no missional model to start with, thus there is nothing to expand or improve.” Another church leader in the 40-49 age category believed the church “used to be missional in its approach – especially in its formative years – but over the years, local church leaders have embraced the status quo and have become irrelevant and indifferent to societal problems.” Three respondents, two from the 40-49 age category and one from the 60+ category, stated that expanding the current discipleship model is the duty and sole responsibility of key leaders. One of the three considered that church leaders need “to include more intentional teaching on the subject”. Based on his analysis, this teaching needs be coherent on all three levels of denominational leadership:

- National leaders (President, Vice-President, and Secretary)
- Regional leaders
- Local church leaders

Without a consistent and coherent teaching on all three levels, the Pentecostal discipleship model will most likely lose its effectiveness, especially when it comes to its missional aspect. The second pastor emphasized the need for pragmatic teaching on the subject: “Church teaching should be extremely practical. One should be able to connect to un-churched or de-churched folks - Monday through Sunday - through things like extracurricular school activities, sporting events, music, medicine, books, etc. In this way, the missional aspect becomes relational and formative in its nature.” The third respondent accentuated biblical teaching on the subject in small groups. In his opinion, “small groups

are a powerful avenue through which both the teaching on the mission of God and the everyday missional activities can occur”. In his twenty-five plus years of ministry, he concluded that he has not found a more efficient way to implement the missional aspect of discipleship except through small groups. Additionally, two more pastors mentioned the term “vision statement” a couple of times. In their opinion, it all starts with and from the vision statement:

- “As long as the vision is missional-less, then it should be no surprise that the local church is indifferent to the *missio Dei*,” said the first pastor, from the 40-49 age category.
- “Including the term ‘missional’ in the vision is a key aspect in reorienting the church towards a missional discipleship model,” said the second pastor from the 40-49 age category.

The last three respondents had diverse opinions ranging from critiquing the inward-focused discipleship model of most churches to creating a church department that is intentional in getting involved in pressing societal issues. The similarity between the three answers was seen in the way all three pastors expressed their frustration with the current discipleship model. A consensus comes from almost all the answers received that the current discipleship model needs a complete makeover and a radical shift for it to be truly missional.

When asked about what should be removed from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes more missional – DQ1b – the participants gave a wide-ranging array of responses. The following table shows the

diverse ways in which church leaders see the necessary adjustments needed for a more missional discipleship model:

**Table 4.13 – Missional Discipleship (questionnaire)**

Age group of the respondents	Question DQ1b: In your opinion, what should be <i>removed</i> from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes <i>more missional</i> ?
30-39	I think there is too much concern for the Sunday show and for huge budgets spent on pharaonic building projects used only for a couple of hours on Sundays. This is not what God intended to be the main aspect in the Great Commission.
40-49	Changing the mindset from “going to church” to “being the church”.
40-49	Less emphasis on church programs.
40-49	Remove the need to center the entire discipleship model around a “charismatic” pastor who is not a disciple-making pastor.
40-49	Too much emphasis on the wants and caprices of “the insiders”. There is a tendency to please the already “spiritually fat” Christians.
50-59	Too much focus on what is happening within the church building. The budget needs to be revisited and radically shifted.
50-59	Remove services that are just making the church busier with more “inside” activities.
50-59	Midweek services. Too many musical groups (kids choir, men’s choir, mixed choir, orchestra, brass band, adult choir, worship groups) which means that members have no free time to get involved in societal issues like abortion, human trafficking, feeding the homeless, etc.
50-59	Reduce religious activism. Some examples include: the same type of church service, redundant musical activities that, in best case scenario, help people grow in their musical skills not in Christ-likeness character.
60+	We have way too many services which means we spend far too much time with familiar faces. This reduces the free time available for reaching out to people that are in dire need of the gospel. The church has become too introverted, forgetting its Great Commission.
60+	Currently speaking there is no one discipleship model embraced and promoted by the Pentecostal church.
60+	I do not believe I am the right person to answer this question.

Of the twelve respondents, two did not offer any advice on the missional aspect, both of whom were from the 60+ age category. Another two had unique perspectives on the subject matter. One pastor from the 40 – 49 age category believed that the issue had to do with a wrong paradigm being promoted. Instead of “being the church,” most church members “go to church.” The second pastor from the same age category believed that the solution to a more missional discipleship model lay in a different place. It is not so much a paradigmatic problem but rather a clergy one. He stated we should “remove the need to center the entire discipleship model around a ‘charismatic’ pastor who is not a disciple-making pastor.” The other ten respondents had similar perspectives. A couple of key words stood out.

The first key word is Church programs and services. Quite a few responses critiqued the number of church services held throughout the week, leaving church members with very little time for intentional missional activities outside the church buildings. Listed below are some of the responses that participants from different age categories gave.

- 30 – 39 category: “I think there is too much concern for the Sunday service.”  
This pastor also expressed a deep concern for big budgets spent on “pharaonic buildings used only for a couple of hours on Sundays”.
- 40 – 49 category: There should be “less emphasis on church programs.”
- 50 – 59 category: We place “too much focus on what is happening within the church building. The budget needs to be revisited and radically shifted.”
- 50 – 59 category: “Remove services that are just making the church busier with more ‘inside’ activities.”



- 60+ category: “We have way too many services which means we spend far too much time with familiar faces.”

The second key word is religious activism. Another group of pastors believed toning down the zealous members who fight for more “religious activism” is a key to redirecting the church to a more missional path. Two responses stand out:

- 50 – 59 age category: The churches have “too many musical groups (kid choir, men’s choir, mixed choir, orchestra, brass band, adult choir, worship groups) which means that members have no free time to get involved in societal issues like abortion, human trafficking, feeding the homeless, etc.”
- 50 – 59 age category: “Reduce religious activism. Some examples include: the same type of church service, redundant musical activities that, in best case scenario, help people grow in their musical skills not in Christ-likeness character.”

The third key word is introverted churches. According to one pastor from the 60+ category, “The church has become too introverted, forgetting its Great Commission.” Another church leader from the 40-49 category believed there was “Too much emphasis on the wants and caprices of ‘the insiders’. There is a tendency to please the already ‘spiritually fat’ Christians.”

