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What helps Christians grow? An exploratory study distinguishing  
among four distinctive pathways

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### **Abstract**

This study draws on a detailed survey completed by 1,123 churchgoers attending churches within the West Midlands region of England in order to identify indicators of Christian growth and distinctive pathways to growth. Factor and reliability analyses distinguished between two indicators of Christian growth (depth of discipleship and strength of vocation) and four distinctive pathways to growth (growth through group activity, growth through Christian experience, growth through church worship, and growth through public engagement). Regression analyses, taking into account individual differences in sex, age, education, church support and challenges to faith, identified growth through Christian experience as the most important factor in helping Christians to grow, while public engagement added weight to depth of discipleship and group activities added weight to strength of vocation. The implications of these findings are discussed for future research and for Discipleship Learning programmes within the Church.

*Keywords:* Christian formation, discipleship learning, empirical theology, congregation studies

### Introduction

The core question ‘What helps Christians grow?’ is being explored by the churches across England and Wales in a variety of ways and under a variety of guises. In particular, notions like Education for Discipleship and Discipleship Learning have come into greater prominence. For example, according to Bishop Stephen Croft (2005), the Church of England has initiated ‘a new conversation about Christian discipleship’ centred on the vision of the Church as a body ‘called to be and to become a community of missionary disciples’ (p. 1). This notion of the development of discipleship is at the heart of the report from the Archbishops’ Council (2015), *Developing discipleship*. A recent special issue of the journal *Rural Theology* drew together a collection of essays reflecting on this theme from a variety of perspectives. The distinctive contribution of the special issue concerns the way in which it complements theoretical perspectives (the first three essays) with empirical perspectives (the next four essays).

In the opening theoretical essay of this special issue, Astley (2015) discusses the ideas of forming disciples and discipleship formation from educational, biblical and theological perspectives. Astley draws widely on the international literatures concerning adult Christian education, formation and learning (including, McKenzie, 1982; Hull, 1985; Groome, 1991, 2011; Astley, 1994; Astley & Francis, 1994; Astley, Francis, & Crowder, 1996) and concerning discipleship (including, Bonhoeffer, 1959; Rengstorff, 1967; Müller, 1975; Dunn, 1992; Koperski, 2010; Worthen, 2014). Astley argues that an analysis and understanding of both formation and discipleship should lead to a more profound and more honed understanding of discipleship through Christian education and Christian learning. Clear thinking may help us understand what helps Christians grow.

In the second theoretical essay, Francis (2015) draws on insights from empirical theology, sociological analysis, and the study of scripture to illustrate how such foundations

can inform practice in discipleship learning. These principles in practice are illustrated by reference to the BA in Theology for Discipleship and Ministry designed by the St Mary's Centre in North Wales. Examples of good practice in programme design and delivery may help us to understand what helps Christians grow.

In the third theoretical essay, Ellis (2015) focuses on practising Christian formation within groups. Drawing on insights from Heidegger (1953, 1975, 1985, 1988, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996), Ellis examines how group processes can move people on from idle talk to transformative conversation. Clear models of human transformation may help us to understand what helps Christians grow.

Each of the four empirical essays in the special issue, in its own way, argues that there may be real value in listening to individuals actually engaged in the process of Christian learning or discipleship learning. Empirical knowledge about what actually goes on in Christian learning may also help us to understand what helps Christians to grow. In particular these four essays test two theories.

The first theory to be tested in this special issue is that not all Christian disciples may learn in the same way. Two studies approached this question in different ways, but both drawing on the same conceptual framework. Both draw on psychological type theory to model different approaches to learning (see Jung, 1971; Francis, 2005). In the first of these two studies, Francis and Robbins (2015) examined the learning styles and psychological preferences of 108 course participants (66% response rate) within the BA in Theology for Discipleship and Ministry. The data demonstrated that the adult learners displayed strong preferences for introversion over extraversion, for sensing over intuition, and for judging over perceiving, as well as a balance of preferences for thinking and for feeling. In spite of the clear personal preferences of the course participants, appreciation was shown for a mixed learning experience, embracing extravert learning preferences as well as introvert learning

preferences, intuitive learning preferences as well as sensing learning preferences, feeling learning preferences as well as thinking learning preferences, and judging learning preferences. Only perceiving learning preferences were not so widely welcomed by the course participants.

