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Expanding Leadership in Contextual Ecclesiology:  
A Comprehensive Study on the Connection Between Discipleship and Leadership

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## **Abstract**

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By Won Dong Kim

In the realm of pastoral ministry, a persistent challenge has been the shortage of laborers despite the abundance of the harvest (Matthew 9:37). Why do people refrain from taking leadership within their church to actively engage in service? How can the concept of leadership be expanded in our ecclesial setting, so that more people are aware that they are called to serve and lead? I am keen to explore a solution through discipleship training, recognizing a vital connection between discipleship and leadership. It is important to understand that our authentic selves are unveiled through the discerning lens of our affection because we live towards what we love. When our faith is firmly anchored in a profound love for Jesus, the ministry we undertake ceases to be perceived as labor; instead, they transform into blessings and manifestations of a purposeful life.

A strategic approach to addressing the persistent challenges involves providing solution for identified problem from the contextual survey through practical, biblical and theological lens, as well as a comprehensive exploration of the application of One-to-One Discipleship Training, a methodology that personally influenced my spiritual journey since my freshman year of college, leading to a profound encounter with Christ. This initiative aims to instill a deep understanding of following Jesus, fostering a passionate commitment to leading and serving the church.

I want to extend my gratitude to my project consultant, Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Elliot Jr and D. Min director, Dr. Roger Nam for their valuable instruction and encouragement. I am also grateful to all the faculty member of Emory University Candler School of Theology who have shaped me into a better practical theologian and pastor. Special appreciation goes to my wife, Jessie, our three children Ryan, Joy, Sarabeth whom I dearly love and certainly for the prayers of our parents and congregation. It is my fervent hope that my research project serves as a catalyst for positive change in our ecclesial context, inspiring a renewed passion for rebuilding discipleship and leadership for the better future of our church! God be the Glory!

Expanding Leadership in Contextual Ecclesiology:  
A Comprehensive Study on the Connection Between Discipleship and Leadership

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## **Introduction:**

The term “Leadership” is universally important and an intriguing topic across global society. Indeed, the presence of an individual with a great leadership quality is paramount for any community to truly thrive and grow. So, what is leadership? In an attempt to delve into the concept of leadership, I conducted small survey within our church community. The survey question was simply aimed at exploring individuals’ understanding of leadership. As a result, 72% of the respondents said leadership involves power and authority.<sup>1</sup> Undeniably, there exists a fundamental human inclination towards power and authority. No one wants to be weak nor wants to reveal their weakness. I concur that, to a certain extent, leadership involves wielding power and authority. A leader is someone equipped with the ability to make decisions and act as the primary driving force for task execution. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not everyone who hold power and authority is necessarily called to be a leader. Consider the scenario of a bank robber brandishing a gun to coerce compliance. While the robber possess power, it would be inaccurate to label them as a leader. True leadership is far from coercion and abusing people.<sup>2</sup> It is also interesting to find 61% of the respondents in the survey believed that leadership is tied to one’s title or position. This indicates a prevailing consensus that hierarchical ranking or status designates certain individuals as leaders. Human nature tends to assess individuals based on their social standing and authority, leading many to aspire to attain titles and occupy specific positions. While there is a degree of truth in this perspective, I contend that a title alone does not automatically confer leadership. While it may signify a person’s position, it does not inherently

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<sup>1</sup> Kim, Won Dong. *105 were surveyed and 92 people completed on the question of “what is leadership?”* Elkton, MI: St. Paul Methodist Church, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of A Leader: Recognizing The Lessons And Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, CO: Tyndale House Publishing, 2012), 209.

define them as a leader. Genuine leadership extends beyond titles; it necessitates personal integrity, ethical conduct, and humility. In essence, leadership is not merely a matter of style or technique but, more profoundly, a reflection of one's character.<sup>3</sup> Without these essential qualities, a title remains nothing more than a name.

So, I come to this question again, what is leadership? The authentic leadership is characterized by its positive influence.<sup>4</sup> What really matters the most is the depth of impact on one person's life. We call this direct intensiveness of influence.<sup>5</sup> (See also indirect intensiveness of influence)<sup>6</sup> This is a face-to-face encounter that aims for deeper relationship. Instances exist where an individual's influence significantly and positively transforms another person's life, exemplifying positive influential leadership. Leadership, defined as making a positive influence, extends beyond formal roles. It encompasses the influence we exert as parents in our households, as professionals in our workplaces, and even our children within their classrooms. Embracing the idea that leadership is synonymous with positive influence empowers each of us to become leaders, leveraging our God-given unique talents to expand the Kingdom of God in our lifetime. The spirit of reformation, as seen in Martin Luther's rediscovery of biblical teachings on spiritual gifts and the ministry of all believers, historically breathed vitality and excitement into the

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<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, *Called to Lead: Leadership Lesson From The Life of The Apostles Paul* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 2.

<sup>4</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2022), 20.

<sup>5</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of A Leader: Recognizing The Lessons And Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, CO: Tyndale House Publishing, 2012), 248.

<sup>6</sup> Note: *indirect influence aims for extensiveness of influence by using tool like media, writings or association to impact broader audience. This concept, gauges impact by the number of people affected by someone's action or leadership. While it reaches out to the number of people, the influence might not be deep and substantial.*

growth of the church.<sup>7</sup> A similar reformation is needed in contemporary churches today. The challenge lies in recognizing and acknowledging the abilities bestowed by God, which some may not realize or choose to overlook.

Over the past twenty-five years of my pastoral journey, a persistent concern has been the challenge of recruiting people for service in ministry, indicating a deficiency in leadership within the church. Service, as defined in dictionaries, involves helping or working for someone.<sup>8</sup> Our primary duty as a church is to reach out to the lost, helping them to find Jesus in their life and working faithfully in all circumstances for the glory of God. It is evident that service is not only a manifestation of leadership but that leadership, in turn, is a manifestation of service. This signifies that those in positions of leadership will inherently serve, and those engaged in service will inevitably emerge as leaders. While acknowledging the absence of a perfect church in this imperfect world, the imperative remains for the church to stand as a beacon of hope. The world, in its darkness, necessitates our role as bearers of the light of Jesus, a commission that, in reality, falls short of the envisioned ideal.<sup>9</sup> There is still so much to be done together to witness and celebrate God's kingdom in our lives, but the workers are few and willing hearts are little.<sup>10</sup> So, my burning question arises: How can the concept of leadership be expanded within the local congregational context, so that more people are aware that they are called to serve and lead? Without a prayerful discernment, the church's decline may escalate, posing a potential threat to its existence in the future. My ongoing study delves into the specifics of my ministry context,

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<sup>7</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books Publish, 2012), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg, *New Oxford American Dictionary 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 34.