DQ2a and DQ2b, in close relationship to the first question, followed a similar pattern. The pastors from ProLider were asked to give their opinion on what to insert and what to remove from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes more intentional. Their insights were quite diverse and extremely edifying. However, a common thread is that they all spoke, directly or indirectly, about leadership -

ecclesial leadership, that is. One pastor from the 40 – 49 age category even quoted the saying that has become golden in leadership circles: “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” He went on to mention the need to expose church boards, senior leaders, and potential church leaders to theologically sound, bible rooted, pragmatic teaching on intentional discipleship. Another pastor concurred, adding the following:

It is difficult to transition from a large church that is service-oriented to a discipleship-oriented church. It is a long and arduous process, and most pastors are not willing to put their reputation on the line. In smaller churches, discipleship is almost natural without having to making it too intentional, but in bigger churches, leaders need to be exposed multiple times to a different paradigm before one can talk about an intentional discipleship process.

The issue, however, is much more complex. For between being made aware of a discipleship paradigm shift and implementing a working model is a huge gap. The questionnaire mentioned essential steps.

The first essential step is developing a discipleship curriculum. One of the responses from the 40 – 49 age category specifically mentioned the idea of a curriculum that instructs members in the discipleship process. Additionally, the curriculum should be extended so that there is “A clear discipleship curriculum for every spiritual stage.” In the end, he suggested that “Constantly evaluating the progress of discipleship more than the progress of any other activity in the church is the key to providing intentional discipleship.”

The second essential step is the necessity of organizing small groups. One of the twelve responses mentioned the importance of building a healthy discipleship model

around the idea of small groups. Without a proper small group milieu, discipleship is just a term found most likely in the vision statement with no visible fruit and with no tangible results on the mission field.

The third essential step is prioritizing discipleship. A couple of pastors believed that the answer to making the actual model more intentional lies in our church agendas. In their view, it is a matter of priorities.

- 50 – 59 age category: One pastor suggested, "Aligning all activities so that they become disciple-oriented; promoting church leaders that are champions in discipling others; [and] allotting a significant part of the budget towards making disciples"
- 30 – 39 age category: One pastor suggested "Making discipleship the bottom line in every domain of the church."
- 40 – 49 age category: Another pastor advocated, "Motivating more mature believers to be spiritual parents for new converts [and] celebrating every step of the way so that church members understand what is important for their pastor."

The fourth essential step is providing courageous leadership. Expanding the actual Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania is also a matter of bold leadership. At least two respondents agreed.

- 60+ age category: "Transitioning from a church that is built around Sunday-only folks to one that seeks to build mature believers through intentional discipleship requires boldness - Christian ecclesial boldness. But then again,

nothing that has ever had lasting impact on this earth was wrought without bold courageous leadership.”

- 60+ age category: “Bold pastors are willing to lay their reputation on the line and make the necessary adjustments so that their church (whether large or small) becomes a disciple-making church. That’s how we are going to build a better and more intentional discipleship model in Romania.”

When asked about what should be removed from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes more intentional – DQ2b – the following responses were collected.

**Table 4.14 – Intentional Discipleship (questionnaire)**

Age group of the respondents	Question DQ2b: In your opinion, what should be removed from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes <i>more intentional</i> ?
30-39	Skipping steps should be removed, an anomaly whereby a person who has not been in an intentional apprenticeship process ends up overnight teaching others.
40-49	Make it more formative. It is not only an issue of knowing but of doing.
40-49	Remove church activities that are not connected and do not promote discipleship. All church activities should be intentional sticking to the main purpose: discipleship.
40-49	Less services so that there is space and time for relational discipleship.
40-49	Remove the pyramid-type, hierarchical authoritative distant discipleship model.
50-59	Less emphasis on Sunday services and more emphasis on relationships that promote discipleship.
50-59	Amateurism and lack of vision.
50-59	Remove all the churchy secondary issues that are steering the focus in a different direction other than discipleship.
50-59	Most church members are concentrated on services not people. I would remove anything that has no echoes of discipleship. We have members that are willing to sit in rehearsals for hours to perform better, musically speaking, but are not willing to put in the time to invest in people's lives / problems. When asked why they are not making disciples, the answer is almost always the same: there is no time!
60+	Wrong expectations. I would work on transitioning from an inward-focused church – one that is expecting a huge crowd of non-believers to COME to their services – to one that is outward focused – a church that meets people where they are.
60+	I think most churches say they are making disciples but, there is no intentional aspect to their discipleship.
60+	Most churches have no intentionality in discipleship. So, there is really nothing to change or remove.

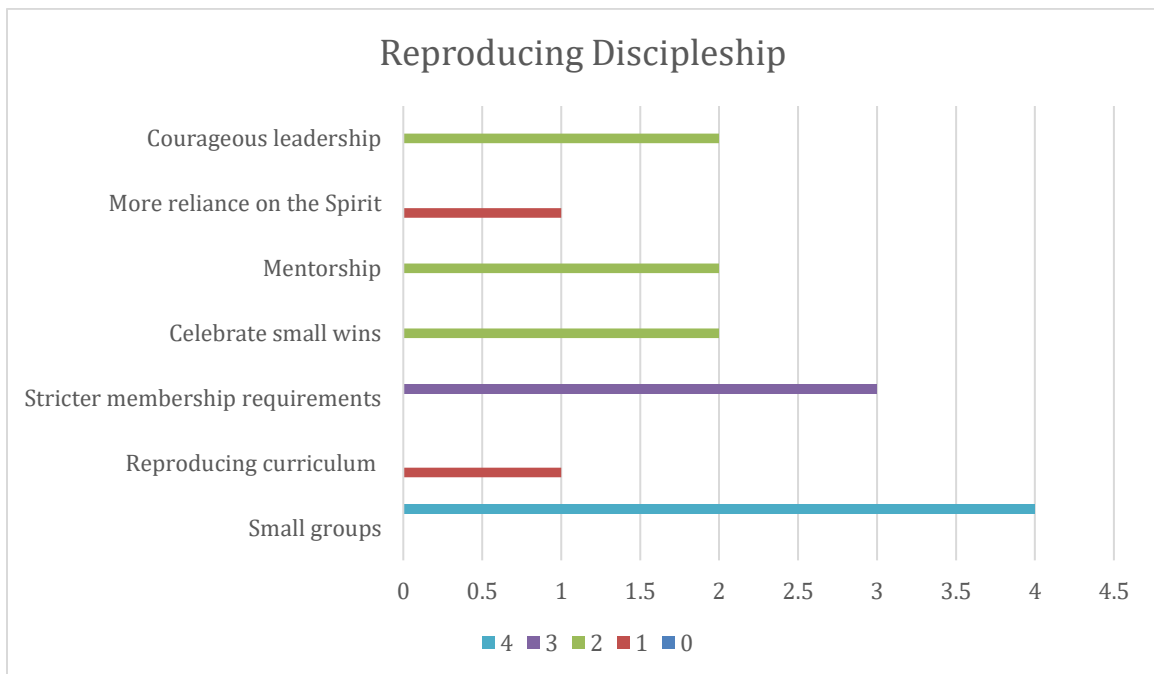
Although some of the answers were similar to DQ1b, many others were helpful in trying to determine a possible way forward. From the outset, it was clear that the relational

