

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry
Emphasis in Discipleship

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING THE DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR LOCAL
CHURCH LEADERS OF THE KIGOMBE DISTRICT IN THE NORTH
RWANDA FIELD

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Date completed: March 2025

Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Kigombe District registered a numerical growth of church members and good infrastructure in the last twenty years. However, during the last five years, it was observed that there has been a lack of effective discipleship for the local church leaders. It resulted in the least involvement of those leaders in church activities. The effects of such a gap in the local church leadership brought about less participation of members in various church services and a high rate of backslidings.

Purpose

The project sought to develop, implement, and evaluate a program to boost the discipleship process for the local church leaders in the Kigombe District based on practical spiritual disciplines so that their growth would effectively impact others.

Method

The research project started on 6 January 2019 and ended on 31 March 2019. The general study population was local church leaders of the Kigombe District, while the targeted population was church elders and local department leaders. The accessible population was 74 local church leaders from the age of 18 and above, both genders considered. For the pretest interview, key informants were 15 church elders and local department leaders.

The Kigombe District Pastor served voluntarily as a research assistant to the researcher in the preliminary steps of the project. The quantitative method was applied in the study. Through the research instrumentation data were collected, processed, analyzed, and well-computed in an SPSS software. The implementation of the study consisted of the intervention articulating six basic spiritual disciplines: spiritual journaling, Bible study, mentoring new converts, small group activities, home visitation, and homiletic principles.

Results

The program implementation was run successfully. The average attendance was 98.8%, and the average report was 98.3%. Study participants got equipped because, through the Likert numerical scale, the spiritual disciplines generally scored *very low* at the beginning of the research, and they scored *high level* at the closing step of the intervention. Other satisfactory results were recorded in the title

giving an increment of 27% per year. Local church leaders were participative in all church services. Therefore, the Sabbath School attendance recorded an increase of 25%, while the backslidings decreased at a rate of 30%. The outcome was that good and wide new church structures were put in place in a time of economic crisis.

Conclusion

Through the evaluation of the initiative, it was observed that transformational discipleship of local church leaders had positive effects on church members as individuals and as a corporate. The outstanding progress in many areas of church life was the result of the effective discipleship of all believers. The research was successful. However, further discipleship programs designed and implemented based on other characteristics of respondents could be of great value in the churches of the Kigombe District as long as the focus of discipleship is well-kept.

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IN THE NORTH RWANDA FIELD

A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Gerard Karasira Nsengiyumva

March 2025

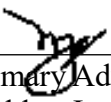
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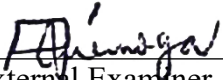
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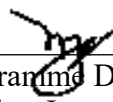
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This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved wife, Olive Karasira,
and our beloved children, Gloria, Princess, Heritier, and
Benjamin for their tireless moral support, and their
ceaseless prayers that were an encouragement
to help me complete this research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of training believers on how to remain disciples and disciple-makers is an important need for the church today. Rivera said that without fully understanding mature discipleship practices, believers cannot fulfill the Great Commission. He continued by saying that the failure to understand and teach these practices has led to complacency, lack of interest, and the inability to become disciples among long-term church laity.¹ In his research, Smith asked two questions: What is discipleship? and What does discipleship involve? Then, he suggested that to answer these questions, the Bible gives a clear definition concerning discipleship. The writer then described biblical discipleship as the formation, transformation, and application of the Word of God in the believer's life.² The aspect of formation regarding discipleship entails training. Alemayehu warned about the elephant that walks into churches.³ The same author says that today, the non-discipleship has become as big as the elephant in the Christian church. He then specifically addressed

¹ Sheina L. Rivera, "Intentional Discipleship: Implementing a Theology of Discipleship for Spiritual Growth" (DMin thesis, Liberty University, 2023), 34, accessed 9 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6079&context=doctoral>.

² Daniel Allen Smith, "A Pastor's Approach to Discipleship and Its Effect on the Local Church: A Three-step Approach to Biblical Discipleship" (DMin diss., Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 9, accessed 9 January 2024, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1530479699?sourcetype=Dissertations%20%20Theses>.

³ Melak T. Alemayehu, "Refocusing on Discipleship: The Heart of the Great Commission and the Hub of All Local Church Ministries," *Ministry Magazine*, April 2019, 9, accessed 9 January 2024, <http://162.241.183.158:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/169/>.

the issue in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church.⁴ The writer added that although the church has recorded numerical growth, it has been affected by significant membership losses. In conclusion, Alemayehu recommended refocusing on discipleship.⁵

Asamoah-Gyadu said there was a concern for the discipleship process in African Churches.⁶ He said that there is much to celebrate in transformational discipleship as far as the ministries of these African Reformation movements are concerned, but there as yet remain areas of concern that need to be dealt with for the optimization of Christian impact in Africa.⁷

In her dissertation, Duron declared that lack of discipleship results in negative effects on Christianity.⁸ For this author, the lack of a prompt discipleship program was the root cause of Christianity and morality decline. She said that as Christianity is declining in America, so is morality.⁹ Then she concluded that the resulting moral decline of American culture, therefore, could be considered a consequence of the church's neglect of discipleship.¹⁰

⁴ Alemayehu, "Refocusing on Discipleship," 9.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Go Near and Join Tysself to This Chariot...: African Pneumatic Movements and Transformational Discipleship," *International Review of Mission* 106, no. 2 (2017): 336, accessed 9 January 2024, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/irom.12190>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sarah Duron, "Discipleship Renewed: Returning to the Ancient Teachings of Jesus as the Manual for Modern-Day Christianity" (DMin diss., The Barnett College of Ministry and Theology, Southeastern University, 2023), accessed 9 January 2024, <https://firescholars.seu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=dmin>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Boyd was right when speaking on Discipleship and the Church. The writer said that certainly discipling should be a source for producing capable teachers (2 Tim 2:2). He added that if the responsibility for helping believers to mature to be able to teach (Heb 5:11-14) were taken more seriously, perhaps the problem of teacher shortages in a large number of churches today would be solved.¹¹

In her paper, Ajambo saw there was much to do with Jesus' discipleship model of servanthood. The author wrote that appropriation of Jesus' discipleship model of servanthood creates a place of dialogue, where the situation in the Church of Uganda (Anglican) can enter into an extended conversation with Jesus' discipleship model.¹²

In the abstract of his paper, Peck addressed the core issue of consistent discipleship in the Adventist Church in Rwanda.¹³ He wrote that one of the most important concerns of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda was how to deal effectively with the numerical growth of new converts.¹⁴ Then he indicated that few pastors were equipped to care for the increasing number of members.¹⁵ Last, he purposed to develop a program providing theological education and training for

¹¹ Luter A. Boyd, "Discipleship and the Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July-September 1980): 272, accessed 9 January 2024, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1250&context=its_fac_pubs.