<sup>9</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in The Sermon On The Mount* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 139.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 9:37

focusing on this particular chronic issue. It is my fervent hope that the research project serves as a catalyst for positive change in my church but I also pray that this endeavor becomes a gateway to fruition for others contending with comparable issues today.

### **Contextual Description**

My context of ministry is at St. Paul Methodist Church of Elkton, which is located approximately 120 miles north of Detroit Michigan, in a small rural community of 800 residents near Lake Huron, one of the five Great Lakes, making it a popular tourist destination. Our church originally began with Evangelical United Brethren Church and merged with Methodist Episcopal Church in 1969 to birth Elkton United Methodist Church until it became the Global Methodist Church in 2023. Our historical trajectory underscores a foundation rooted in a solid Wesleyan faith and conservative traditional belief. The demographic composition of our congregation is predominantly Caucasian, with a distribution of 60% elderly, 30% middle-aged, and 10% younger individuals.<sup>11</sup> Over its 140 years of history, St. Paul Methodist Church has been recognized as one of the most active growing Methodist Churches in Huron County. However, over the past decade, a discernible trend has emerged, signaling a critical influence on the overall decline of the church. According to the historical archives of our church, there seems to be three major reasons behind this trend; relocations of church members, aging congregation and fail to invest in next-generation ministry.<sup>12</sup> This downward trend appears to have persisted for two decades, and has fostering a culture of undermining both service and leadership within our church. Despite an upswing in membership over the last couple years, a persistent challenge of finding dedicated servants in various ministry still remains critical. The challenges posed by the

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<sup>11</sup> Kim, Won Dong. *Demographic of the Church* Elkton, MI: St. Paul Methodist Church, 2022

<sup>12</sup> John Ginter, *Historical Sketch of the St. Paul Methodist Church: Observance from 1883-2023 Revised*. Document. Elkton: MI. From Library of Church.



COVID-19 pandemic, economic and spiritual downturns have further hindered efforts to find individuals willing to serve. Regrettably, these challenges have resulted in the closure of the both the youth and choir ministries due to a lack of volunteers. During COVID season, the insufficient number of volunteers and a lack of unity among those who were serving led to the decline of the youth ministry. Similarly, the choir ministry faced challenges with the relocation of the choir director and the ongoing struggle to recruit new volunteers, ultimately leading to its closure. The looming concern is that if this stagnation in service persists, it will inevitably erode the church's vitality over time. The closure of ministries poses a significant threat to the overall health of the church, and without intervention, a bleak future is anticipated.

Why is our church continuing to facing a shortage of willing leaders for service? In an effort to address this matter more comprehensively, I initiated a survey with the congregation.<sup>13</sup> The primary objective of the survey was to delineate the concept of leadership and to gain insights into the reasons behind the reluctance to enter leadership role. To foster candid and unbiased responses, the survey was administered anonymously, resulting in a robust 82.61% response rate, thereby establishing it as a highly reliable source of information. The survey yielded several noteworthy insights, revealing four main issues as prominent factors contributing to the hesitancy among individuals to engage in service within the church.

First, there is a misconception about the definition of leadership. As previously indicated in the introduction, a significant portion of our members tends to equate leadership with attributes such as a power, authority or formal titles. Consequently, many have reached the conclusion that they are unsuitable for leadership roles in any capacity, given that they do not

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<sup>13</sup> Kim, Won Dong. *92 were surveyed and 76 people completed on the question of "what are the obstacles in leadership?"* Elkton, MI: St. Paul Methodist Church, 2022.

meet the requirement. The second challenge revolves around the apprehension of criticism and the weight of responsibility. While number of individuals harbor a desire to serve, reluctance often prevails due to the fear of potential criticism. Fear stems from a lack of trust. The absence of trust lead to fear of conflict and when there's fear of conflict, not many like to make commitment. This lack of commitment will eventually lead into avoidance of accountability that leads to inattention to result.<sup>14</sup> The third challenge pertains to a sense of inadequacy arising from a lack of resources and training. The shift to online platforms, due to the pandemic has unfortunately constrained resources for training and education, particularly impacting our aging demographic that may lack access to computers or struggle with online resources. Finally, an additional challenge surfaced among respondents who expressed a desire to serve but felt constrained by age-related factor. A significant portion of our congregants are elderly, having devoted their lives to serving the church in the past. I know majority of them feel incapable of contributing due to challenges associated with aging, leading to a sense of perceiving themselves as no longer vital to the church. This mindset has unfortunately contributed to feelings of loneliness and depression among our seniors. I made a visit to a 92-year-old parishioner and he tearfully shared his surprise at my asking for his opinion, stating that he had never imagined anyone would care about what an old man had to say. I assured him of the sincere value we place on his life wisdom in shaping the future of our church, emphasizing that every word he shared would be valuable. In conclusion, this survey has brought to light a multitude of reasons why individuals may feel reluctant to engage in both service and leadership, as I understand these two are critically interconnected to one another.

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco, CA: JosseyBass Publish, 2002), 188-189.

## **Innovations**

While various factors may contribute to the reluctance to enter leadership roles, this project posits that a fundamental deficiency appears to lie in the genuine commitment to following Jesus. Despite possessing a religious framework, there appears to be a discernable gap in the practical application of true discipleship, resulting in a notable shortfall in ministry engagement. Discipleship, defined as following Jesus, therefore, serves as a catalyst within the broader framework of the church's mission, fostering the development of committed servants over time. After all, truly following Jesus is the beginning of faithful service, and genuine discipleship is the opening of authentic leadership. This means there is an indispensable relationship that extends from the followership of Christ to discipleship and leadership. When Jesus calls for Peter, He commands him to "follow me" (discipleship) and then continues, "I will make you a fisher of men" (leadership), another compelling example that following Him is the first and most fundamental basis of our leadership.<sup>15</sup> In addition to this, the poignant dialogue between Jesus and Peter,<sup>16</sup> where Peter's love for Christ is equated with a commitment to building the church, emphasizes the profound connection between love for Jesus and the church's foundation.<sup>17</sup> It is crucial to address the pressing need for recruiting "Christian" - which means followers of Jesus or follower of the Way<sup>18</sup>, the term denoted individuals committed living a life worthy of God's call who embody the heart of God.

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<sup>15</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publication, 2013), 17.

<sup>16</sup> John 21:15

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 16:18

<sup>18</sup> Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding And Fulfilling The Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 105.