factor is missing from the current discipleship model. At least three of the pastors concurred:

- 40 – 49 age category: Have “less services so that there is space and time for relational discipleship.”
- 40 – 49 age category: “Remove the pyramid-type, hierarchical authoritative distant discipleship model.”
- 50 – 59 age category: Place “less emphasis on Sunday services and more emphasis on relationships that promote discipleship.”

The issue of time constraints and its impact on the commitment of church members to discipleship is a common argument raised by members when questioned about their lack of contribution to this endeavor. A notable illustration of this was provided by a pastor who observed that “many members prioritize their involvement in church services over investing in people's lives. In this regard, some members exhibit a willingness to spend extended periods in rehearsals to perfect their musical performances but are not inclined to devote similar effort towards nurturing relationships or addressing personal issues. Consequently, when queried about their inability to make disciples, the most common excuse cited is a lack of sufficient time.” Furthermore, a pastor in the 30-39 age category expressed concern regarding the tendency of some leaders to prioritize charisma over character and assign responsibilities that exceed the spiritual maturity of individuals, thereby bypassing crucial formative processes. Discipleship is not a process that can be artificially induced, as any attempt to do so is likely to compromise and subvert the entire process.

Inquiries posed in DQ3a and DQ3b focused on the reproducing aspect of discipleship. In DQ3a, pastors from ProLider were asked to provide recommendations on expanding the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania to make it replicable. DQ3b, on the other hand, sought to identify aspects of the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania that need to be eliminated for the model to become replicable. Based on the responses garnered from DQ3a, Figure 4.3 highlights the recurring insights and key themes that the research revealed.



**Fig. 4.3. Reproducing discipleship.**

Out of the 12 respondents 4 believed the most efficient way to multiply disciples is through small groups. One respondent said that it is here where “the apprentice learns, then becomes a leader, takes others along and then multiplies the group, giving credit to the assistant leader to start a new group.” In the same vein, another pastor from the 40 – 49 age category believed the Romanian Pentecostal church needs to recover “a long-held

Romanian habit of Christian hospitality: receiving believers and non-believers in their homes with the scope of investing in their lives.” Two more concurred saying that multiplication is not possible without smaller groups of people intentionally investing in each other.

The second most commonly cited insight was the need for "stricter membership requirements," with several pastors agreeing that lowering such requirements impedes the church's ability to intentionally invest in others.

- 40 – 49 age category: “Leaders need to have higher expectations from church members when it comes to intentionally investing in others.”
- 40 – 49 age category: “Creating awareness of the problem – the lack of spiritual multiplication in most churches is not even considered an issue. It is the sole responsibility of church leaders to require more from their members.”
- 50 – 59 age category: “Every member needs to be empowered and held accountable for the way they are making disciples.”

Other pastors believed the answer lied in the way church leaders handled the issue of multiplicative discipleship:

First, they spoke about courageous leadership and the ability to start from scratch, creating a working model that centers on the words of Paul: “You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.” (2 Tim. 2:1-2). Speaking about courage, one pastor mentioned the courage to “change the scorecard” from buildings and budgets to souls saved and disciplined.



Second, they spoke about celebrating small wins and giving credit to those leaders who are champions in reproducing discipleship. They indicated that promoting them and recognizing them in front of the congregation was important.

Third, they spoke about mentorship which involves assisting and encouraging people along the discipleship process and continuing the discipleship process with potential small-group leaders and empowering them to serve in higher capacities.

Concerning DQ3b, which focused on the negative aspects of the discipleship model, respondents had diverse solutions on what should be removed from the current model. Unlike the previous question, no two pastors had similar perspectives. The solutions varied from addressing aging leadership to removing redundant worship services.

**Table 4.15 – Reproducing Discipleship (questionnaire)**

Age group of the respondents	Question DQ3b: In your opinion, what should be removed from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes <i>reproducing</i> ?
30-39	We should get rid of the idea that disciples are only made by preaching from pulpits.
40-49	The formal aspect of investing in disciples (discipleship from afar)
40-49	Cancel some church services so that people have enough time to make disciples. Also, some multiplying discipleship models are too sophisticated and difficult to implement.
40-49	Aging and irrelevant leadership that wants to maintain the status quo.
40-49	The long period of adaptation and initiation of a new believer.
50-59	Perfectionism in discipleship. The idea that discipleship happens without giving it too much thought.
50-59	The fact that multiplication is not an aspect taken into account when visions are being forged.
50-59	Most churches have converts but most are „orphans.” They have no spiritual father or mother. Nobody really takes the task of discipleship seriously except the pastor, when he has time.
50-59	Indifference to the aspect of multiplication, awareness that numbers count in multiplication. It is not just a matter of inward holiness. Remove the notion of “the little flock” mentality, as if bigger is always unhealthy.
60+	The concept of the existence of "specialists" in the field of ministry, who seem to distinguish themselves from ordinary believers, (some of them unfortunately seem to really like to be seen that way), a kind of "stars", should be removed. Jesus was approachable by ordinary people and by no means posed to be of a different . . . class (although He really was)!
60+	Remove redundant worship services and too many extracurricular activities.
60+	Since most churches have no reproducing aspect inserted in the vision, I am not sure what should be removed.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