¹² Nyegenye Rebecca Margaret Ajambo, "A Study of Discipleship in Mark 10:35-52: A Model for Leadership Development of Clergy in the Church of Uganda (Anglican)" (PhD diss., University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2012), xii, accessed 9 January 2024, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/196547526.pdf>.

¹³ Robert G. Peck, "Theological Education in Context: A Pilot Extension Program for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 1992), 5, accessed 9 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/643>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

pastors and mature local church leaders to improve their leadership abilities and skills.¹⁶

Very little was done to address the discipleship training in the Seventh-day Church in Rwanda. Related articles are written in specific areas. Karasira wrote about the youth's involvement in evangelism. He did mention the lack of an adapted training program. He said that the Youth Department in this Mission Field did not have any program designed to equip both trainers and learners to serve the church as it should be, especially in evangelism. He recognized that the Worldwide Youth Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has designed a curriculum that should serve to train the youth. However, he concluded that in many places, local churches have not made use of it.¹⁷ Nsengimana, in his dissertation, included discipleship in small groups as one of the approaches for the sole purpose of increasing church growth in the specific church of Gikondo. He didn't mention discipleship training.

In his paper, "Discipleship and the Church," Boyd observed a contrast. He wrote that in recent years discipleship has become an integral part of evangelicalism. Then he added that the way Jesus trained his followers, has become a useful tool of discipleship even today. However, he deplored that many Church employees had considered discipleship was not an integral part of the the local church business, therefore it had little role to play in the cause of the church.¹⁸ For him, discipleship through training is a need because it is considered essential by people who do not take it as part of the major purpose of the church. Nsengimana has seen it imperative to

¹⁶ Peck, "Theological Education in Context," 5.

¹⁷ Gerard Karasira, "A Strategy for Adventist Youth Involvement in Evangelism in South Rwanda Field" (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2017), 2.

¹⁸ Boyd, "Discipleship and the Church," 267.

recommend to Rwanda Union Mission to send students to the DMin program, with the purpose to have trained leaders who would train local church leaders on small group ministries.¹⁹ In his paper, Peck emphasized equipping pastors through formal education in the Adventist Church in Rwanda.²⁰ Much has been done to train pastors, but nothing was done for the lay church leaders. There is much concern about discipleship training for local church leaders. It is in this perspective that this research aims to study the discipleship program for the local church leaders of the Kigombe District.

Description of the Ministry Context

The Kigombe District is situated in the Musanze City, which is in the Northern Region of the Republic of Rwanda that borders Uganda. The region is mountainous and the city lies at the foot of volcanoes, one of which, the Karisimbi is the highest in the country peaking at 4,519 meters above sea level. The area receives rainfall almost throughout the whole year with a short dry season from June through August. Because of the high rainfall, the vegetation is green all year round. It makes the city look clean, beautiful, and green. The fauna is predominantly marked by the presence of mountain gorillas, a rare species in the world that attracts many tourists.

There are many businesses in the city, which form a major source of livelihood for many people. Similarly, a significant number of people rely on farming. Four main activities form the backbone of the city including tourism, business, farming, and civil servanthood. The city has many academic institutions and schools offering all levels

¹⁹ Schadrack Nsengimana, "Using a Small Group Approach to Increase Church Growth in the Gikondo Seventh-day Adventist Church" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2014), 120, accessed 9 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/253/>.

²⁰ Peck, "Theological Education in Context."

of education, and setups, such as hotels, markets, and several retail and wholesale shops. It also has administrative headquarters, judiciary chambers, referral hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, and banks both national and international. Because of all these activities and institutions, the city is usually busy every single day of the week. Quite several church leaders in Kigombe District are civil servants. Others are self-employed in different businesses, while a small number of them are employees of the church.

The local community of the city is generally receptive to the Gospel. As it is for the rest of the country, the predominant religions are Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Charismatic churches (Protestant churches that call themselves New Born Again), Jehovah's Witness, and Muslim.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was established in Rwanda in 1919. The first missionary, Henri Monnier, a missionary from Switzerland, arrived in the Northern part of the country in 1921. The first church was established in Rwankeri, 30 kilometers west of the city of Musanze. As the ministry of the gospel grew, Rwankeri became the headquarters of the mission in Northern Rwanda for 75 years.

In July 1997, the North Rwanda Conference moved from the rural area of Rwankeri to the city of Musanze. The Church experienced a significant growth in membership and infrastructure. Statistics from the third quarter of 2017 showed that the Adventist presence in the city is quite remarkable standing at 13.5% of the general population. Membership has increased considerably because while in July 1997 there were only two churches with 613 members, currently 14,449 members are worshipping in 24 churches, which are organized into four districts, including

Kigombe. The status of the Field changed into a local conference on September 3, 2012.²¹

The researcher has served as an educator and minister in the North Rwanda Conference for 23 years, and at the time of the project, he has been serving as the Conference president for the last five years. Pastoral observation shows that the majority of the local church leaders have been busy with their regular occupations all week long. Their schedule did not allow them to pause and set aside time for their spiritual life.

In an interview²² with different officials of the churches of the Kigombe District, the researcher asked randomly 11 church elders if they have had any spiritual retreats on how they can grow in their relationship with God. Only two elders (18%) had been trained once in a ministerial seminar. The rest never knew about such an experience. He then asked different department leaders whether they had attended a spiritual leadership seminar. Surprisingly, one out of 15 (6%) did attend training when he was a church elder.

The office of the district Pastor has frequently recorded irregularities about church leaders who would excuse themselves to not preach on the Sabbath when their turn comes.²³ Therefore, another leader would preach just to fill in the gap, with many imprecisions because not prepared. The same records denote that 33% of the Sabbath School superintendents were trained in small-group activities.²⁴

²¹ North Rwanda Field of the Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the North Rwanda Field Executive Committee," Musanze, Rwanda: North Rwanda Field, 14 November 2011.