As this project demonstrates, our attitude toward service in ministry is intricately connected to our understanding of followership of Christ. Thus, a trite yet crucial question arises: Am I genuinely following Jesus? We need to ask this question in the most honest manner because often, we find ourselves as more wanderers than followers.<sup>19</sup> We engage in numbers of activities, interacting with many people, and expressing countless thoughts yet we seldom take the time to be with God. We cannot serve God as wanderers; we must become followers. This project includes a thorough examination of the transformative nature of a life committed to following Jesus, drawing from the compelling narrative of Peter, as well as John Wesley and the Methodist movement. The proposed solution further integrates the application of One-to-One discipleship training, a methodology that personally influenced my spiritual journey since my freshman year of college, leading to a profound encounter with Christ. The essence of this eight-week course is to nurture our congregation as a committed follower of Christ, producing an effective leader who will serve God wholeheartedly.<sup>20</sup> The overarching aspiration is for this process to catalyze a renewed fervor within individuals, reinvigorating ministries that may be waning. The ultimate vision is to witness the establishment of a resilient church for future generation, characterized by the joyful service of dedicated fathers and mothers of faith.

### **Critical Discourse I – Biblical Solution: Discipleship featuring Peter**

The biblical figure who emerged as an unparalleled servant following Jesus is arguably Peter. Coming from Galilee, Peter, a fisherman, underwent a profound transformation after encountering Jesus. Jesus calls Peter to join him, envisioning him as a fisher of men.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> Henry J.M. Nouwen, *Following Jesus: Finding Our way Home in an Age of Anxiety* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2019), 11-15.

<sup>20</sup> Eddy Byun, *The Disciple Maker: A Tool to Aid the Believer in One-to-One Discipleship* (Seoul, Korea: Duranno Press, 2014), 122-147.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 4:19

underlying lesson is that the role of becoming fishers of people does not precede the imperative of following Jesus. Our priority is not serving or leading but following Jesus. A pivotal scriptural passage shedding light on the authenticity of following Jesus is found in Matthew 16, known as the chapter of Peter's Great Confession. When Jesus inquired about the public's perception of him, the disciples proffered various identities, such as Elijah, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist.<sup>22</sup> Peter, however, made a powerful confession, proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God.<sup>23</sup> In response to this profound declaration, Jesus bestowed his blessing upon Peter and proclaimed his intent to build his church upon this confession: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church."<sup>24</sup> This verse holds significance as the term "church" in the Bible is first mentioned here. The Greek word for church is "ekklesia" ἐκκλησία, meaning public assembly in which we are called out of a life of sin into a new community.<sup>25</sup> Jesus explicitly stated his intention to establish his church (ekklesia) upon a rock, specifically alluding to Peter. Noteworthy is the linguistic nuance in the original text where the term "rock" is *petra*, a feminine noun.<sup>26</sup> However, Peter in Greek is translated as "petros" written in a masculine noun signifying a smaller stone or pebble. Yet, when Jesus referred to "this rock," it is used in the feminine form "*petra*," accentuating that Peter, in his individual capacity, was akin to small, insecure pebble. It is in Peter's Confession of Christ as the Messiah and the Son of the living God that he transcends his pebble-like state, becoming the bedrock upon which Jesus declares

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew 16:14

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 16:16

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 16:18

<sup>25</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Thirty Questions: A Short Catechism On The Christian Faith* (Wilmore, KY: Seedbed Publishing, 2012), 61.

<sup>26</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew Volume 1: The King and His Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 306.

his intent to build a church.<sup>27</sup> This nuanced play of language underscores the transformative power of authentic discipleship and the foundational role of acknowledging Jesus as the Christ. Consider the pivotal question at hand: Can Peter genuinely embody the metaphorical “petra” representing the formidable rock? This inquiry arises due to Peter’s well-documented vacillations and capricious nature, marked by fluctuations in his emotions and dedication. Upon learning of Jesus’ foretold suffering and crucifixion, Peter undergoes a significant transformation in demeanor. The biblical narrative employs phrases such as “grabbed Him,” “took Him aside,” “pushed Him aside, and “rebuke Him” to elucidate Peter’s actions.<sup>28</sup> Interpretations of this passage diverge; some posit that Peter’s actions stemmed from a loving concern for Jesus, driven by a desire to avert the foreseen tragedy. Alternatively, a more stringent viewpoint suggests that Peter, abruptly standing up, seized Jesus, and reproached him, potentially uttering sentiments like, “Have we followed you for three years just to witness you demise?” The precise interpretation may vary<sup>29</sup>, but the crux lies in Peter’s remarkably changeable and wavering disposition.

Previously hailed “petros” the sturdy rock upon which Jesus intended to build His church, Peter now grapples with a distinctly altered state of mind. Despite his previous confession of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Peter engages in contentious interactions with Jesus, even expressing protest. In response, Jesus sternly rebukes Peter, and calls him as “Satan” and admonishing him for obstructing God’s plan.<sup>30</sup> This demonstrates that if we do not

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<sup>27</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew Volume 1: The King and His Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 306.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 16:21-23

<sup>29</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew Volume 1: The King and His Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 312-313.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 16:23

wholeheartedly follow Jesus, we can become pawns in Satan's schemes. The underlying message here posits that while God's church is built upon the foundation of individuals confessing Jesus Christ as the Messiah, it is susceptible to erosion and stumbling blocks if genuine daily commitment to following Jesus is neglected. Following Jesus is not a sporadic or seasonal endeavor; it necessitates unwavering daily dedication, put an end to a self-serving, self-glorifying, and self-centered life.<sup>31</sup> When Jesus commanded, "Follow Me," it is a call away from ourselves toward God.<sup>32</sup> The church's foundation rests not solely on Peter or his confession but requires a cornerstone for stability.<sup>33</sup> In historical construction practices, stones forming a structure had to fit seamlessly to prevent collapse. Cornerstones, the strongest stones, were indispensable for secure construction.<sup>34</sup> The absence of this cornerstone could precipitate the collapse of all interconnected walls, regardless of their individual strength. In this metaphor, Jesus Christ assumes the role of the cornerstone. Without Christ being the head of the cornerstone and believers constituting the body, the analogy underscores the inseparability of the head and body. Rocks lacking the support of the cornerstone are inherently insecure and prone to collapse.

So, we come back to the very question we raised in the beginning. What does it mean to follow Jesus in this context? Our biblical example invites us to see that the essence of following Jesus is to invite Christ as the cornerstone of the church, constructed upon the rock of faithful

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel L. Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Mark* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 173-174.

<sup>32</sup> Henry J.M. Nouwen, *Following Jesus: Finding Our way Home in an Age of Anxiety* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2019), 28-30.