This is a pre-intervention dissertation exploring the current model of discipleship in the Romanian Pentecostal denomination and positing a way forward so that it becomes more missional, intentional, and reproducing. The data analysis led to five findings:

1. A significant proportion of churches lack a structured discipleship curriculum.
2. The biggest hindrance in reproducing discipleship is a busy Christian in an inward-focused church.
3. Pentecostal churches in Romania have yet to develop effective missional discipleship strategies.
4. The Romanian Pentecostal churches have an urgent need to introduce the concept of small groups in the vision and the life of the local church.
5. A shift in mindset from programs to purpose is fundamental.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter presents the conclusion of a pre-intervention research project aimed at exploring the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania and developing a missional, intentional, adult-member, reproducing discipleship model for future implementation. The five major findings of the study are presented in an evaluative perspective that integrates personal observation, engagement with the literature review presented in Chapter 2, and reflection on the biblical and theological implications of the findings.

Each finding is discussed in detail, highlighting the significant impact of a robust discipleship model and its ability to make healthy disciples. The implications of the findings for ministry are also explored, along with limitations of the study and unexpected observations. Finally, the chapter offers recommendations for further research and concludes with a personal reflection on the project's long and arduous journey of the project.

#### **Major Findings**

The major findings serve as the culmination of an in-depth exploration into the subject matter. These significant revelations not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject, but they also hold the potential to shape future discourse and drive further exploration in the field.

**First Finding: Churches Lacking a Structured Discipleship Curriculum**

A significant proportion of churches lack a structured discipleship curriculum, despite over half of them incorporating the term "discipleship" in their vision statement.

Discipleship is an essential aspect of the Christian faith, as it involves the process of becoming more like Jesus Christ through intentional learning, growth, and development. However, many churches today lack a structured discipleship curriculum, as the research clearly shows. The discipleship interview (DSI) revealed that half of the pastors believed the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania is "not at all" intentional. According to the discipleship survey (DS), 22 of the 26 survey participants expressed a belief that their respective churches lacked a comprehensive plan aimed at cultivating mature Christians or fostering healthy discipleship. Only 2 respondents, comprising a meager 8% of the total participants, conveyed a conviction that their church was effectively conveying the "next-steps" message. It is surprising, however, that the survey results revealed that only 54% of the surveyed pastors, said it was likely or highly likely that the term "discipleship" appeared in their respective vision statements. It reveals a paradox and an undeniable sad truth that between written visions and fleshed-out visions there is a big chasm.

Based on the researcher's personal observations, prior to and after the research, without a structured discipleship curriculum, churches will continue to struggle to provide a clear path for spiritual growth and development for their members. Inserting the term "discipleship" in a vision statement is not enough. Ecclesial leaders must be willing to flesh out a vision statement's implication in all areas of the Christian life. It is only in a rigorous and a relational discipleship program that people understand and apply biblical

teachings to their daily lives, build deeper relationships with other believers, and develop their gifts and talents for serving God and others.

The scholarly literature made it evident that intentional discipleship holds a fundamental role in the unfolding of the plan of God. Harvey Herman, Walter Brueggemann and other Old Testament scholars point to a clear expectation of disciple reproduction in the pre- and post-rabbinic period. The practice of intentional discipleship is a cornerstone of the Judeo-Christian faith and its praxis, given that it encompasses not only the acquisition of knowledge about God, including Yahweh and Jesus, but also entails following His guidance and assisting others in their efforts to do the same.

### **Second Finding: Busy Christians in an Inward-Focused Church**

The biggest hindrance in reproducing discipleship is a busy Christian in an inward-focused busy church.

In modern Christianity, based on two decades of full-time ministry, I have noticed that the concept of being busy has become a badge of honor. Many Christians are involved in multiple church activities, committees, and groups, and the church itself often emphasizes busyness as a sign of commitment and devotion. On the surface, busy Christians may seem like a good thing. After all, they are actively engaged in church activities and working towards the goal of spreading the gospel. However, the problem arises when this busyness becomes an end, rather than a means to an end. In an inward-focused church, the focus may shift from the outward mission of spreading the gospel to the internal activities of the church. This can result in an unhealthy emphasis on busyness and activity within the church, at the expense of evangelism and outreach. Another

negative consequence of an inward-focused church is burnout and exhaustion of leaders and lay persons.

Personal observations were backed up and reinforced by the research. From the questionnaire (DQ), five out of twelve participants offered a critique of the number of church services provided, contending that this limited the ability of members to engage in purposeful, missional, and replicative forms of discipleship. Another pastor, from the 60+ category, believed the church “has become too introverted, forgetting its Great Commission.” This should not come as a surprise because, as the literature from chapter two pointed out, Romanian Pentecostalism grew up under Communism. Through austere religious and political changes, the Securitate limited the church’s impact outside its four walls. Those circumstances engendered an inherent paradox wherein adherents of the Pentecostal faith acknowledged the preponderance of God’s work in the world transpiring through the efforts of laypersons operating outside the institutional purview of the church. Nevertheless, the church’s predominant preoccupation persisted in the realm of its internal operations, with significant attention and resources devoted to matters related to its financial allocations and related pursuits. Moreover, to curtail the duration of substantial discipleship efforts, the Securitate gave church leaders strict orders to undertake a much larger administrative role in addition to their pastoral duties. This resulted in an overwhelming burden of novel administrative obligations.

Another important reason for the lack of an extrovert church is the influence of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox understanding of discipleship significantly underscores the importance of liturgical practices and worship services within the church. Within the Orthodox tradition, faith is centered on the church, its activities, and its

objectives. Consequently, it is not surprising that Pentecostal congregations, influenced by Orthodox principles, spend a considerable amount of time, resources, and effort on church services and liturgies. Within the context of ecclesiastical practices, it is not without merit that a segment of the populace assertively posits the notion that certain churches have assumed a role akin to merchants, offering and dealing in sacred commodities and services.