²² Group of church leaders, Kigombe District, interview by the author, Kigombe, 7 October 2018.

²³ Kigombe District of the SDA Church, "District Pastor's Report" (Kigombe, Rwanda: North Rwanda Field, 23 December 2018).

²⁴ Ibid.

Statement of the Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Kigombe District registered a rapid growth in numbers and infrastructure in the last twenty years. However, during the last five years, there has been a lack of systematic discipleship programs for the local church leaders, resulting in the lack of their involvement in church activities. This necessitates researching to discover whether church elders and departmental leaders lack a specific nurturing program for their Christian maturity that would allow them to devote quality time to the spiritual transformation of their fellow believers.

Research Questions

The following inquiries will direct the study to meet specific goals.

1. What obstacles are local church leaders currently encountering in the Kigombe district concerning discipleship?
2. Which local church leaders should be prioritized in this study to foster genuine spiritual transformation?
3. What practical strategies can local church leaders in the Kigombe District adopt to effectively enhance and revive their discipleship efforts?
4. How can a discipleship program be structured to improve the effectiveness of local church leaders in their personal lives and ministries?
5. What methods can be used to assess the impact of a discipleship program for local church leaders in the Kigombe district regarding their spiritual development and ministry effectiveness?

Statement of the Purpose

This dissertation aims to put in place a discipleship strategy based on practical spiritual disciplines so that, as church leaders in the Kigombe district practice them

willingly, their growth will impact others effectively. After its implementation, the process will be evaluated.

Justification

The spiritual slacking of the church leaders in Kigombe District is shadowing the discipleship of church members. According to the June 2017 statistics, church leaders do not attend the midweek services. Their presence is constantly at 4% and the attendance of these services is less than 4.9% of the membership. The prayer meetings are not enthusiastic and dry because they are not well organized and poorly conducted. Consequently, some members attend Pentecostal prayer group meetings. The attendance in Sabbath School is at 35% and 80% during the divine service. The backsliding of new converts is constant at 50% due to a lack of appropriate nurturing programs. Monthly reports give good figures of tithe but the numbers of tithe givers are around 13%.²⁵

The above statistics lead to the need for research and the discovery of ways to help church leaders develop their relationship with God and get equipped for their various assignments in the church. It requires the renewal of their commitment to Christ through spiritual practices along with their involvement in church activities through different services.

Delimitations

The North Rwanda Conference has 34 districts with 121,628 members worshipping in 285 churches and 78 congregations. While the problem is prevalent in all churches of the conference, the research cannot be carried out in the whole

²⁵ North Rwanda Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the North Rwanda Conference Stewardship Annual Report" (Musanze, Rwanda: North Rwanda Conference, 27-29 December 2017), 18.

conference. For more effectiveness, the study was narrowed to the four churches of Kigombe District, namely Cyuve, Kigombe, Yaounde, Galilaya, and Nyarubande.

Even though the problem can be identified among all church members, the project dealt with the church elders and departmental directors. These 90 persons compose a reasonable number to assess in the study, compared to the Kigombe District membership which has reached 4,331 people.

The departmental leaders that were elected for the study from each church are clerks, treasurers, Sabbath school superintendents, youth leaders, women ministry leaders, evangelism coordinators, first deacons and deaconesses, and music leaders. The convenient time for different meetings and training was Sunday afternoons.

Description of the Dissertation Process

The research uses a quantitative method to achieve its purpose. Chapter two deals with the theological research to build the biblical foundation. It focuses on the Old and the New Testaments, as they articulate on the discipleship. Along with that, the writings of Ellen G. White are searched to elaborate on the discipleship.

Chapter three is a comparative study that is based on the writings of other Christian authors who have said much about Christian discipleship as a journey toward Christ's likeness. Discipleship guides the conversation between literature and the researcher as the key concept of this project. Accurate journals on discipleship are the primary sources.

Chapter four describes the ministry context behind the Kigombe District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Then, it explains the research design. Procedures for data collection and analysis, presentation, and description of findings should be done. An elaborate questionnaire helps as a tool for the study to get accurate information from the field. The results should be discussed in comparison to the scholarly works.

An intervention should be designed based on the implications of the results.

Chapter five deals with the chronological implementation of the intervention. The prepared training for the church leaders includes journaling, Bible study, and spiritual mentoring as spiritual disciplines for personal and community growth. Then, the following seminars deal with small group activities and home visitation as tools for friendship and mutual encouragement, and spiritual accountability. Last, training on sermon preparation and delivery culminates the intervention. The data are gathered and analyzed. The evaluation of the results of the study concludes the chapter.

Chapter Six presents a concise recap of the project with a brief overview of the implementation of the intervention, the analysis of data, and the implications and challenges that were encountered and not part of the design. Then, it deals with the recap of the conclusions drawn from the entire dissertation. Finally, a provision of concise recommendations culminates the project.

Limitations

The study has recorded two major limitations. First, local church leaders in the Kigombe district often navigate a myriad of responsibilities, encompassing roles as civil servants, agricultural practitioners, and business operators. This multifaceted engagement restricted their capacity to attend services and training punctually and fully participate in discipleship activities. Second, after the program, there might be a lack of ongoing support or accountability for implementing what was learned, which could limit long-term effectiveness.

Expectations

The main expectation of the study is to develop a discipleship program that can help local church leaders in the Kigombe District to ensure that their spiritual life

is of great importance in the Christian journey. The research should demonstrate that church leaders are to become effective disciples so that they can make good disciples, the main aim of the Seventh-day Adventist mission. Church leaders need to elevate higher their spiritual level if they commit themselves to raising the spirituality of their members.

This discipleship program should revitalize the church leadership in their daily ministry. It should help church leaders understand that discipleship is a lifetime experience that aims for continual spiritual transformation toward Christ's likeness. Therefore, by introducing church leaders to spiritual renewal, this discipleship program is going to provide new skills that should motivate and enable them to share them with their fellow believers. This research should contribute to a better understanding of discipleship as a lifelong process through experiences and application of spiritual principles in the local churches.

The goal of this research is for the church leaders of the Kigombe District to continually be aware of the fact that their spiritual influences should be both: intentional and random. The study is going to articulate the spiritual practices that help church leaders, and church members by extension, to keep on the discipleship journey. These elements take into consideration an intentional and regular Bible study, an active prayer life through journaling, and a purposed home visitation program.