In the second of these studies, Francis and Jones (2015), invited the 73 participants at a residential Diocesan Ministry Conference to function as a hermeneutical community engaging in a conversation between the Word of God and the People of God on the theme of discipleship. Building on the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics (Francis & Village, 2008), the participants worked in groups structured according to dominant psychological type preferences: sensing, intuition, feeling and thinking. In these groups the participants discussed two passages from Mark's Gospel focused on specific aspects of discipleship (Mark 6: 7-14 and Mark 6: 33-41). The process demonstrated how psychological type preferences are reflected in the way in which scripture is interpreted and the way in which disciples learn.

The second theory to be tested in this special issue is that participants who engage in processes of Christian learning are actually influenced by this experience. Two studies approached this question from different methodological perspectives, one rooted in a qualitative tradition and one rooted in a quantitative tradition. In the qualitative study, Neil (2015) reported on the findings of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with three individuals who had participated within the BA in Theology for Discipleship and Ministry, two of whom emerged with the full degree and one with the Diploma. Two are now clergy and one an active lay member in a developing Ministry Area. The interviews revealed that the participants have a confidence in expressing their faith, a clear view of their journey of faith and of the vocation they are following, and insights into lay theological education both for themselves and for others in church.

In the quantitative study, Village (2015) analysed data provided by 2,272 lay people who answered the 2013 *Church Times* survey and who lived in England and worshipped in an Anglican church. Village's aim was to identify the factors that contribute to growth in discipleship, distinguishing between personal and environmental factors (nature and nurture). As an index of growth in discipleship, Village employed the five-item Confidence in Faith Scale (CIFS) that included items about the salience of faith, sharing faith, growing in faith, and closeness to God. The data demonstrated that psychological type preferences predicted confidence in faith, with CIFS scores positively correlated with extraversion, intuition, feeling and judging scores. Tradition and theological stance had slightly less predictive power on CIFS scores, with charismatics and especially conservative evangelical charismatics having the highest confidence. Over and above these factors, learning also promoted confidence in faith: in particular those who had attended courses about religion in dioceses or through universities showed higher levels of confidence in their faith than those who did not. It seemed that feeling confident in faith is something that some people may be predisposed to, but which can also be enhanced by the right sort of education.

In some ways the study published by Village (2015) may get closest to the question posed by the present paper: What helps Christians grow? Here is an example of the kind of empirical evidence that can be generated from an empirical survey conducted among church members. The limitation with Village's study is that it relied on the secondary analysis of data collected for a much broader research agenda. Another database that has the potential for generating richer quantitative insights into the factors that shape Christian growth is the new survey shaped by the St Peter's Saltley Trust.

### **Research questions**

Against this background, the present study set out to draw on the detailed congregational survey designed by the St Peter's Saltley Trust to illuminate the research

problem ‘What helps Christians grow?’. The analytic strategy advanced by the present study focused on four specific research questions. The first research question concerned identifying from the survey reliable measures that could serve as indicators of Christian growth. The second research question concerned identifying from the survey reliable measures that could serve as indicators of pathways of Christian growth. The third research question concerned identifying from the survey reliable measures of factors that might promote or that might hamper Christian growth. The fourth research question concerned evaluating the comparative effect of the pathways of Christian growth (identified by research question two) on the indicators of Christian growth (identified by research question one) after taking into account the effects of sex, age, education and the factors that promote or challenge Christian growth (identified by research question three).

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

Local churches within the West Midlands region of England, were invited to participate in a congregational study concerned with the experience of discipleship and the journey of faith. A total of 29 churches responded to the invitation to administer a questionnaire to members of the congregation and in many cases the project leader was present to explain the project and to oversee the process. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. They were given the following instruction

Try to answer each question accurately, but don't take too long over any particular question. Your instincts will often give the best answer.

Questionnaires were submitted by 1,325 individuals, from which 202 were excluded in view of missing data. From this kind of congregation survey it is often not possible to report an accurate response rate.

### **Instrument**



The questionnaire comprised five main sections, dealing with: God's calling, my journey of faith, faith into practice, coming to life, and personal data. The first three sections employed five-point Likert scaling: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1). The fourth section invited prioritising two options from groups of seven. The personal data included questions about sex, age, education, ethnicity, and distance travelled to church.