As expounded upon in the biblical section of this study, during the concluding stages of His earthly existence, just prior to His ascension, Jesus sought to ensure that His disciples did not overlook the broader implications of God's mission. This prompted Him to issue a clear and direct mandate to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Mat. 28:19). The emphasis is on making disciples, but one cannot doubt that there is a direct correlation between "making disciples" and "going". Jesus' choice of words can be interpreted as a formal summons for all future followers to participate in His mission, akin to an official directive, a direct order, or a mandate like those given to new military conscripts.

In conclusion, the issue of busy Christians in an inward-focused church is a complex one. While busy Christians may seem like a good thing, an overemphasis on busyness can lead to problems such as a lack of focus on evangelism and burnout. To avoid these issues, it is essential to find balance in Christian activity, recognizing that the ultimate goal is to share the gospel and make disciples. By doing so, Christians can ensure that they are effectively serving the mission of the church.



### **Third Finding: Churches with No Missional Discipleship Strategy**

While Pentecostal churches in Romania have demonstrated excellence in helping the poor and vulnerable, they have yet to develop effective discipleship strategies for motivating their members in addressing pressing societal and systemic issues, such as creation care, abortion, and human trafficking.

Growing up in a Christian environment, I often heard sermons or exhortations on James 1:27. Additionally, our church developed a sensitive ear to issues like homelessness, widows, and other issues related to poverty. There were societal issues, however, that the Pentecostal church did not tackle because there was no missional discipleship strategy. Going back to the literature review, I was not surprised by this finding. Pentecostal communities lived as marginalized and undereducated communities. They even lived physically on the outskirts of urban places. During the Communistic regime, the Pentecostal faith community was subject to suppression, condemnation, and financial penalties if it engaged with societal matters. Consequently, the Pentecostal faith community developed a timidity that was passed on to younger generations. The marginalized in the wider society had no voice in public affairs. Furthermore, within the Pentecostal tradition, there was an erroneous perception that the church should remain uninvolved in societal issues, leading to a tragic outcome where the community prioritized spiritual pursuits internally without any intention of extending their spiritual practices to the broader public sphere. In essence, there was a lack of missional drive within the community.

The Bible teaches that God created the world and entrusted it to humanity to steward and care for it. Genesis 1:28 states, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be

fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." This verse implies that humans have a responsibility to care for the earth and its inhabitants.

In addition to biblical teachings, the theological framework exposed by scholars like Gordon Wenham emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation. The doctrine of creation affirms that all things were created by God and that everything is dependent on God for its existence. This interconnectedness means that the health of the environment as well as the health of inter-personal relationships affects all aspects of life.

Christian discipleship is a journey of following Jesus Christ, and it encompasses all aspects of life, including things like creation care and the sacredness of life. As stewards of God's creation, Christians have a responsibility to care for all of God's creation. As the research shows, very few churches provide an intentional, holistic, and missional discipleship strategy. Romanian Pentecostal churches have yet to develop effective discipleship strategies for motivating their members to address pressing societal issues. There is much work to be done.

#### **Fourth Finding: The Need for Small Groups**

The Romanian Pentecostal churches have an urgent need to introduce the concept of small groups in the vision and the life of the local church.

Since the implementation of the discipleship scorecard at our local church, small groups have become a prominent topic of discussion during our board meetings. A diversity of viewpoints has emerged with some members advocating for small groups based on success stories from other churches, while others expressed skepticism due to reports of failed attempts at their implementation in other settings. Indeed, instances of

disorganization and neglect leading to the collapse of small group structures have been noted in some churches, causing them to split. Despite the heated debates surrounding this topic, our church board ultimately resolved to make the shift.

No doubt discipleship is a crucial aspect of Christianity that involves mentoring and training believers to grow in their faith and become more like Christ. As the research has shown, from the questionnaire as well as the survey, a good portion of pastors saw the importance of introducing the concept of small groups in the local church. Small groups have emerged as a popular and effective way to carry out discipleship, providing a supportive environment for believers to learn and grow together.

In scripture, the biblical authors clearly show a strong tie between Jesus and the twelve. Accountability was achievable in this manner. No doubt Jesus' small group offered a level of accountability that would have been difficult to manage in larger settings. When the disciples knew they had to report back to Jesus and their peers, they were more likely to stay on track and make progress in their spiritual growth. This small group setting also provided a safe space for the other disciples to share their struggles, their failures, their doubts, and to receive support and encouragement from the rest of the group. Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for faithful witnessing in the world. Building robust disciples is not an easy endeavor. It requires constant personal attention, constant sacrifice, and much patience. This can only be done in a small group, relational setting. It is achieved when the mentee stays close to those whom he or she seeks to lead. Jesus himself is the ultimate master of a successful small group.

Theologically speaking, based on the literature review, John Wesley heavily critiqued the issue of personal holiness at the expense of social holiness. Christian discipleship, in the vision of Wesley and other theologians like Bonhoeffer, is not a solo endeavor. Christians are called to be in community with one another, supporting and encouraging each other along the way. This is why Bonhoeffer advocated for the need to stay rooted in the community, a theological concept that gains track when Christians look at the fellowship of the Triune God. Small groups, in conclusion, offer a sense of community that can be difficult to find in larger settings. This sense of community provides a sense of belonging that is vital to discipleship.

#### **Fifth Finding: From Programs to Purpose**

A shift in mindset from programs to purpose is fundamental. For this to happen, leaders need to be exposed to ongoing, relevant, and pragmatic teaching on discipleship.

One of the major shifts emerging leaders in the Pentecostal church in Romania posited forward in the research is a paradigm shift from programs to purpose. The findings from the questionnaire, survey, and literature review provide compelling evidence that churches are failing to align their services with the goal of discipleship. The survey results were particularly striking, with over three quarters of the respondents indicating dissatisfaction with their church's efforts to prioritize discipleship. Additionally, the perspectives of three key pastors from three distinct age ranges of 30-39, 40-49, and 50-59 corroborate this view. All advocated for a shift towards disciple-centered activities. These converging lines of evidence demonstrate the urgent need for churches to prioritize discipleship and align their programs accordingly.