The next chapter provides a biblical and theological foundations for discipleship. In the attempt to establish the foundation of the discipleship program, the study ensures to be based on the Bible, Bible dictionaries and commentaries, and the writings of Ellen G. White.

Definition of Terms

Church leaders – in this study refer to the lay church officials who have been selected from the believers to serve as heads of departments in a given local church for a certain term.

Disciple – a disciple is the follower of the one who leads, teaches, or coaches. In this study, a disciple means the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Discipleship describes the life journey of the disciple, the broader Christian life, actions, reactions, emotions, feelings, and relationship with God. Discipleship is not just a program, but it is about following the model of Christ in all aspects of the disciple's life.

District – in this study, the term *district* will have two different meanings. First, the name *district* will mainly refer to a group of local Seventh-day Adventist Churches under the leadership of one pastor. The same word also designates the administrative local government under the province.

Spiritual mentorship is a dynamic built on trust between two individuals in which they agree to start a spiritual walk together. The most experienced person helps the least skillful one to achieve the goal of a remarkable change. This type of relationship is stronger than any kind of friendship because the trainer can even address his/her trainee in a way that none other would dare to do. In this study, the trainer is called a *mentor* and the trainee is a *mentee*.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

This section will focus on some of the Bible characters in the Old and New Testaments who have had good life experiences to influence other people that they encountered. The study will explore the foundations of discipleship chronologically from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Moreover, the writings of Ellen White will be supplemented with other details.

Biblical Concept of Discipleship

The term discipleship appears nowhere in the Bible. It derives from the term disciple, which translates *mathētēs* in Greek. Martin stipulates that originally, *mathētēs* was employed among Greeks to design one who learns, and it involves the role of pupil or adherent.¹ The Greek word *mathētēs* (disciple) is from the verb *mathanō*. Martin goes on and say that in the Greek culture before Socrates, *mathanō* described the process by which a person was attached to another to seek practical or theoretical knowledge.² But the concept of discipleship was most popular in the Judaism of Jesus' day. A disciple in Judaism had to leave his home and move in with his teacher or rabbi.³ The twelve apostles of Jesus and others were called his disciples.

¹ Luther H. Martin, "Disciple, Discipleship [Mathētēs]," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 2:128.

² Ibid.

³ Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (1985), s.v. "Disciple."

However, the word *mathētēs* identifies followers of various schools and traditions. The Bible speaks of the disciples of the Pharisees (Matt 22:16; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33) and the disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35-37; 3:25). The New Testament defines a wider circle than the twelve disciples. These are the adherents of the movement associated with Jesus. The word disciple may have the sense of believer (John 8:35). The book of Acts continues to use the word disciple, but *mathētēs* has the concept of believer.⁴

In the New Testament, discipleship is described as a close relationship between the disciples and their Master. When he entered into a ship, his disciples followed him (Matt 8:23). In these two passages, the disciples' attitude showed the kind of relationship they had with Jesus. They came to him; they followed him.

Jesus used the vine allegory to illustrate the true relationship between the master and his disciples. He used the verb to *abide* in John 15:3-4. It is interpreted that the branch's relationship to the vine is described with the same verb that describes the disciples' relationship to Jesus, to *abide* by the Greek *menō*.⁵ To *abide* means to stay where you are. Bible interpreters said the Christian (*disciple* – emphasis mine) has been placed in Christ; that is his position. In daily walk, he should stay in intimate fellowship with the Lord.⁶

The concept that is emphasized here is the intimacy of the disciples with Jesus. Even if they do not understand, the disciples have been washed (John 15:3), both literally (John 13:10) and through their response to Jesus' word. It is observed the

⁴ Richards, *EDBW*, s.v. "Disciple."

⁵ Gail R. O'Day, "John," *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Completely New Commentary*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 9:758.

⁶ William MacDonald, "John," in *Believer's Bible Commentary*, ed. Arthur L. Farstad, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 1549.

concern is that they will show their true allegiance to Jesus by *abiding* (John 15:4 – menein).⁷ The vine’s allegory is to underline the significance of the disciples’ dependence on Christ. Moreover, the application of this illustration is found in verse 7, where abiding in the vine is closely linked with prayer.⁸

A daily walk and intimacy with Jesus convey the idea of the disciple’s journey, the idea of the progressive and continuous relationship the disciple has with Jesus. The dependence and prayer that are illustrated in the vine parable of John 15, pass on the indication of worship. Therefore, Christian discipleship is well described by three important characters. Biblical discipleship is a submissive, continuous, and progressive relationship an individual or a corporate has with Jesus. It is submissive because *abiding* goes together with *keeping the commandments* (John 15:10). Then, it is continuous because not *abiding* means ceasing to exist (John 15:6). Lastly, it is progressive because *abide* is consequently associated with *bearing fruit* (John 15:4).

Discipleship can be defined as a long-life relationship that an individual or a corporate undertakes with Jesus Christ. It is a lifetime process toward a Christlike experience. Christ is the initiator and the disciple is his protégé. The next sections of this chapter will deal with a correlation between discipleship, and spiritual growth and mentoring.

Discipleship Models in the Old Testament

The term discipleship is not found in the Bible, but it derives from the term disciple. The word disciple is used once in the Old Testament. Isaiah 8:16 quotes

⁷ J. Martin C. Scott, *John*, Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible (Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2021), 119.

⁸ Donald Guthrie, “John,” *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition (NBC)*, 4th ed., ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1056.

“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.” The text refers here to Isaiah’s active ministry of sealing God’s words in the hearts of his followers. ... The prophet needs to strengthen the resolve and solid biblical foundation of his disciples.⁹

To remain faithful to God, in this only passage, denotes the idea of the relationship between God and his disciples. The closer the relationship remains, discipleship will last. However, this text of Isaiah 8:16 is not the first to introduce the idea of discipleship. Even though the word discipleship is almost absent in the Bible in general and in the Old Testament in particular, biblical figures have proven sustainable spiritual relationship with the Lord. Given that, God is the initiator of discipleship, therefore the process of discipling starts with the creation of humans.