<sup>33</sup> Ephesian 2:20

<sup>34</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *An Expositional Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 92.

confessions.<sup>35</sup> Acknowledging the inherent human fragility akin to Peter's ever-changing nature, we must pray for Christ to become our solid cornerstone of our life, our church and our ministry. Although the world is teaching us to be independent (in some cases is appropriate), Bible is teaching us to be dependent towards God, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit for the radical discipleship.<sup>36</sup> The prevailing weakness and decline observed in many churches today, marked by a death of devoted servants, are attributed to the insufficient acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. Ministries founded solely on personal pride, experience, and knowledge, devoid of Christ's presence, may exhibit transient success, but they are susceptible to structural cracks and eventual deterioration. Even if a church boasts a foundation anchored in the greatest rock, without Jesus as the central cornerstone, its longevity is inevitably compromised. Thus, the indispensable role of Christ as the cornerstone is emphasized, serving as the unifying force that prevents the crumbling of the church and its ministries. Therefore, the cornerstone of Christ is essential for the church, and Christ Himself must become our greatest rock in which we stand. A recent survey from the Cultural Research Center states that 69% of the nation's population self-identified as Christian. Among them, only 6% engage in discipleship, while the rest do not feel the need for it.<sup>37</sup> This is clear evidence that the diminished willingness of individuals to serve God can be traced back to prevalence of religious adherence rather than genuine discipleship. True followers of Jesus contribute to the edification of the church, not its dismantling. They draw near to the church, embracing roles of service and leadership in a natural outpouring of their

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<sup>35</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *An Expositional Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 91.

<sup>36</sup> John Stott, *The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of our Calling* (Downer Grove, IL, IVP Books, 2010), 109.

<sup>37</sup> George Barna, "Cultural Research Center," Arizona Christian University August 31, 2021, [https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CRC\\_AWVI2021\\_Release06\\_Digital\\_01\\_20210831.pdf](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CRC_AWVI2021_Release06_Digital_01_20210831.pdf)



commitment to Christ's kingdom because they follow Jesus who is passionate about building the church. We recall from the biblical narrative of Peter's life, when he was called to follow Jesus, he promptly obeyed and dedicated his life to being a disciple. We discover that we cannot serve without genuinely following Jesus, and lead without genuinely become disciples. If we are to be like Peter, the rock, Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, must dwell and move within us. Only then we can handle ministry and service.

### **Critical Discourse II – Theological Solution: John Wesley and Methodist Movement**

John Wesley is undoubtedly one of the figures who truly followed Jesus and devoted himself to a life of service in the history of Christianity. The transformative juncture in his spiritual journey that transpired during the Aldersgate event in 1738. Having returned to England on February 1, 1738, following a mission in Georgia, America, Wesley found himself at a crossroads. Although he could have continued his role as an educator at Oxford University and leader of the Holy Club movement, the urgency of the issues surrounding faith and salvation weighted heavily on him.<sup>38</sup> Despite his intellectual upbringings and involvement in religious activities, Wesley grappled with a profound sense of despair. The pressing question of salvation became paramount in his life. And by God's grace, the turning point came upon the evening of May 24, 1738, around 8:45 pm, while attending a worship society in a church on Aldersgate Street in London, Wesley experienced the power of the Holy Spirit as he listened to a reader reciting the preface to Luther's commentary on the Book of Romans. The diary entry for that day is recorded as follows:

“In the evening, I went very unwillingly to as society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart

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<sup>38</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 54.

strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”<sup>39</sup>

The pivotal Aldersgate event marked a turning point for Wesley, inspiring him to foster discipleship and nurture effective leaders for the church and beyond. Here you see another prime example of how truly following Jesus can become leading and serving. Recognizing the necessity for organization within the Methodist movement, Wesley instituted a connectional system known as the conference.<sup>40</sup> Since June 25, 1744, which is also known as 1744 conference, for six days, a gathering organized by John Wesley took place at the London foundry, during which the foundation of doctrine, discipline and other various matters such as appointment of preacher and missional task were discussed and decided upon.<sup>41</sup>

Wesley’s vision extended beyond administrative structure; he harbored a profound concern for humanity, particularly those who were lost in life. The spiritual transformation following his encounter with God ignited a commitment to serve people faithfully. In order to handle that important task, the organization of the Wesleyan movement called United Society was formed. The following account is the evidence of how it began:

“In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to me in London who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Percy Livingstone Parkers, *The Heart of John Wesley’s Journal* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 66.

<sup>40</sup> Rupert E. Davies, *The Work of John Wesley Volume 9: The Methodist Societies History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 1989), 20.

<sup>41</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and The People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 2013), 163-171.

<sup>42</sup> Rupert E. Davies, *The Work of John Wesley Volume 9: The Methodist Societies History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 1989), 69.

John Wesley played a pivotal role in guiding people toward repentance and faith through public preaching and itinerant ministry. Wesley believed that organizing and nurturing those who had repented was essential. These individuals came from various backgrounds and economic classes within society, with only a small minority being wealthy. The majority were laborers or from the lower socioeconomic class. Many of these individuals had encountered God's grace through Methodist preaching and prayer. Subsequent to this transformative experience, they shared testimonies of abandoning destructive habits such as alcoholism, domestic violence, prostitution, crime and despair. Instead, they discovered love, hope, joy and a renewed life in Christ. As the number of people attending increased, Wesley acknowledged the challenge of personally overseeing everyone's spiritual growth. Consequently, he instituted the United Societies, further dividing them into smaller groups known as "class meetings" in various regions, thereby delegating responsibility. Each class meeting comprised 12 individuals who gathered weekly under the guidance of a facilitator, referred to as a "class leader," for spiritual conversations and guidance.<sup>43</sup> Wesley provided guideline to the class leader, outlining the responsibilities and expectations as following:

"It is his business to see each person in his class once a week at least; in order to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor; to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require."<sup>44</sup>

Members actively participated in class meetings, sharing personal experiences, confessing sins, discussing concerns, bearing witness of God's work in their lives, providing mutual

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<sup>43</sup> Rupert E. Davies, *The Work of John Wesley Volume 9: The Methodist Societies History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 1989), 70.

<sup>44</sup> Rupert E. Davies, *The Work of John Wesley Volume 9: The Methodist Societies History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 1989), 70.

encouragement and prayer. Every Methodist was required to attend a class meeting and it served as a qualification or renewal for participation in other gatherings.

While the primary focus of class meeting centered on discipleship and spiritual exhortation, these gatherings also fostered a sense of fellowship. Devoid of worldly entertainments, members shared tea, engaged in meaningful conversation, and shared life's necessities when needed. Their commitment extended beyond the meetings as members visited the sick and collaborated in assisting the marginalized. It is quite fascinating that Wesley personally remembered the names of those who attended class meetings. Recognized as a folk theologian, Wesley demonstrated a unique commitment to serving wherever there was a need for people, and served them in the name of Christ.<sup>45</sup> This encompassed addressing both their spiritual and material needs.