### **Participants**

The 1,123 thoroughly completed questionnaires were submitted by 425 men, 649 women, and 49 people who did not disclose their sex. In terms of age participants were invited to check a series of age groups: 60 were under 21, 76 were between 21 and 30, 104 between 31 and 40, 118 between 41 and 50, 223 between 51 and 60, 247 between 61 and 70, 195 between 71 and 80, and 66 over 80, with the remaining 34 not disclosing their age. In terms of education, 608 were graduates and 491 non-graduates, with the remaining 24 not disclosing their educational level. The majority of the participants (924) were white British. In terms of denomination, 566 attended Anglican churches, 206 independent evangelical churches, 171 Methodist churches, 61 Roman Catholic churches, 46 Baptist churches, and 19 other churches. The remaining 54 described themselves either as visitors or as not generally attending a church.

### **Analysis**

The data were analysed by the SPSS package drawing on the frequency, correlation, factor reliability and regression routines.

## **Results and discussion**

### ***Assessing Christian growth***

The first step in data analysis was designed to identify and examine dependent variables that serve as indicators of Christian growth. One set of seven items was identified as

assessing Depth of Discipleship (table 1) and a second set of five items was identified as assessing Strength of Vocation (table 2).

- insert tables 1 and 2 about here -

The Index of Depth of Discipleship achieved an alpha coefficient of .82. According to this index, over three quarters of the participants felt that they were good at nurturing and caring for others in the church community (91%), good at putting their faith into practice in daily life (87%), good at exploring the Bible (81%), good at understanding how to see the world and our times as God sees them (79%), and good at worshipping with mind, body and spirit (77%). Over half felt that they were good at speaking about their faith or personal journey (68%), and good at praying deeply in a range of different ways (62%). Overall these statistics demonstrate a group of churchgoers who have developed depth to their discipleship.

The Index of Strength of Vocation achieved an alpha coefficient of .70. According to this index, over half of the participants felt that they have a particular calling (63%), that they are more or less on the journey God wants them to be on (57%), and that they have been helped in their journey of faith by a direct call or experience that they believe was from God (56%). Turning attention to the two reverse coded items in the scale, 31% of the participants said that they do not know what their calling is, and 6% said that they were resisting or ignoring their calling. Overall these statistics demonstrate a group of churchgoers who have a relatively strong sense of calling.

These two dependent variables (Index of Depth of Discipleship and Index of Strength of Vocation) were positively correlated ( $r = .47$ ) suggesting that the two variables access similar but not identical aspects of Christian growth.

### ***Identifying pathways to growth***

The second step in data analysis was designed to identify and test the extent to which the participants had followed identical or different pathways of Christian growth. A core

section of the questionnaire (part two) invited participants to assess on the five-point Likert scale the extent to which they had 'been helped in their journey of faith' by a list of 30 experiences or activities. Factor analysis, employing principal component and varimax rotation, identified how these 30 items fell clearly into a four-factor structure. Table 3 presents the solution when all factor loadings below the threshold of .41 have been suppressed. The factor structure is very clear. These factors can be interpreted as: growth through group activity (factor one), growth through Christian experience (factor two), growth through church worship (factor three), and growth through public engagement.

- insert tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 about here -

Reliability analyses were employed to explore more fully the scaling properties of these four factors (tables 4, 5, 6 and 7). The Index of Discipleship through Group Activity demonstrated that over half the participants had been helped in their journey of faith by being part of their church's social life or fellowship (82%), by being part of a small group or Bible study group (68%), by engaging with Christian conferences, festivals, events or pilgrimages (63%) and by leading others in worship, small group activity or prayer (55%). Almost half had been helped in their journey of faith by a Christian course offered by a local church (49%), or by going on a retreat (39%).

The Index of Discipleship through Christian Experience demonstrated that over three quarters of the participants had been helped in their journey of faith by trying to put their faith into practice in daily life (88%), by listening to sermons (88%), by praying by themselves (87%), and by their closest friendships or relationships (85%). Over half had been helped in their journey of faith by reading or studying the Bible by themselves (74%), by reading Christian, spiritual or theological books (66%), by a particular person like a missionary or teacher (57%), by a spiritual director, mentor, soul friend or prayer guide

(56%), by a direct call or experience they believe was from God (56%), and by listening to recorded Christian teaching, discussion or talks (52%).