Discipleship Model in Eden

Genesis 1:26-27 explains how God created man. Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our *image*, in our *likeness* ... in his image God created them; male and female he created them” (NIV – emphasis mine). The focus is on the image and likeness. It should be understood that the image of God in which mankind was created refers to those qualities of humanity that are like God’s. The capacity for making choices, a personal relationship with God, and commitment are traits of life that belong exclusively to the nature of humans and God.¹⁰ The use of likeness implies the idea of relationship. The Creator and his creation relate. This is to mean God considered making humans in God’s image and likeness (*tselem* and *demut* in Hebrew). Humans, bearing the image of God, therefore are truly like God, but they

⁹ Derek Kidner, “Isaiah,” *NBC*, 640.

¹⁰ Sherrill G. Stevens, *Genesis*, Layman's Bible Book Commentary 1 (Nashville, TN: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1978), 18.

are not identical to God.¹¹ The discipleship model in Eden was twofold didactic: discipleship by creation and discipleship by admonition.

Discipleship by creation. The Bible clearly states that God created man in His image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them (Gen. 1:27). In His image is pivotal in this discipleship concept. God made Adam and Eve his disciples first by creation. He created them in his likeness; to be like him but not identical to him. The theological concept of the *imago dei* presumes both a nature and a future, both a capacity to do what God intends for us as the consummating vocation of humanity and doing what God intends.¹² The relational discipleship principles in Eden were the being and doing what was the purpose of God in creating humans. God himself was the master and Adam and Eve were his disciples. God visited them regularly. Scriptures narrate our forthparents heard his voice as he was walking in the garden in the late afternoon (Gen 3:8a). Emphasis is put on visiting as a relational tool of discipleship.

The *imago dei* refers to the intrinsic spiritual worth that God has bestowed upon humanity. Nonetheless, this worth is an incomplete reflection of the divine *likeness* that is yet to be achieved. Russel ascertained that the likeness reminds us that the human creature is not static.¹³ The *being* in the *imago dei* is to see everything with the eye of faithful obedience. God kept visiting his first creatures and gave them instructions. He taught them three fundamental lessons: (i) be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28a), (ii) have dominion over other creatures (Gen 1:28b), dress the garden

¹¹ J. M. Houston, "The Environmental Background to the Old Testament," *New International Bible Commentary*, Subsequent edition, ed. F. F. Bruce (Zondervan, 1999), 47.

¹² Russell R. Reno, *Genesis*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 53.

¹³ Reno, *Genesis*, 51.

and keep it (Gen 2:15), and (iii) you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for the day that you eat of it you shall die (Gen 2:17b). The two first lessons are just instructive, while the third one is a caution. As long as they *followed* God's command, they *stayed* closer to him, and he visited them in the garden. Discipleship is being and doing what God intends for his creatures.

Discipleship by admonition. It is another divine discipleship methodology. God made them disciples by teaching them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil so that they may not die (Gen 2:17). The likeness of God in humankind before sin was the product of God's creation and was last as the result of the close relationship between humans and God. The likeness implies a comparison in which God is the antecedent term while human is the consequent. As far as that relationship was maintained, the likeness remained. August and colleagues remarked how Adam and Eve's pre-fall relationship with God was characterized by beautiful fellowship as they walked together every evening in the garden.¹⁴

The Scriptures do not tell for how long they enjoyed the beauty of Eden, but they ended up going astray. They were immediately expelled from the garden. Even though they disobeyed and disrupted their relationship with God, He did not let them go on their own. The declaration of God (Gen 3:15) embodies the promise and prophecy of what will be the climax of the reconciliation between God and his rebellious creatures. Sherril saw that God was bringing back his people to him through that process of reconciliation all over the narratives of the Old Testament. The promise of Genesis 3:15 that *he shall bruise your head* is an expression of assurance of the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Then, the author added that Jesus achieved

¹⁴ John H. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 223.

through incarnation the very victory of which this promise speaks.¹⁵ God did not forsake them at all. The admonition God gave them was not a curse, but it was a friendly reproof against their sin.

Noah's Model of Discipleship

Genesis 7:1 identifies Noah as righteous. Noah was disciplined by none other than God himself. He was a man who had integrity in his character. His relationship with God was approved as the Lord commanded him to go into the ark, him and his whole family because God had found him righteous in this generation (Gen 7:1). Noah was a spiritual man, and his family emulated him. Noah's life illustrates how important one person can be whose life is genuinely in touch with God. Fellowship with God enabled him to see the way God was leading and to follow him.¹⁶ From this affirmation, we get two key elements as marks of Noah's discipleship and spirituality. A life of genuine touch with God denotes spirituality, and a fellowship that enables one to follow God indicates discipleship.

Noah's spiritual life was very distinctive until the Lord declared him righteous. To be saved with his whole family into the ark was God's grace to his people as it had been from creation. Noah did not merit the grace to be counted righteous, but he was given by grace. However, God said that he alone was found righteous in his generation. Wenham thought Noah's fidelity to God led to his salvation.¹⁷ His spiritual life was a reminder to his family and the rest of his contemporaries that God wanted them to preserve his image for his glory. The Epistle

¹⁵ Stevens, *Genesis*, 31.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁷ Gordon John Wenham, *Genesis 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 177.

to Hebrews 11:7 says that by faith Noah, being warned by God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

The Bible does not provide any speech from Noah, however, his influence on his relatives and neighbors was clear. Ellen White said that while Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified to his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says.¹⁸ His family followed his instructions; therefore, the entire family was saved against the flood. Another writer affirmed that God has chosen Noah as the suitable representative of the human race, the one by whom or through whom humanity might be preserved.¹⁹ Christian spirituality is a gift from God, but it has to be maintained by the believer. It is a life experience daily. It depends necessarily on the connectivity the human holds on with God.

The flood account and the ark seem to be taken as evident proof that the mission of God through Noah failed. However, Noah did not fail because his mandate was to build an ark for people to escape the flood. His preaching was mostly expressed in his attitude and works different from his contemporaries. There was no failure at all, be it on the side of God or on the side of Noah. He completed the project as God assigned him. Moreover, he managed to save his entire family in the ark.

True discipleship must start with the individual himself, and then it spreads within the inner circle of the believer's family before it serves others. Ellen White said while Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified to his

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Omaha, NE: Pacific Press, 1970), 95.