The presence of numerous unconnected programs within a church can engender not only concerns regarding efficacy, but also create issues of quality. An increase in the number of programs and their lack of coherence in relation to a shared purpose results in an augmented difficulty in effectuating leadership, organization, and the prioritization of meaningful undertakings. Each program ought to be scrutinized to determine whether it aligns with the principles and values that Jesus espoused. Programs that have the capacity to contribute to the formation of disciples but have failed to do so should be integrated into the broader framework of biblical relational discipleship.

My empirical analysis, based on over fifteen years of full-time ministry, suggests a common deficiency in ecclesial communities, namely a lack of cohesive discipling objectives. Consequently, I posit that the harmonization of all ecclesiastical programs with a shared purpose is paramount. A minimalist approach, emphasizing the need to prioritize quality over quantity in the execution of church programs, is needed. Less is indeed more.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

The pre-intervention ministry project offers valuable insights into the internal and external factors that impact the spiritual growth and development of Christians in Pentecostal churches in Romania. The study identifies both supportive and detrimental factors that may influence new members continued spiritual progress. It is crucial for church leaders to recognize and understand these factors, to develop intentional and strategic responses that foster a conducive atmosphere for the growth and development of new converts.

The present study's findings carry further significant implications for local churches and their leaders. The research instruments employed to evaluate the current state of Pentecostal churches have illuminated a sobering reality. Specifically, the study underscores the pervasive lack of robust discipleship strategies and curricula within these faith communities, leaving younger generations ill-equipped to resist the siren call of a secular world. The concurrent wave of secularism from the West further exacerbates this problem, as many young congregants face an increasingly hostile environment to their faith. This predicament is particularly concerning, given the current trend of teenagers leaving the church. These observations suggest that proactive steps are necessary to reverse this trend and cultivate an environment that sustains the spiritual growth and development of younger generations.

To address this issue, church leaders must recognize that traditional approaches, such as Sunday services or mid-week gatherings, are no longer sufficient. They must develop and implement innovative and effective strategies that engage and mentor younger members of their congregations, promoting active discipleship and spiritual growth. This requires a comprehensive review of existing curricula, programs, and practices to identify and address gaps in the discipleship process. Additionally, leaders must cultivate a culture that values spiritual development and empowers members to become agents of change within their communities. By taking these steps, church leaders can help stem the tide of departing teenagers and inspire a new generation of faithful followers.

The pre-intervention project, which centered on the issue of missional, intentional, and reproducing discipleship, carries significant implications for religious

education as well. The conclusions suggest that theological schools must integrate this paradigm shift into their curricula, ensuring that future pastoral students are equipped to tackle the challenges facing postmodern faith communities. As emphasized by one respondent in the survey, this shift represents a vital change in the approach to ministry and discipleship. It requires a joint effort to move away from a culture of passive participation and endless consumerism and towards one that promotes intentional discipleship. To achieve this, theological schools must incorporate this shift into their core courses, exposing graduate students to the principles of missional and reproducing discipleship. This requires a thorough examination of the current curricula, identifying areas where gaps exist and revising courses to incorporate relevant and contemporary material. Additionally, institutions must provide opportunities for students to gain practical experience, exposing them to the realities of ministry and enabling them to apply these principles in real-world contexts. Additionally, religious institutions must recognize that this paradigm shift is not a one-time event but a continuous process. As such, they must incorporate multiple opportunities for exposure and engagement, allowing students to encounter and grapple with these concepts repeatedly throughout their studies. This will ensure that future leaders are well-equipped to promote lasting and meaningful change within their congregations and communities, fostering a culture of intentional and reproducing discipleship that will transform the landscape of contemporary Christianity.

Finally, a fourth implication centers on the need for national denominational leaders to get involved in an adequate manner. The implications of the pre-intervention project have far-reaching effects that can be utilized by national denominational leaders

to sound the alarm to churches that have been in a steady decline in recent years. The study's findings make it clear that many churches have lost sight of the central importance of discipleship in promoting church growth and development. The answer is not always rebranding, merging, or closing doors, but rather a renewed focus on discipleship, which is essential to creating an atmosphere conducive to growth and development.

National denominational leaders can utilize the research findings to develop and distribute resources that highlight the central, unifying act of discipleship in healthy churches. This could include developing training programs, publishing articles and books, and conducting conferences and workshops that educate and motivate pastors and church leaders to prioritize intentional, missional, and reproducing discipleship. By emphasizing discipleship as a central component of church growth, national denominational leaders can play a crucial role in promoting a paradigm shift in church practices that will lead to long-term success.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study focused solely on leaders from one recognized evangelical denomination in Romania, namely the Pentecostals. This limitation is acknowledged as it is possible that other denominations with mature leaders could have contributed valuable insights to the project. It is worth noting that the majority church in Romania, the Orthodox Church, was not included in the interview, survey, or questionnaire due to personal considerations about their biblical and theological understanding of discipleship. While this decision may have been valid, it is important to recognize that excluding such a large segment of the population could have limited the scope and depth of the study.



Another limitation of the study came from the very fact that few elderly pastors were willing to sit down and talk about the issue of discipleship. This limitation provided limited access to insights from pastors who ministered during the Communist era. It is not clear if the reason for this limitation is burnout or indifference, but it is important to acknowledge that this could have affected the validity of the study. For future inquiries, a more deliberate effort must be made to attract a broader sample of older pastors, age 65 years and up, to ensure that the findings are more satisfying.

A final limitation of the research relates to the underrepresentation of female church leaders in the study's participation. This limitation stems from the Pentecostal church's fixed gender norms in Romania, which restrict the ordination of women to leadership roles. This curtails the potential contributions of female ecclesial leaders to the formation of church policies and practices. However, the significance of incorporating the perspectives of female church leaders in the construction of future discipleship models is paramount. Female leaders bring distinct and valuable insights, experiences, and perspectives that can contribute to a better understanding of holistic discipleship. Thus, it is advisable that future studies include female church leaders in their research to ensure that their voices are adequately heard and considered in the development of a discipleship model that is missional, intentional, and reproducing.