The Index of Discipleship through Church Worship demonstrated that over three quarters of the participants had been helped in their journey of faith by attending church or worship regularly (94%), by music in worship (87%) and by participating in communion (83%). Over three-fifths had been helped in their journey of faith by the seasons and shape of the Christian year (65%), by a familiar pattern of worship (63%) and by liturgy in church worship (62%).

The Index of Discipleship through Public Engagement demonstrated that over half of the participants had been helped in their journey of faith by conversations with others whose faith or beliefs are different from theirs (65%), by experiencing different churches/Christian spiritualities (60%), and by hobbies, leisure or cultural activities not connected with church (55%). Smaller numbers of participants have been helped in their journey of faith by taking part in a practical Christian service or mission project not connected with their church (40%), by Christian education provided by a college, university or denomination (32%), by taking part in a social justice or campaigning activity beyond their church (31%), and by taking part in online discussions or conversations (14%).

- insert table 8 about here -

Table 8 explores the bivariate correlations between the four identified pathways to growth. Consistent with the identification of these four pathways by a rotated factor solution, there are significant and strong correlations between these pathways, as well as a proper distinction between them.

### ***Promoting and challenging Christian growth***

The third step in data analysis was designed to identify and examine factors that may either promote or challenge Christian growth. In terms of promoting growth, part three of the

questionnaire invited participants to assess how good the church that they attend is at helping people to grow in their faith on seven criteria. Principal components analysis showed that all seven items in this section loaded on one principal factor, accounting for 54% of the variance. Table 9 explores the scale properties of this Index of Church Support (with an alpha coefficient of .84). These data demonstrated that over half of the participants considered that the church that they attend is good at helping people to nurture and care for each other in the church community (72%), to put faith into practice in daily life (69%), to worship with mind, body, and spirit (56%), to explore and understand the Bible (52%), and to understand how to see the world and our times as God sees them (51%). Over one third considered that the church that they attend is good at helping people to speak about faith or personal journeys (45%) and to pray deeply in a range of different ways (37%).

- insert table 9 about here -

In terms of hindering Christian growth, part two of the questionnaire invited participants to assess how much their Christian journey had been challenged by ten specific phenomena. Principal components analysis showed that seven items loaded strongly on the first factor accounting for 30% of the variance, and the remaining three items loaded on the second factor, accounting for 13% of the variance. The three item factor drew together the following phenomena: the commitments of daily life; my own bad habits or laziness; and fear of making a greater commitment. Reliability analysis found that these three items generated a poor alpha coefficient. The seven items generated an Index of Challenges to Faith with an alpha coefficient of .73 (see table 10).

- insert table 10 about here -

The data presented in table 10 demonstrate that around one third of the participants considered that their Christian journey had been challenged by the beliefs or attitudes of people close to them (34%) and by understanding their faith differently from those around

them (32%). At least a fifth of the participants considered that their Christian journey had been challenged by having no-one with whom to share their journey (24%), by the quality of their church worship or community (22%), and by the lack of opportunity to learn or grow (20%). Others considered that their Christian journey had been challenged by the fear that Christianity is not true or makes no sense (17%) and by the words of the creed or other articles of faith (12%).

### *Piecing the components together*

The fourth step in data analysis was designed to piece the component parts of the puzzle together in order to address the core research question, ‘What helps Christians grow?’ This strategy proposed a path model that identified Depth of Discipleship and Strength of Vocation as the ultimate dependent variables, and the four pathways to discipleship as intermediate dependent variables. Thus, in the first model the three personal variables (sex, age and education) and the two contextual variables (church support and challenges to faith) were regressed on the four pathways independently. In the second model the three personal variables (sex, age and education), two contextual factors (church support and challenges to faith) and the four pathways (group activity, Christian experience, church worship, and public engagement), were regressed in that order on Depth of Discipleship and Strength of Vocation separately.

- insert table 11 about here -

The first set of regression models (with group activity, Christian experiences, church worship, and public engagement as dependent variables) explored the concurrent effects of sex, age, education, church support and challenges to faith on each of the four pathways to discipleship. Ignoring the five percent probability level, these data suggest that there are no strong sex differences among these four pathways except in respect of women being significantly more likely than men to follow the pathway of church worship. Age is a more

important factor than sex, with older people being significantly more likely to follow the pathway of church worship and younger people being significantly more likely to follow the two pathways of group activity and Christian experiences. Education has a significant effect on two of the pathways with graduates significantly more likely to follow the pathways of group activity and public engagement. Support from the local church exercised a strong significant impact on all four pathways, with the strongest effect being on the church worship pathway and the weakest effect being on the public engagement pathway.