One distinctive aspect of the Methodist movement was the shared responsibilities for the mission and sacred duties of soul-saving ministry between clergy and laity. The prerequisite for this ministry was a profound encounter with God, and Wesley's discipleship through the Methodist Society aimed to cultivate the gifts and grace necessary for effective service. While anyone could serve, genuine followership of Jesus was deemed essential. The driving force behind Wesley's active service and ministry was none other than the encounter he had with God in Aldersgate. After his experience with the Holy Spirit, he truly became a disciple of Jesus, and his passion for Christ was manifested in leadership to guide the church. It was only then, when he genuinely followed Jesus, that he understood the means and the purpose of life, as it is demonstrated in the following letter:

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<sup>45</sup> Lovett H. Weems, Jr, *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 35.

“Oh why is it that so great, so wise, so holy a God will use such an instrument as me! Yea, Thou sendest whom Thou wilt send, and showest mercy by whom Thou wilt show mercy! Amen! Be it, then, according to Thy will.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Critical Discourse III – Practical Solution: Contextual Survey**

As I was researching the correlation between discipleship and leadership through the biblical lens through the life of Peter,<sup>47</sup> it led me to contemplate the influence of the Wesleyan tradition on this topic.<sup>48</sup> Eventually the biblical and theological understanding of discipleship and leadership resulted in a rationale for conducting a survey on leadership because it was crucial to identify the problem and provide practical solutions in my ecclesial setting. As a result, I have identified four major underlying problems that deter people from taking leadership positions in my ministry context. These issues included a misunderstanding of leadership, fear of criticism, lack of education and the impact of aging.<sup>49</sup>

Misunderstanding of Leadership: First, there is a misconception that only exceptional and extraordinary individuals can assume leadership role.<sup>50</sup> It is crucial to underscore, however, that in the context of God’s work, no one is inherently more or less capable. Particularly in the context of the church, leadership is not limited to a select few nobles and elites; neither is service restricted to those who stand out. In the framework of a vision for the priesthood of all believers,<sup>51</sup> the biblical archetype of the royal priesthood extends from Adam to Israel, finding its ultimate manifestation in the exemplary priestly servant, our Savior Jesus. The legacy of priestly service was handed down to the disciples of Jesus and continues throughout the contemporary

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<sup>46</sup> A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart, John Wesley: Evangelist* (Lexington, KY: Cliff College Publishing, 2007), 79.

<sup>47</sup> See Critical Discourse I

<sup>48</sup> See Critical Discourse II

<sup>49</sup> See my contextual description in page 8-10.

<sup>50</sup> See my introduction in page 5.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

church, comprising all believers.<sup>52</sup> Of course different churches and denominations have interpreted and structured this in a different way. In a church deeply ingrained with the Wesleyan spirit, such as ours, it holds significance to empower lay servant leaders, encouraging everyone to utilize the gift bestowed by God within our ministry setting. Today, we collectively constitute the church, called to serve the divine purpose. This signifies that God's grace and gifts are bestowed upon all people with the specific intent of contributing to the advancement of His kingdom. The reality is that anyone in our congregation has the potential to embody leadership qualities and make meaningful contribution to serving God.

Fear of Criticism: Second, some people refrain from serving due to the fear of criticism from others. Fear arises from a deficiency in trust, resulting in the avoidance of conflict due to its intimidating presence. The key factor underlying the fear and conflict is the ambiguity surrounding the church's core values and vision. Unclear vision naturally begets insecurity and subsequently, fear and conflict. For instance, in sports, teams with a shared objective perform more effectively, fostering mutual trust and collective strength as they support each other as one team. In the same way, fostering a culture of trust within the church becomes essential. This can be accomplished by cultivating shared visions and values, understanding that a lack of clear purpose leads to no victories, we must transform our clarified focus from a mere program into a deeply ingrained habit.<sup>53</sup> Through this commitment, we can effectively surmount fear and conflict. Shared common ground establishes trust effortlessly, paving the way for natural collaboration and a more effective pursuit of collective goals.

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<sup>52</sup> Uche Anizor and Hank Voss, *Representing Christ: A vision for the Priesthood of All Believers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 55.

<sup>53</sup> Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner and Lane Jones, *Seven Practices of Effective Ministry* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2004), 33

Lack of Education: Third, some individuals, despite their willingness to serve, may not know how to do so because they have not been trained. While I acknowledge that these challenges persist, I am optimistic that through focused initiatives, we can enhance our capacity to provide valuable education and practical resources, fostering the development of leadership skills. It is interesting that within local churches, a common dichotomy often emerges, dividing individuals into distinct roles as either teachers or learners. It sounds like there are the faithful doers and the persistently passive receivers. We need to cultivate a culture that church become a community of all learner and all teacher.<sup>54</sup>

Aging Congregation: Fourth, in our church, there seem to be individuals who are willing to serve but their ability to do so as actively as before is hindered by the factor of aging. Rabbi Abraham Heschel perspective that “growing old is not a defeat but a victory, not a punishment but a privilege”<sup>55</sup> resonates with the fundamental secret of successful gaining is learning to affirm the lives that God has given us and that whether young or old, our purpose to serve God continues. Therefore, church need to continue promote vocation to our elderly congregation to ask question, “What does God want me to do in my life now” rather than, “What do I want to do in my life now”.<sup>56</sup> While I acknowledge that aging is a valid concern, it should not serve as a barrier to service. Although some may not be able to take the same tasks they once did, there are still various ways to contribute, such as extending a warm welcome to a guest, sharing the church bulletin, or offering a handshake and many more. Service comes in many forms and it is

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<sup>54</sup> Norma Cook Everist, *The Church As Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 23.

<sup>55</sup> Will Willimon, *Pastoring for Life: Aging Growing Old In Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 67.

<sup>56</sup> Will Willimon, *Pastoring for Life: Aging Growing Old In Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 136.

imperative that we find ways to encourage our seniors to actively participate in our church by providing them with meaningful avenues for service. The objective extends beyond aging successfully; it's a called to aging faithfully and spiritually.<sup>57</sup>

You are what you love: Regardless of the reasons why we may not be able to serve, let's reconsider them from the perspective of love now. My project originated from a reflection on our spiritual reality, wherein the claim of loving Jesus often falls short in our reluctance to make sacrifices for Him due to the countless commitment priority more than God, indicative of a lack of genuine followership. It is important to understand that our authentic selves are unveiled through the discerning lens of our affection because we live towards what we love.<sup>58</sup> For example, true love for someone is manifested in the willingness to make sacrifices on their behalf. In human relationships, we willingly go where our loved ones go and engage in activities they enjoy. This instinctive inclination is not a learned behavior but a natural response. Applying the principle of loving within our family to the context of the church, we understand that the essence of gathering is not centered around assigned tasks but revolves around shared life. Similar to how we don't say, "I'm going home to work" upon leaving our workplace, but rather return home because our loved ones are there. In the same way, the church should embody a space where tasks are transcended by the bond of love. In a family setting, responsibilities are fluid; if one is unwell, the other steps in, and if one is busy, the other takes charge to help. Likewise, within a church fueled by love, the focus shifts from mere tasks to a collective, voluntary engagement in the work. Cleaning up litter, bringing in chairs, or straightening tables

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<sup>57</sup> Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. *Aging And Ministry In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Inquiry Approach* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 63.