### **Unexpected Observations**

Upon reviewing the data obtained from the DSI, DQ, and DS, a surprising revelation emerged regarding the prioritization of church activities over discipleship programs. The empirical analysis uncovered a pattern of busy churches that appeared to emphasize church services and other visible events as a means of attracting and retaining

members. This finding contradicted my initial assumption that a church without a core discipleship paradigm would exhibit lower levels of church attendance and fewer programs. Despite the absence of a discipleship program, the pastors included in the study demonstrated a commitment to providing a range of activities for their congregants. As indicated by both qualitative and quantitative instruments, these busy churches devoted significant resources to hosting engaging worship services, holiday events, and other activities that primarily catered to the Sunday crowd. Although these churches were not lacking in resources such as time, talent, or energy, they appeared to lack a unifying theme centered around discipleship.

An additional surprise came from the survey and the questionnaire concerning the role of discipleship in churches. Despite the multitude of vision statements that reference discipleship, there is a notable lack of emphasis on fostering discipleship during the average church week. This observation is consistent with the conclusions drawn from George Barna's extensive research on the state of discipleship in diverse churches across America. In particular, Barna's evaluation that the vast majority of churches in the country offer some form of discipleship program or activity, while only a small minority have established a true church of disciples, remains relevant within the Romanian context (*Growing True Disciples* 33-34). This observation highlights the pervasiveness of superficial or inadequate discipleship programs that fail to achieve their intended objectives. It is remarkable how easily we can delude ourselves into believing that we are fulfilling the mandate of making disciples when, in fact, we may be merely focused on gaining church converts.

Finally, the present study has surprisingly revealed a sad state in which some pastors find themselves. Despite the mounting evidence indicating the harmful effects of a lack of intentional, missional, and reproducing discipleship, a significant number of pastors continue to persist with outdated and ineffective approaches to church leadership. These pastors' values, strategies, and scorecards remain entrenched in paradigms that are increasingly viewed as counterproductive and irrelevant. The reluctance of these pastors to adapt to changing circumstances and explore new avenues of church leadership may have significant long-term consequences for the church's ability to achieve its mission and remain relevant in the face of ongoing societal changes.

### **Recommendations**

The Pentecostal denomination in Romania has been greatly affected by the forty plus years of communism, resulting in various scars that continue to impact the denomination. Furthermore, the country is experiencing a rapid growth of secularism, which is causing many Christian denominations in Romania to decline. This decline is further exacerbated by the entertainment industry, as Hollywood is doing a better job than the church in instilling their core values in the young generation. Consequently, it is recommended that church leaders address these challenges urgently. While many churches remain preoccupied with their traditional practices, it is time for pastors, local ministry leaders, and kingdom-centered Christians to embrace intentional, missional, and reproducing discipleship to ensure the church's long-term survival. To achieve this, churches must re-evaluate their old paradigms and consider making ecclesial shifts that would better serve the needs of the present generation. Bold leadership is required to bring about this change. Failure to take necessary action will result in the church

becoming increasingly irrelevant in society and it runs the risk of closing its doors for decades to come.

An additional recommendation to enhance the development of discipleship is to engage with the scholarly works of prominent authors such as Bill Hull, Bobby Harrington, Jim Putman, Robby Gallaty, and Craig Etheredge. These individuals have dedicated considerable attention to the subject of discipleship, and their practical and theoretical contributions have gained significant credibility. Furthermore, by applying the insights derived from their extensive experience and knowledge, churches can effectively promote the establishment of a thriving culture of discipleship.

### **Postscript**

The composition of the final paragraphs of a three-year project is a remarkable milestone that prompts a sense of disbelief. At the project's inception, I harbored uncertainties regarding the attainment of this stage. At times, the temptation was to give up, especially in the sixth year. However, I am appreciative of having overcome that impulse and committed to a thorough assessment of the research topic.

Having the opportunity to pursue my graduate studies at a preeminent seminary, among notable international students and erudite professors, has been the most significant academic blessing of the past decade. It was at Asbury Theological Seminary where I reconnected with the teachings and life of John Wesley, a devoted follower of Jesus whose influence greatly impacted my personal growth and ministerial practice. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunities presented to me, among various other reasons. With hopeful anticipation, I look forward to how the knowledge I have acquired will be instrumental in serving the greater good of the church, guided by the divine providence

The pre-intervention project has proven instrumental in multiple ways. Firstly, it allowed me to enhance my analytical and diagnostic skills concerning the discipleship issue, enabling my church to better navigate this challenge. To my delight, several other churches have already implemented quite a few correctional measures. Secondly, it compelled me to reflect profoundly on the pressing need for a shift from “programs to purpose” in my own church. The surveys and interviews conducted as part of this academic pursuit were immensely helpful, enabling me to gain a deeper understanding of the problem and gain insights from other pastors' experiences. As a result of this scholarly journey, our church has experienced growth in both numerical and spiritual aspects. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

## **APPENDIXES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **Informed Consent Letter for Semi-Structured Interview (DSI)**

My name is Vlad Adrian. I am a Student at Asbury Theological Seminar Seminary (Asbury Theological Seminary, 204 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390, USA) conducting a study for my DMin dissertation. My contact phone number is +40771421352. My email addresses are adrian.vlad@asburyseminary.edu and vladadrian1986@gmail.com. My research supervisor is Dr. Ellen Marmon, Director, Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. You may contact me at any time, if you have questions about this study.

You are invited to complete this questionnaire because you are a senior pastor of a Pentecostal Church, involved in ministry for at least 25 years and you were selected from a list of over 100 national pastors that have served both in the church prior to and after the fall of Communism.

The purpose of this research is to explore the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania and develop a missional, intentional, adult-member, reproducing discipleship model for future implementation. It is believed that the project can be utilized as a model for future generations since it has practical application in broader denominational and even international contexts.

If you agree to be in the research, you will be asked to answer some of the questions related to the discipleship process. The duration of the participation for the interview will not be more than forty-five minutes. You will receive the questions through email two weeks before the scheduled interview. The interview will take place via ZOOM, in a place where you feel comfortable and where there are no distractions. The interview will be audio and video recorded for the purpose of transcribing all of the information on a Word document. The recordings will not be used for any other purpose than the one mentioned above. The data will be safely kept out of the reach of other adults and children. Once the research is published, the researcher will destroy the data in the next year.