¹⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 287.

sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. She concluded that Noah gave the world an example of believing just what God says. Multitudes came from every direction to see the strange sight and to hear the earnest, fervent words of the singular preacher.²⁰

Abraham: The Model of God's Discipleship

There is more than one model of discipleship in the account of Abraham being called: his very call, the way he mentored Lot, and lastly how he mentored Eleazar.

The call of Abraham. God's invitation to Abraham places him in the center of God's plan for humanity after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden. The Bible does not tell any other similar call's story before. Noah was called to build the ark in his place. He did not move to another country. Abraham was required to leave the three most important things that people strive for today: his country, his people, and his father's household (Gen 12:1). Carson et al. said that God's call to Abram required faith alone. He added that Abraham had to abandon the security of family and country and then travel to a foreign land. He had believed that God would give him both descendants and land.²¹

In faith, Abraham obeyed God's call and went, as the Lord had told him (Gen 12:4). Abraham obeyed God's command (Go). He followed God's instructions to the land he would be shown. This was the turning point of Abraham's relationship with God. Modern people can rarely understand the reaction of Abraham to God's call, but that was what God wanted him to do. "The idea of separating himself from the heritage of his family would have involved a great sense of threat to his identity and

²⁰ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Omaha, NE: Pacific Press, 1970), 95.

²¹ D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 46.

future.”²² Otherwise, the family solidarity would have bound Abraham to Terah, his father who was renowned for his profession of idol-making. Sherrill said that Abraham’s mission was not to perpetuate the heritage of his ancestry. Rather, it was to begin with God a new stream of life and heritage.²³

Obedient Abraham became God’s faithful follower (disciple). Wherever he went, traveling the new land, he built altars (Gen 12:7, 8) and worshiped the Lord. That was his way of witnessing to the Lord. From this distinctiveness, Abraham showed to the nations that he was the disciple of another God different from their gods. Therefore, Abraham’s worship distracted people from their idolatry and attracted them to come and live with him. The Scripture says that all the possessions they had accumulated and the *people* they had acquired in Harran (Gen 12:5, emphasis mine). When he went to liberate his nephew who had been taken captive, the Bible says that he had called out the 318 trained men born in his household... (Gen 14:14). They were trained not only to fight enemies but they were taught to follow the Lord of their master. Abraham was God’s follower on God’s mission, he taught others to follow God, the Creator. This is the very essence of discipleship.

Abraham mentoring Lot. Here is a good style of discipleship by mentoring. Three biblical evidences prove that Lot was Abraham’s protégé. First, Lot went with Abraham when he went out from Harran (Gen 12:4). Carson et al. commented that with plenty of wealth, Lot did not choose to remain in Harran, he decided that his future would prosper only by following Abram. This is an act of discipleship.²⁴ Not only that, when commanded by Abraham to leave, he went unhesitant. When the

²² Stevens, *Genesis*, 54.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Carson, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, 46.

angels told Lot to leave Sodom, he obeyed and went straight out of the city. Second, is the character of hospitality that Lot must have emulated from Abraham. They have experienced two similar episodes on different occasions. Abraham had hosted three men who were standing nearby (Gen 18:1-8). In the same way, Lot saw two angels arrive in Sodom in the evening, he pleaded with them to come to his house and spend the night there (Gen 19:1-3). Third, the three angels who came to Abraham promised him to get a son from Sarah who was still childless and yet was past the age of childbearing. The two angels took Lot and his wife and his two daughters out of Sodom before it was destroyed by fire (Gen 19:12-21).

The narrative emphasizes the reason for the angelic rescue. The Bible says that God remembered Abraham... and sent Lot out amid the overthrow (Gen 19:29). Even though Lot had chosen to go to Jordan's valley just before Sodom, he should be read as a man inclined toward what is right and good. Russell commended Lot's condition saying that unlike his wife, Lot does not look back with nostalgic loyalty to sinful habits, but he cannot see a way forward.²⁵ The scene of Genesis 19:3-5 disclosed to the angels that no righteous in Sodom except the immigrant Lot. Moreover, his commitment to the visitors referred to the intercession of Abraham, and God remembered. Therefore, Lot was not swept away with the wicked, as Abraham feared (Gen 18:23-32). God had continually used Abraham for the salvation of his nephew, Lot. The patriarch did not despise anyone who came under his house's roof. Abraham was not only hospitable, but he was also so prayerful man as he had persuaded even his servants.

²⁵ Reno, *Genesis*, 187.

Abraham mentoring Eleazar. This is another style of discipleship of Abraham. The whole family shared Abraham's spiritual life until the servant knew and recognized the Lord as the God of his master (Gen 24:1, 12, 15, 26). God was no longer Abraham's God alone because the servant was praying trusting the same God. When the servant went on his master's mission, he prayed at the beginning and the end. Eleazar went with his mission foremost in his mind. He practiced what he had learned from his master, Abraham. It is said that he began to pray earnestly that Yahweh, God of his master Abraham, might give him success that very day and show kindness to Abraham.²⁶

The narrative goes on. The servant has found the girl he needed for his master's son; therefore, he praised God for he had made his journey successful. The Scripture says that "the man bowed down and worshiped the Lord, saying, 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham'" (Gen 24:26). The repetition of the phrase God of my master Abraham indicates that the servant knew the relationship his master had with God was genuine. It proves also that Abraham did hide that connection with the Lord from his servant because his servant had become a true worshiper of God. He asked God to bless his project, and when he got the answer; he worshiped and praised the Lord.

Jethro and Moses

God had chosen Moses to bring Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt, to lead them throughout the wilderness to the Promised Land. On their way, Moses faced a big challenge to judge alone all the people. His father-in-law, Jethro advised him to provide a team of people who would help him to judge the Israelites. Jethro invited

²⁶ John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (UBC) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 223.

Moses to listen now to him, that he would give the younger some advice, and that God be with Moses (Gen 18:19). Jethro knew very well that the mission to lead Israelites and judge them was Moses' duty. He knew he was responsible for nothing in that matter. However, he took the opportunity to help his son-in-law to accomplish his task. His advice consisted of five steps: to advocate before God, to teach people the decrees and laws, to select men who fear God, to establish officials over thousands ... and tens, and Moses to preside as the final appeal for difficult cases.²⁷ The Scripture says that Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said (Exod 18:24). He followed and implemented Jethro's advice. He had proven Jethro's wisdom was indispensable to lead God's people. He willingly became a good disciple of his father-in-law. Moses was the one chosen by God, but he had to learn from another person how to fulfill the mission he was assigned to.