<sup>58</sup> James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2016), 13.



become expressions of devotion rather than burdensome tasks. When our faith is firmly anchored in a profound love for Jesus, the activities we undertake cease to be perceived as labor; instead, they transform into blessing and manifestations of a purposeful life.

The church conceived through the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ, embodies a holy community.<sup>59</sup> Despite contemporary shortcomings within the church, God still wants church to be an integral part of this world as the body of Christ. The inseparable connection between Jesus and the church mirrors the essential unity of the head (Jesus) and body (ourselves). In an era marked by diminishing dedication, a comprehensive understand of true discipleship is pivotal in addressing prevailing issues.

### **Project: One to One Discipleship**

**Introduction:** This project had two main steps. The first began with a survey aimed at unpacking the definition of leadership, which eventually expanded into discipleship. I explored the connection between leadership and discipleship from biblical, theological, and practical perspectives. The second step involves a practical tool that is needed to further activate service in the church. Of course, a disciple training manual does not automatically create disciples. It is when believers obey in accordance with the work of the Holy Spirit that they become disciples. This training process is merely a small seed and a tool in that history-making. Let's begin!

**Description:** There is some clear evidence and data, according to our church historical archive, that only a limited group of individuals has consistently been involved in ministry, revealing a scarcity of volunteers.<sup>60</sup> While various factors may contribute to this reluctance, this project posits that a fundamental deficiency appears to lie in the genuine commitment to

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<sup>59</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>60</sup> *See my contextual description in page 8-10.*

following Jesus. One-to-One discipleship challenges the current state of the church, where merely listening to a Sunday sermon is insufficient. While numerous Bible programs available, there are not many tailored to each church's specific circumstances, based on a biblical church model. It is essential to recognize that engaging in discipleship training is not a panacea that transforms individuals into devoted followers of Jesus overnight. Rather, it is a deliberate and gradual nurturing process. As recipients of discipleship open their hearts and in obedience to the influence of the Holy Spirit, evolve into disciples, they subsequently progress into roles of service within the church.

**Method:** In this project, I engaged a four-fold foundational philosophy for engaging in discipleship training methodology. One, the emphasis is not in making my disciples but making disciples of Jesus Christ. Two, the objective is to contribute meaningfully to the church, aligning with its ministry objectives as much as possible. Three, the aim is to establish spiritual authority by assuming a role akin to a spiritual parent and exemplifying a Christ-like character. Four, discipleship is perceived as a relationship divinely ordained by the Holy Spirit. After identifying through a church survey that many individuals were unsure about how to serve, I began discipleship training, thinking that it would be necessary in our church context. The discipleship training commenced with an 8-week program in August and September of 2023 involving the 12 members of the leadership council currently serving in our church. The structure of the course, segmented into 8 topics, facilitated weekly two-hour sessions, allowing for comprehensive coverage. These gatherings took place in the church library, conducted according to the following structured agenda:

1. Initial Greetings and Sharing (20 minutes): Participants began with sharing experiences from the past week and reflecting on any Scripture that resonated with them.
2. Praise and Prayer (10 minutes): A segment devoted to collective praise and prayer, fostering a spiritual atmosphere.

3. Verse Memorization Check (10 minutes): Participants reviewed and tested each other on memorized verses from the assigned Scripture for the week.
4. Lesson Study (60 minutes): The core of the session involved an in-depth study of the content for the day's lesson, contributing to the disciples' spiritual growth.
5. Closing Prayer and Farewells (20 minutes): The session concluded with a closing prayer, personal prayer requests, and farewells, ensuring a sense of spiritual unity and support.

This systematic approach was repeated over the course of 8 weeks, every Wednesday, providing a comprehensive training platform. The One-to-One discipleship training encompassed a spectrum of essential topics under the grandeur theme of Following Jesus – Word of God, Prayer, Fellowship, Witness, Spirit-filled Life, Temptation, Obedience, and Ministry.<sup>61</sup> As it is presented in the chart, the 8-week discipleship training follows a pattern, starting with the theme of Following Jesus and culminating to serving in ministry. Once again, it emphasizes that serving in ministry becomes a natural consequence of those who genuinely follow Jesus.




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<sup>61</sup> Durrano Press, *One To One Discipline: Not a Self-Centered Christian but a Christ-Centered Christian* (Seoul, Korea: Durrano Publishing, 2014), 50-184.

**Word of God:** Understanding the Word of God is foundational to following Jesus. The Bible serves as God’s self-revelation and a representation of Christ Himself.<sup>62</sup> To authentically know and follow Jesus, one must begin with a dedicated study of the Bible. Consequently, it is crucial to establish a structured approach to engage with the Word of God. In the initial session, I introduced five steps to interact with the Bible: listening, reading, studying, memorizing, and reflecting.

**Prayer:** Meditation on the Word of God naturally leads to the practice of prayer. Far beyond a mere compilation of requests, prayer embodies an intimate communion with God.<sup>63</sup> In this discourse, I delved into the intricacies of prayer, addressing aspects its essence and discussing what prayer is, to whom we should pray, who can pray, why we should pray, when to pray, and what we should pray. Following Jesus is inseparable from a life of prayer, and engaging in service is intrinsically linked to a foundation of prayer.

**Fellowship:** Fellowship is a fundamental aspect of our spiritual journey, wherein individuals dedicated to studying the Word of God engage in prayer and unite in a unique Christian fellowship, distinct from worldly associations. This distinctive Christian fellowship is made possible solely through the influence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> The primary objective of this fellowship is to foster unity in the Lord, contributing to the spiritual vitality of the church and the advancement of God’s kingdom.

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<sup>62</sup> Eddy Byun, *The Disciple Maker: A Tool to Aid the Believer in One-to-One Discipleship* (Seoul, Korea: Duranno Press, 2014), 16.

<sup>63</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Prayer: The Cry for the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 7.