- insert table 12 about here -

The second set of regression models (with depth of discipleship and strength of vocation as dependent variables) explored the concurrent effects of sex, age, education, church support, challenges to faith, and the four pathways to discipleship. Ignoring the five percent probability level, these data suggest that the most effective pathway to discipleship for promoting Christian growth (both in terms of depth of discipleship and strength of vocation) is that of Christian experience. On top of Christian experience, public engagement adds additional weight to depth of discipleship, and group activities adds additional weight to strength of vocation. The pathway associated with church worship adds additional weight to neither dependent variable.

### **Conclusion**

Drawing on the detailed congregational survey designed by the St Peter's Saltley Trust to illuminate the research problem 'What helps Christians grow?', the present study set out to address four specific research questions.

The first research question concerned identifying from the survey reliable measures that could serve as indicators of Christian growth. In response to this question, the study developed two measures characterised as Depth of Discipleship and as Strength of Vocation. The Index of Depth of Discipleship was based on self-assessment as being good at: praying

deeply in a range of different ways; understanding how to see the world and our times as God sees them; worshipping with mind, body and spirit; exploring the Bible; putting my faith into practice in daily life; nurturing and caring for others in the church community; speaking about faith or personal journeys. The Index of Strength of Vocation was based on: people being helped in their journey by a direct call or experience they believe was from God; the sense of a particular calling; the sense of being on the journey God wants them to be on; the idea that they know what their calling is; and the willingness neither to resist nor ignore that calling. It is on this dual operationalisation of the notion of Christian growth that the present study has built. Future research concerned with examining the core research question ‘What helps Christians grow?’ may wish both to include these measures (for the sake of replication) and to place alongside them other operationalisations of the construct of Christian growth.

The second research question concerned identifying and distinguishing among different pathways of Christian growth that may be followed by different people to different degrees. In response to this question, the study distinguished among four distinct pathways (identified by varimax factor analysis) and developed four measures to operationalise each of the pathways. The Index of Discipleship through Group Activities involved: being part of a small group or Bible study group; being part of the church’s social life or fellowship; taking part in the church’s outreach; a Christian course offered by a local church; leading others in worship, small group activity or prayer; going on retreat; and Christian conferences, festivals, events or pilgrimages. The Index of Discipleship through Christian Experience involved: listening to sermons; praying by myself; reading/studying the Bible by myself; a spiritual director, mentor, soul friend or prayer guide; listening to recorded Christian teaching, discussion or talks; reading Christian/spiritual/theological books; close friendships or relationships; a particular person (e.g. missionary or teacher); trying to put faith into practice in daily life; and a direct call or experience I believe was from God. The Index of



Discipleship through Church Worship involved: attending church/worship regularly; music in church worship; liturgy in church worship; participating in communion; a familiar pattern of worship; and seasons and shape of the Christian year. The Index of Discipleship through Public Engagement involved: taking part in online discussion or conversations; taking part in a social justice/campaigning activity beyond my church; taking part in a practical Christian service or mission project not connected with my church; Christian education provided by college, university, denomination; experiencing different churches/Christian spiritualism; conversation with others whose faith is different from mine; and hobbies, leisure or cultural activities not connected with church. Two key features need to be recalled about these four factors. First, they emerged as the result of a rotated factor rotation. In other words, the factors are not independent. Second, these four pathways emerged by factor analysis from the range of items placed in the original questionnaire. Future research may wish either to retain this original batch of items or to add further items in order to explore whether the same factor structure can be recovered from a wider correlation matrix.