You will be asked to read the consent letter and reply with a personal email stating that you agree to participate in an online semi-structured interview via ZOOM. There are no monetary incentives for the participation in this study.

If you decide at any moment during the interview that you do not want to answer a question, please feel free to do so. Any other issues or concerns that need to be clarified should be written in an email format.

By replying to this email, you declare that you have read the purpose and nature of the research and voluntarily accept to be a participant in the study.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Questions (DSI)**

1. Tell me how came to know Christ (your conversion story).
2. Describe your spiritual upbringing.
3. Can you name a possible spiritual mentor? Why or why not?
4. In what type of discipleship environment did you grow up?
5. Was there an intentional discipleship model set in place?
6. Do you remember having or hearing about a discipleship curriculum?
7. How would you describe the state of discipleship in your local church? What about our denomination?
8. To whatever degree the state of discipleship in your church is different from the denomination, what are the reasons for the differences and/or similarities?
9. Do you believe local churches do a good job with the missional aspect of discipleship? What about the intentional aspect?
10. In your ministry context, what discipleship practices are you currently utilizing to ensure that members are investing in other people so that multiplication is being done?
11. What are some ways we can improve the current discipleship model in Romania so that it is more missional, intentional, and reproducing?

## APPENDIX C

### **Informed Consent Letter for Discipleship Survey (DS)**

My name is Vlad Adrian. I am a Student at Asbury Theological Seminary (Asbury Theological Seminary, 204 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390, USA) conducting a study for my DMin dissertation. My contact phone number is +40771421352. My email addresses are adrian.vlad@asburyseminary.edu and vladadrian1986@gmail.com. My research supervisor is Dr. Ellen Marmon, Director, Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. You may contact me at any time, if you have questions about this study.

The purpose of this research is to explore the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania and develop a missional, intentional, adult-member, reproducing discipleship model for future implementation.

It is believed that the project can be utilized as a model for future generations since it has practical application in broader denominational and even international contexts. The area in which the information of this study will be gathered from and shared into is the Pentecostal Regional Community of Bucharest (PRCB) comprising eight counties (Calarasi, Bucharest, Dambovita, Giurgiu, Ilfov, Ialomita, Vrancea, Teleorman).

The survey will take approximately fifteen/twenty minutes of your time. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. Filling the survey involves minimal risk. Your name will not be used in any of the reporting and writing related to this study. I plan to develop a dissertation based on three different research instruments (two qualitative and one quantitative), along with personal inquiries and academical research. This dissertation will be shared with my cohort colleagues and Asbury Theological Seminary faculty on the Asbury's Kentucky Campus.

By completing the online form, you are agreeing to fill out the survey for this research study.







Section 3 of 4 “REPRODUCING”

Q1: To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania *REPRODUCING*: ***Of those that got baptized in the last 5 years, how many are new converts?***

10-20%     30-40%     50-60%     70-80%     90-100%

Q2: To what extent is the current discipleship model in the Pentecostal denomination in Romania *REPRODUCING*: ***Are church members required/empowered to disciple new or potential converts?***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly unlikely	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highly Likely

## APPENDIX E

### Informed Consent Letter for Discipleship Questionnaire (DQ)

My name is Vlad Adrian. I am a Student at Asbury Theological Seminary (Asbury Theological Seminary, 204 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390, USA) conducting a study for my DMin dissertation. My contact phone number is +40771421352. My email addresses are adrian.vlad@asburyseminary.edu and vladadrian1986@gmail.com. My research supervisor is Dr. Ellen Marmon, Director, Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. You may contact me at any time, if you have questions about this study.

You are invited to complete this questionnaire because you are a senior pastor of a Pentecostal Church, involved in ministry for at least 15 years and you serve along other pastors and/or church leaders in the leadership network called ProLider.

The purpose of this research is to explore the current model of discipleship within the Pentecostal denomination in Romania and develop a missional, intentional, adult-member, reproducing discipleship model for future implementation. It is believed that the project can be utilized as a model for future generations since it has practical application in broader denominational and even international contexts.

The questionnaire will take approximately fifteen/twenty minutes of your time. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. Filling the questionnaire involves minimal risk. Your name will not be used in any of the reporting and writing related to this study. I plan to develop a dissertation based on three different research instruments (two qualitative and one quantitative), along with personal inquiries and academical research. This dissertation will be shared with my cohort colleagues and Asbury Theological Seminary faculty on the Asbury's Kentucky Campus.

By completing the online form, you are agreeing to fill out the questionnaire for this research study.

## APPENDIX F

### Discipleship Questionnaire (DQ)

#### Section 1 of 4

My research is on DEVELOPING AN INTENTIONAL, MISSIONAL, AND REPRODUCIBLE DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN ROMANIA.

Your answers will help improve the research and perhaps help further the mission of God by creating a discipleship model that is effective. Therefore, I would kindly ask you to provide the best of your knowledge and sincere answers to the following questions. The questionnaire will take around 10 minutes out of your time to complete. Please know that your individual responses to this questionnaire will remain confidential (it is not required to write your name or identifiable information) and in the care of the researcher, and all research documents will be stored securely and used just for the purpose of this research.

I give my consent for the researcher to use the following information for the advancement of his dissertation.  YES

Age group:  40-49                       50-59                       60+

Years of experience in ministry (paid or unpaid):  10-19    20-29    30-39    40+

#### Section 2 of 4 “MISSIONAL”

By missional, the researcher means 4 things: creation care, care for the needy, social justice, and engaging systemic issues like human trafficking, abortion, and orphans.

Q1: In your opinion, what are the best ways to **expand** the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes more missional?

Q2: In your opinion, what should be **removed** from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes **more missional**?

#### Section 3 of 4 “INTENTIONAL”

Q1: In your opinion, what are the best ways to **expand** the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes more **intentional**?

Q2: In your opinion, what should be **removed** from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes more **intentional**?

#### Section 4 of 4 “INTENTIONAL”

By reproducing, the research means disciples that make disciples that make disciples.

Q1: In your opinion, what are the best ways **to expand** the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes *reproducing*?

Q2: In your opinion, what should be **removed** from the current Pentecostal discipleship model in Romania so that it becomes *reproducing*?

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