<sup>64</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:14

**Witness:** The essence of salvation naturally instills in Christians a compassionate heart for those yet to encounter God's grace, compelling them to share the Gospel, good news.<sup>65</sup> It is a proclamation that Christ, through His sacrifice, offers an open gateway to eternal life for those who choose to dwell with God. In this assignment, the focus shifts to exploring how to enhance the effectiveness of sharing the Gospel. It emphasizes that living out one's faith, articulating beliefs, and engaging in worship as believers constitute potent forms of evangelism. The alignment of a Christian's actions and words with their faith serves as a compelling tool for sharing the transformative message of the Gospel.

**Spirit-Filled Life:** In this exploration, the discourse delves into the essence of being a Spirit filled individual and elucidates why empowerment by the Holy Spirit is indispensable. To be Spirit-filled denotes living a life under the lead of the Holy Spirit, saturated with His power, culminating in a character that increasingly mirrors that of Christ. Confronted with the inherent conflicts of our sinful nature while dwelling in the flesh, navigating them successfully requires the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, Spirit-filled living manifests in both internal and external fruit. Internally, it involves the transformation of character to reflect Christ-likeness, while externally, it encompasses the receipt of spiritual gift for effective ministry.

**Temptation:** This discourse elucidates on the multifaceted dimensions through which Satan launches his assaults. First, Satan directly target individuals, seeking to diminish their awareness of God and undermine the foundation of their faith. This direct assault is a strategic

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<sup>65</sup> Paul W. Chilcote, Lacey C. Warner, *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 52.

<sup>66</sup> David Platt, Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2014), 109.

maneuver aimed at infiltrating the core of our faith and the church.<sup>67</sup> Second, Satan employs the world as a conduit for his attacks, manifesting through the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.<sup>68</sup> These are worldly desires that pose challenges to the steadfastness of one's spiritual journey. Furthermore, Satan tests individuals through the desires of the flesh, encompassing physiological craving such as hunger, sexual desires, and greed, as well as intrinsic ambitions like an excessive longing for possessions and self-centered success. Additionally, inner wounds become a battleground for Satan's tests, including emotions like rejection, inadequacy, fear, anger, and inferiority. It is crucial to recognize that following Jesus does not exempt individuals from life's challenges. Failure to grasp this spiritual truth renders effective ministry impossible, as struggles and problems are inherent even in the pursuit of ministry.

**Obedience:** The word "obedience" is one that modern day people shy away from as it seems to imply losing personal rights and surrendering individual will.<sup>69</sup> Despite its negative connotations in the modern lexicon, embracing obedience is intrinsic to truly following the path of Christ. In this assignment, I draw a parallel between Adam's disobedience, which introduced sin and consequential death to the world, and the obedience exemplified by Jesus Christ, leading to the fulfillment of God's will and the bestowal of salvation, ultimately resulting in eternal life.<sup>70</sup> While Jesus Christ serves as the ultimate example of obedience for Christians, I delve into specific area where obedience is requisite, including within families, churches, and society. The

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<sup>67</sup> J. Heinrich Arnold, *Discipleship: Living for Christ in the Daily Grind* (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing, 2011), 202.

<sup>68</sup> 1 John 2:16

<sup>69</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), 18.

<sup>70</sup> Romans 5:19

cultivation of obedience in these spheres is emphasized as indispensable for preparing individuals to enter into roles of service within ministry.

**Ministry:** Jesus had three main aspects of His earthly ministry; teaching in the synagogues (education), preaching the gospel of the kingdom (evangelism), and healing various forms of sickness and disease (service, healing).<sup>71</sup> A foundational principle emphasized through this training is the active engagement of parishioners in ministry.<sup>72</sup> Contrary to passive role, lay people are dynamic contributors actively involved in various faces of ministry. God, in His wisdom, has bestowed diverse spiritual gifts upon believers. These gifts encompass serving, teaching, leadership, mercy, love and caregiving, among others. The purpose of these varied gifts and talents is to interconnect with the work of the church, ultimately facilitating the expansion of the kingdom of God. In this context, every member becomes a vital participant in the collective mission, contributing to the growth and impact of the church in advancing God's kingdom.

**Outcomes:** In conducting and analyzing of my project, I observed the following outcomes. First, the leaders who have completed the training are displaying a desire to become shepherds to their respective flocks. They will be assigned flocks who will engage in 2 hours weekly discipleship training just like they themselves have undergone. This collective effort is anticipated to culminate in the completion of church-wide discipleship training by the end of next year, fostering a healthy and active serving environment within our church. While we acknowledge that we are still in the early stages of this transformative journey, there is palpable excitement and a shared realization among us that our church thrives on a leadership structure that is distributed among all its members. This collaborative approach is laying the groundwork

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<sup>71</sup> Matthew 4:23

<sup>72</sup> Durrano Press, *One to One Discipline: Not a Self-Centered Christian but a Christ-Centered Christian* (Seoul, Korea: Durrano Publishing, 2014), 176.

for a vibrant and engaged community that produces positive effects of a focus on following Jesus.

Second, there are individuals willing to step into serving in ministry, albeit in small numbers. For example, over the past two decades, our church's library and educational facility were essentially functioned as storage rooms. Books were stacked haphazardly, and everything including curtains and carpets remained unchanged for nearly a decade. This environment signaled a lack of willing heart and ownership for the church as a good steward. However, it appears to be that things are gladly changing. Two female members completed 8 weeks of One-to-One discipleship training, reached out with a desire to renovate the educational facility. In response, the room renovation project launched immediately and within two weeks, additional members of the church joined the effort, engaging in active serving by painting, changing light fixtures, and assisting with carpet and furniture removal and installation. The project began with two female members and eventually involved 15 volunteers, and in just over a month, the educational facility underwent a remarkable transformation from a disorganized space to brand new rooms. All this was unattainable for the past decade due to a lack of volunteers. When questioned about these volunteers' motivation, the two women leading the initiative shared that during their discipleship training, they felt a sudden calling to dedicate themselves to a meaningful project for the church.