The third research question concerned identifying from the survey reliable measures of factors that Christians identify as promoting or as challenging their Christian growth. In the response to this question the study developed a measure of church support and a measure of challenges to faith. While both measures embraced a range of issues, factor analysis confirmed that the issues included in the questionnaire loaded on the principal component. The Index of Church Support identified the local church as good at helping people to: pray deeply in a range of different ways; understand how to see the world and our times as God sees them; worship with mind, body and spirit; explore and understand the Bible; put faith into practice in daily life; nurture and care for each other in the church community; and speak about faith or personal journeys. The Index of Challenges to Faith identified the following factors: the beliefs or attitudes of people close to me; having no-one to share my journey

with; lack of opportunity to learn or grow; fear that Christianity is not true or makes no sense; understanding my faith differently from those around me; the quality of my church worship/community; and the words of the creed or other articles of faith. Again, future research may wish to employ these instruments and to supplement them with other comparable indices.

The fourth and major research question concerned evaluating the comparative effect of the pathways of Christian growth (identified by research question two) on the indicators of Christian growth (identified by research question one) after taking into account the effects of sex, age, education, and the factors that promote or challenge Christian growth (identified by research question three). In response to this question, the study found that the most effective pathway to Christian growth was through the route characterised in the study as Christian experience. Because the four pathways are not independent routes this finding does not indicate that any of the pathways should be undervalued or ignored. Indeed the data demonstrated that the pathway of public engagement added weight to depth of discipleship and the pathway of group activities added weight to strength of vocation. What the data do suggest, however, is that investment in the areas captured by the pathway of Christian experience may offer particular reward in promoting Christian growth.

From a practical perspective, promoting Christian growth through Christian experience may involve churches and Christian education giving particular attention to encouraging disciples to read and study the Bible by themselves, to read Christian, spiritual, or theological books, to listen to recorded Christian teaching, discussion, and talks, to listen to sermons, and to pray by themselves. This approach may also involve churches and Christian educators giving particular attention to encouraging disciples to draw on the resource of a spiritual director, mentor, soul friend or prayer guide, to embrace their closest

friendships and relationships within the context of their faith, and to put their faith into practice in daily life.

The generalisation of these findings to all Christian disciples, however, requires one serious caveat. Other strands of research have suggested that Discipleship Learning may work differently for different psychological types (see Francis & Village, 2008; Francis, 2009; Francis & Robbins, 2015). Future research that invests in the core question ‘What helps Christian’s grow?’ may be wise to include a measure of psychological type within the survey instrument.

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Table 1

*Index of Depth of Discipleship*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
<i>I feel I am good at:</i>		
praying deeply in a range of different ways	62	.60
understanding how to see the world and our times as God sees them	79	.51
worshipping with mind, body and spirit	77	.66
exploring the Bible	81	.53
putting my faith into practice in daily life	87	.56
nurturing and caring for others in the church community	91	.48
speaking about my faith or personal journey	68	.62
alpha		.82

Table 2

*Index of Strength of Vocation*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
I have a particular calling	63	.53
I am more or less on the journey God wants me to be on	57	.42
I have been helped in my journey of faith by a direct call or experience I believe was from God	56	.42
I don't know what my calling is*	31	.56
I am resisting or ignoring my calling*	6	.36
alpha		.70

Note: \* these items are reverse coded



Table 3

*Rotated factor solution*

	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
Being part of a small group/Bible study group	.72			
Being part of my church's social life/fellowship	.60			
Taking part in my church's outreach	.64			
A Christian course offered by local church	.64			
Leading others in worship, small group activity or prayer	.59			
Going on retreat	.60			
Christian conferences, festivals, events, or pilgrimages	.63			
Listening to sermons		.47		
Praying by myself		.72		
Reading/studying the Bible by myself		.68		
A spiritual director, mentor, soul friend or prayer guide		.42		
Listening to Christian teaching, discussion, or talks on tape, etc.		.43		
Reading Christian/spiritual/theological books		.51		
My closest friendships or relationships		.53		
A particular person (e.g. missionary or teacher)		.52		
Trying to put my faith into practice in daily life		.61		
A direct call or experience I believe was from God		.50		
Attending church/worship regularly			.48	
Music in church worship			.48	
Liturgy in church worship			.73	
Participating in communion, etc.			.60	
A familiar pattern of worship			.73	
Seasons and shape of the Christian year			.76	
Taking part in online discussion or conversations				.44
Taking part in a social justice/campaigning activity beyond my church				.63
Taking part in a practical Christian service or mission project not connected with my church				.49
Christian education provided by college, university or denomination				.53
Experiencing different churches/Christian spiritualities				.50
Conversation with others whose faith or beliefs are different from mine				.59
Hobbies, leisure or cultural activities not connected with church				.57

Note: These four factors accounted for 46% of the variance.