The wisdom and advice of Jethro brought a quick transformation in the justice system among the Israelites. Nevertheless, it went even beyond Moses' concern. Today, every governance system applies Jethro's advice by adopting the administration style of representation and delegation of power from the central to the local entity. Every generation has to learn from the men of experience and adapt the acquired information to their current situation as Moses and Jethro interacted.

Naomi Discipling Ruth

The story of Naomi and Ruth her daughter-in-law is among the most interesting narratives of the Bible that prove the relevance of discipleship in regard of church mission. Naomi is an Israelite immigrant whose son had married Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 1:4). Although marriage with Moabite women was not forbidden, no

²⁷ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, UBC, 167-168.

Moabite or his sons to the tenth generation, was allowed to enter the assembly of the LORD (Deut 23:3). Nevertheless, Ruth being a Moabite is found among the rare women whose names are in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matt 1:3, 5-6, 16). This indicates the fact that discipleship is a tool of *missio dei* that transcends all barriers: culture, gender, nationality, and so on.

The Bible does not tell how Ruth stayed with her husband, but seemingly, they did not spend too much time together because Mahlon had died before getting a child. However, it is evident that whatever short time they had spent together (Ruth and her husband), the life of Naomi had affected Ruth too much so that she decided not to leave her mother-in-law (Ruth 1:16). Writers have said that neither mother's house, nor native people, nor ancestral *elohim* can lure Ruth away from Naomi's side. Even Naomi cannot. They proved Ruth was amazingly ready to walk away from everything important and meaningful in her world.²⁸ [emphasis original]. The response of Ruth to her mother-in-law shows that she had resolved herself to follow Naomi wherever she goes. This was the result of good relationship Naomi has cemented between her and Ruth. That relationship was an informal type of discipleship through mentoring. Ruth chose to be a disciple of Naomi's God. The process of Naomi mentoring Ruth has been a great success. Speaking about the uniqueness of her decision, the authors have said that her response to Naomi is one of Scripture's greatest declarations of interdependence.²⁹ Ruth's determination is most impressive when she confesses that Naomi's people will be her people and Yahweh will be her God (Ruth 1:16b).

²⁸ Gordon J. Harris, Cheryl Anne Brown, and Michael S. Moore, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, UBC, 321.

²⁹ Harris, Brown, and Moore, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, 321.

Commentators say Ruth renounced her ethnic and religious roots and followed the culture of Naomi.³⁰

Moreover, Ruth is among the five women in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The others are Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Mary (Matt 1:1-16). Except for Mary Jesus' mother, all the rest are of Gentile origin. Tamar was probably a Canaanite,³¹ Rahab a Canaanite, Bathsheba a Hittite, and Ruth a Moabite. This is a clear indication that discipleship as the key approach of *missio Dei* is all-inclusive.

In sum, Ruth decisively casts her lot with Naomi because she had been much impressed by the character of her mother-in-law. She recalls an earlier emigrant, Abraham, who also cast his lot with Yahweh (Gen 12:1-5). Hubbard had compared Ruth and Abraham during their call, and concluded that Ruth's leap of faith even outdid Abraham's; because she acted with no promise in hand, with no divine blessing pronounced, without spouse, possessions, or supporting retinue.³² Naomi disciplined her daughter-in-law in being, not knowing that she would become part of the genealogy of the Savior of the universe. In this narrative, discipleship is revealed as God's means to bring salvation to all peoples regardless of their origins.

Discipleship Models in the New Testament

The genealogy of the Savior demonstrates that discipleship models in the New Testament were more centrifugal than they were in the Old Testament. Jesus and later the apostles went to find people where they lived and taught those who accepted to follow them.

³⁰ Robert L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm, B. Eerdmans, 2007), 117.

³¹ "Remain a Widow" [Gen 38:11], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 1:435.

³² Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, 120.

Jesus' Model of Discipleship

Jesus taught many parables to all of his followers but he used to explain more to his close disciples, the apostles who had accepted to stay with or follow him, and go wherever he would go or send them. In the parable of the sower, the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him why He speaks to the people in parables (Matt 13:10). The Lord replied that the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to them, but to others, He speaks in parables (Luke 8:10). France commented on this verse that the theme of God's secrets (*mystērion*, from which we get *mystery*) is prominent in the book of Daniel. He added that in them, God's truths are hidden from other people, but they are revealed to his faithful servants. Therefore, Jesus' disciples are in the same position of understanding what is hidden from others, not because they are cleverer, but because they, like Daniel, have been given to be and live closer to Him, to be like Him.³³ This is the ultimate goal of Christian discipleship.

On the Mount of Beatitudes, Jesus took time to teach long and various topics that covered three entire chapters (Matt 5-7). Another long address is that of Jesus ordaining his twelve disciples (Matt 10:5-42). He had given them the authority and power over the unclean spirits (Matt 10:1), then he instructed them (Matt 10:5) before he sent them out. One commentator on Matthew 10:5 said that the disciples had had the opportunity to observe Christ's methods, to listen to His teaching, and to profit from instructions He had given privately to them from time to time.³⁴ To observe His methods and profit from His instructions were the two pillars of Jesus's discipleship model.

³³ R. T. France, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 141-142.

³⁴ "These Twelve" [Matt 10:5], *SDABC*, 5:374.

In the gospel by Luke, Jesus admonished his disciples for several things before he sent them. He talked about his betrayal, the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and the cost of being his true follower. Then comes the story of the Lord appointing seventy-two others (Luke 10:1). Before they left, he warned them about their safety (Vs 3), their food security (Vs 4,7,8), and their accommodation (Vs 5,6). He gave them authority to heal the sick (Vs 9). Jesus was teaching his disciples by *doing*. The *SDA Bible Commentary* has a specific detail on this particular passage that the ministry of the Seventy for the Samaritan people would prepare the disciples for their labors in that region.³⁵

When the disciples saw Jesus praying, one of them asked Him to teach them to pray, just as John taught his disciples (Luke 11:1). The phrase *teach us to pray* demonstrates they wanted to learn from their master did. Then, the Lord had taught them how to pray not as the hypocrites do (Matt 6:5-8). Jesus responded by giving a model prayer, a parable to illustrate the spirit of prayer that admonished encouraging faithfulness and diligence in prayer.³⁶ Giving a model prayer through admonition is a style of discipleship by mentoring.