In addition, following the comprehensive promotion of discipleship training within the entire congregation, there have been preliminary discussion about reinitiating the youth ministry, which was previously inactive. Additionally, the choir ministry, previously dormant, is showing signs of small revival, with discussions underway regarding volunteers gathering for practice and performing on special Sundays. This may sound like we have all figured out but the reality is,



from an overall perspective, only 10% of the church is actively serving thus far. The remaining 90% is still inactive. I envision a day when all congregants willingly contribute with hearts full of love for God and the church, eagerly serving one another because if we are truly faithful to Christ, we will be faithful to other believers as well.<sup>73</sup> I am aware that not everyone may view these initiatives favorably, with some perceiving the discipleship training as an attempt to assign church responsibilities. Some may not participate in discipleship training due to their own life schedule and conflict. Such perspectives are acknowledged, respected and they will be loved no matter what, because they still remain integral parts of our church community. The commitment remains to listen to their voices, as the essence of the church transcends a mere place of work; it is fundamentally a space characterized by care and love.<sup>74</sup>

### **Conclusion: On the way to leadership**

In the course of my project, a profound realization has taken shape – the concept of “volunteering” transcends the confines of the church. Individuals undergoing transformation and renewal embody a life of service that extends beyond the ecclesiastical realm, leaving indelible imprints of Christ’s presence wherever they go.<sup>75</sup> It is a common pitfall for individuals, particularly pastors like myself, to be obsessed within the church, where the physical structure, building, space, attendance and ministry can seem to be everything. As the church grows and flourishes, it may be perceived as a blessing, however, if our focus remains solely on internal development, it is akin to building our own Tower of Babel, creating more barrier between the

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<sup>73</sup> J. Heinrich Arnold, *Discipleship: Living for Christ in the Daily Grind* (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing, 2011), 92.

<sup>74</sup> Eddy Byun, *The Disciple Maker: A Tool to Aid the Believer in One-to-One Discipleship* (Seoul, Korea: Duranno Press, 2014), 110.

<sup>75</sup> J. Heinrich Arnold, *Discipleship: Living for Christ in the Daily Grind* (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing, 2011), 100.

church and the world. The believers should fundamentally see their life as a place of service, armed with spiritual wisdom to combat evil, serve the world, and guide it toward the divine. We must never become church-centric individuals who perceive their church as exclusively special place. This also means, we should never perceive serving outside of the church as if it were to opposing their local church. While advocating for service within their local church, it is equally vital to serve in various places in our society. The point is that our emphasis must shift from mere service to the profound importance of authentic discipleship, intentionally establishing deep intimate relationship with Jesus in a daily basis. True discipleship transforms us into the embodiment of the body of Christ and in doing so, we become catalysts for the birth of the church in diverse environments, and our communities seamlessly integrate into the kingdom of God.

Overall, the results of this project, I learned the following. First, the significance of listening as a practice of attentiveness. Some churches gauge the vitality of their community through active volunteerism, inadvertently pressuring individuals to serve without adequate preparation. Rather than fixated on compelling people to serve for the sake of surpassing other congregation, a more prudent approach involves listening to individuals with an open heart. Understanding their concerns and diverse perspectives on service is essential. Pastors, driven by ambitious visions for their churches, may inadvertently overshadow the lives of their congregation. Excessive ambition can potentially disrupt the authentic needs of the church community. To avoid such pitfalls, a commitment to deep listening is imperative. Often time, Christians are the people that want to solve problem when injustice and oppression is present. Many people feel commission to speak and proclaim truth to defend the weak and marginalize. Likewise, many people speak of active service in the kingdom of God. While this kind of

invitation may drive sense of action quickly, they can less receptive in listening.<sup>76</sup> I appreciate the form of receptive listening methodology particularly the emphasis through the transformation from sacramental listening to incarnational listening.<sup>77</sup> The sacramental listening recognizes God's presence not only in the hearing of the Word and in the Eucharist, but also everything being in creation. On the other hand, incarnational listening is to affirm that every creation is different and have different role in their part of God's creation.<sup>78</sup> Maintaining an open heart to listen, wait and continue to love for those that are not ready to serve is essential. Second, while I still value the One-to-One discipleship method, what I would do differently next time is allocate more time for training. I express this concern because the eight-week training period felt like an attempt to digest everything in a short span, potentially leading to side effects (ex; feeling pressure, giving up midway, misunderstanding vision and goal). Instead, extending the training duration to at least double the current length and exploring a broader range of topics in a focused yet relaxed manner might prove more beneficial. The rationale behind this suggestion is that many, both shepherd and flock members, perceived the entire training process as a sudden push to accomplish something immediately, which could be seen as too demanding or pushy. Everything takes time and we all have to learn that God's way and our way are different, so does his timing and our timing.<sup>79</sup>

My project began with heartfelt concern, as I witnessed the dwindling of ministry due to a lack of people serving in the church. It started with a question: how can the concept of

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<sup>76</sup> Darby Kathleen Ray, Jay McDaniel, *Theology that Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 26.

<sup>77</sup> Darby Kathleen Ray, Jay McDaniel, *Theology that Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 27.

<sup>78</sup> Darby Kathleen Ray, Jay McDaniel, *Theology that Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 27.

<sup>79</sup> Isaiah 55:8

leadership be expanded within the local congregational context, so that more people are aware that they are called to serve and lead? Through deep prayers and seeking God's wisdom, the Holy Spirit invited me to view this issue through a deeper spiritual lens, rather than merely through surface-level observation. It became evident that the church is more than a venue for labor; it serves as a sanctuary where we partake in the true Sabbath (שַׁבָּת) rest. Work becomes untenable without such rest. Authentic rest emerges from a deep and personal connection with Jesus Christ. Thus, sincere service is predicated on a genuine following of Jesus. This is why my project thesis was focus on the need for discipleship training as a vital part of leadership and service. From the moment we all become genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, serving becomes not an obligation but a voluntary act of joy and gratitude. Peter rushed ahead of God's plan by denying Jesus and rejecting the cross, but it was only after becoming a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ that he emerged as one of the most significant leaders in early Christian history.<sup>80</sup> John Wesley also experienced both victories and failures in his Georgia mission, but it was only after his profound encounter with God in Aldersgate that he became a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ, leading to the Methodist movement.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, in our ecclesial setting, while we have faced our trials and errors, and have sought solutions to identified problems, our commitment to becoming genuine disciples of Jesus Christ will truly transform us into leaders who serve.<sup>82</sup> This is a clear example of how discipleship evolves into leadership. My desire for our church is not to rush into ministry, but passionately fall in love with Jesus once again. It is not about working, but it about resting (sabbath) in Him first and it is not to lead but to truly follow Him first. Through our ongoing discipleship training, I hope to see everyone grow into beautiful leaders of God's

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<sup>80</sup> *See my critical discourse I*

<sup>81</sup> *See my critical discourse II*

<sup>82</sup> *See my critical discourse III*

kingdom. God unfolds His unique approach to ministry, a process that unfolds over days, times and years of meticulous preparation.

There are long and lonely days that pass where we might be convinced that nothing of value was redeemed, and yet it is these very days which God uses to prepare us for his work. When we realize that God was preparing David to become the King of Israel while he was shepherding a flock of family sheep, who are we to complain? We have planted a small seed and it may seem slow at time, however, I am steadfast in my understanding that our difficult days do not just become bearable, they become redemptive. I know God is working, in his time, and in his ways, so I trust in Him as I'm concluding the great journey of my doctorate research here at Emory University Candler School of Theology. God is good, all the time!

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