Table 4

*Index of Discipleship through Group Activity*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
<i>I have been helped in my journey of faith by:</i>		
being part of a small group/Bible study group	68	.62
being part of my church's social life/fellowship	82	.46
taking part in my church's outreach	47	.61
a Christian course offered by a local church	49	.56
leading others in worship, small group activity or prayer	55	.58
going on retreat	39	.52
Christian conferences, festivals, events or pilgrimages	63	.57
alpha		.82

Table 5

*Index of Discipleship through Christian Experience*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
<i>I have been helped in my journey of faith by:</i>		
listening to sermons	88	.43
praying by myself	87	.54
reading/studying the Bible by myself	74	.61
a spiritual director, mentor, soul friend or prayer guide	56	.53
listening to Christian teaching, discussion, or talks on tape, etc.	52	.47
reading Christian/spiritual/theological books	66	.63
my closest friendships or relationships	85	.44
a particular person (e.g. missionary or teacher)	57	.41
trying to put my faith into practice in daily life	88	.53
a direct call or experience I believe was from God	56	.49
alpha		.82

Table 6

*Index of Discipleship through Church Worship*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
<i>I have been helped in my journey of faith by:</i>		
attending church/worship regularly	94	.38
music in church worship	87	.37
liturgy in church worship	62	.55
participating in communion, etc.	83	.49
a familiar pattern of worship	63	.50
seasons and shape of the Christian year	65	.56
alpha		.74

Table 7

*Index of Discipleship through Public Engagement*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
<i>I have been helped in my journey of faith by:</i>		
taking part in online discussion or conversations	14	.37
taking part in a social justice/campaigning activity beyond my church	31	.54
taking part in a practical Christian service or mission project not connected with my church	40	.52
Christian education provided by college, university, or denomination	32	.48
experiencing different churches/Christian spiritualism	60	.44
conversation with others whose faith or beliefs are different from mine	65	.45
hobbies, leisure or cultural activities not connected with church	55	.39
alpha		.74

Table 8

*Correlations between pathways to growth*

	GA	IE	CW
Public engagement	.58 <sup>***</sup>	.58 <sup>***</sup>	.28 <sup>***</sup>
Church worship	.25 <sup>***</sup>	.31 <sup>***</sup>	
Individual experience	.66 <sup>***</sup>		

Note: Group activity (GA), Public engagement (PE), Church worship (LC), Individual experience (IE)

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$

Table 9

*Index of Church Support*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
<i>The church that I attend is good at helping people to:</i>		
pray deeply in a range of different ways	37	.62
understand how to see the world and our times as God sees them	51	.60
worship with mind, body and spirit	56	.65
explore and understand the Bible	52	.59
put faith into practice in daily life	69	.63
nurture and care for each other in the church community	72	.54
speak about faith or personal journeys	45	.57
alpha		.84

Table 10

*Index of Challenges to Faith*

	Yes %	<i>r</i>
The beliefs or attitudes of people close to me	34	.42
Having no-one to share my journey with	24	.48
Lack of opportunity to learn or grow	20	.44
Fear that Christianity is not true or makes no sense	17	.39
Understanding my faith differently from those around me	32	.52
The quality of my church worship/community	22	.40
The words of the creed or other articles of faith	12	.49
alpha		.73



Table 11

*First regression model*

	Group activity	Individual experience	Church worship	Public engagement
<i>Personal factors</i>				
Sex	.04	.08*	.09**	.06*
Age	-.12***	-.13***	.15***	-.05
Education	.08***	.04	-.03	.14***
<i>Contextual factors</i>				
Church support	.21***	.26***	.33***	.18***
Challenges to faith	-.08*	-.07*	-.08**	.06
total $r^2$	.08	.10	.16	.06

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 12

*Second regression model*

	Depth of Discipleship	Strength of Vocation
<i>Personal factors</i>		
Sex	.00	-.03
Age	.06*	.04
Education	-.11***	.05*
<i>Contextual factors</i>		
Church support	.19***	-.07**
Challenges to faith	-.03	-.19***
<i>Discipleship pathways</i>		
Group activity	.04	.15***
Individual experience	.44***	.51***
Church worship	.03	-.04
Public engagement	.12***	-.01
total $r^2$	.39	.40

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$