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus taught his disciples and charged them how to make other disciples. He told them to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them (Matt 28:19-20). Mounce commenting on this passage said that the full scope of making disciples involves baptizing them and teaching them.³⁷ Baptizing and teaching are two elements of discipleship. A particular section on them will appear in the next chapter. Jesus' model of discipleship consists

³⁵ "Whither He Himself Would Come" [Luke 10:1], *SDABC*, 5:780.

³⁶ "Teach Us to Pray" [Luke 11:1], *SDABC*, 5:788.

³⁷ Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew* (1991; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 268.

of *being, telling, and doing*. All these three methods are found all over the four Gospels. First, his character had molded the apostles from brutal fishermen to meek martyrs. He loved them and asked them to love one another. He commanded them to love one another as He loved them (John 13:34; 15:9, 12). Second, He had many things to teach them before he left for heaven. He told them He had much more to say to them, more than they could bear then (John 16:12). Third, His disciples could not heal a demon-possessed then Christ showed them how it should be done. He said that this kind can come out only by praying and fasting (Matt 17:21).

The Lord taught His disciples in different ways. Simon Peter is one of the best examples of radical transformation (Luke 22:32). They had imitated him. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached, about three thousand were baptized (Acts 2:40). Peter healed the crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-9). The same Peter healed Aeneas and Dorcas (Acts 9:32-41). Christ's method of discipleship is the best; therefore, His disciples followed it and there was the multiplication of disciples. The church would do better to apply these three principles of discipleship being, telling, and doing to complete successfully the mission of the Lord.

Barnabas, Paul, and John Mark

The initial name of Barnabas is Joseph. He was called Barnabas by the apostles. His new name means son of encouragement (Acts 4:36). The Apostles were all afraid of Paul even after his conversion because they knew him as the greatest persecutor of the Christian church at her birth. They were slow to welcome him into the group of disciples. Williams wrote that Paul was not easily accepted by the church when he went back to Jerusalem after his conversion. Later on, it was Barnabas who

brought him to the apostles.³⁸ Therefore, Barnabas stood to defend Paul's case before the disciples in Jerusalem. He then recounted to them the wonderful story of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:26-27).

Barnabas encouraged Paul to not give up, but at the same time, he pleaded with the apostles to accept Paul. In the process, a comment on Barnabas said that it was important for the apostles to know that Christ had spoken to the one whom Barnabas was sponsoring. The motive behind this was that Barnabas well knew that news of Saul's bold ministry would make a deep impression on the minds of the apostles and lead them to receive him as one of their own.³⁹ The other apostles had received their commissions directly from the Lord (Matt 28:19,20). They needed clear proof that the same Master had also commissioned Paul personally.

After the testimony of Barnabas, the apostles accepted Paul among them and stayed with them, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord (Acts 9:28). Bruce said Barnabas' name meant what he accomplished. He specifically said Barnabas was true to his name. He disciplined Paul and encouraged the apostles to receive him. Barnabas the encourager gave them his guarantee to the apostles and other believers in Jerusalem that Saul was now a true disciple of Jesus, and they were reassured.⁴⁰ The earlier church at large had benefited from the discipleship model of Barnabas and Paul.

Barnabas had played an important role as Paul's mentor not only at the beginning of his ministry. He also taught him how an experienced missionary should deal with beginners in the work. During the first missionary journey, Paul and

³⁸ David J. Williams, *Acts*, UBC, 176.

³⁹ "Spoken to Him" [Acts 9:27], 6: 237.

⁴⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 193.

Barnabas had John Mark as their helper (Acts 13:5). But, when the opposition went stronger against them, John left them (Acts 13:13). During their second missionary voyage, Barnabas wanted to take Jon Mark with them, but Paul disagreed because this young man deserted them in Pamphylia (Acts 15:37,38).

Although Barnabas had decided to support John Mark, therefore he left Paul (Acts 15:39,40). Here are two different points of view concerning the reintegration of John Mark. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* stipulates that it was Barnabas' family relationship with John Mark (Col.4:10) that led him to show his fitness for service.⁴¹ Paul, as a courageous warrior for Christ, had an opposite view. For him, anyone who had so acted, needed to be disciplined by a rejection for a time so that he might fit for better work in the future.⁴² So it should have been the case of John Mark. However, the Scripture reveals that Paul received John Mark once more when he was a prisoner (Col 4:10). Finally, Paul learned to recognize in John Mark one who was profitable to him for the ministry. Towards the end of his ministry, the apostle Paul requested Timothy to get Mark and bring him because he was helpful in Paul's ministry (2 Tim 4:11).

The *eye of Barnabas* is a principle that church believers should learn and apply for effective discipleship. Barnabas did not see people as they were in their present conditions, but he saw them, as they would become in the future. He saw in Paul an apostle to the Gentiles even though the apostles in Jerusalem were doubtful to accept him in their midst. Although John Mark had disappointed Paul, Barnabas had seen in him the writer of the Gospel in the New Testament by the name of Mark. A true disciples-maker should not judge things and workers in the cause of the Lord at

⁴¹ "Determined" [Acts 15:37], *SDABC*, 6: 317.

⁴² *Ibid.*

their starting point. He will need to be patient in assisting beginners to grow in their discipleship journey.

Paul, Timothy, and Titus

During his missionary tours, Paul had established churches in different localities like Ephesus, and the Island of Crete. He had trained two young men for the headship of these churches. He appointed Timothy in Ephesus,⁴³ and Titus in Crete. Paul had taught them by example. Therefore, he instructed them to set good examples for the believers (1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7). However, the senior apostle had advised everyone separately according to the specific issues at his place of appointment. Ephesus was one of the leading centers of Christianity, but at the same time, there were many other erroneous teachings like Nicolaitanes and Gnostics.⁴⁴

Paul advised particularly Timothy to keep the things he has heard Paul say, and to entrust reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy, a faithful follower of Paul's teachings, was to mediate the instructions to others. Gordon has elaborated on this passage, stating that those to whom he entrusted his teachings should be reliable and trustworthy individuals. The focus was on their dependable character rather than their status.⁴⁵ Among many other tasks Timothy was assigned, making disciples was the most privileged at that given time. Paul made him his disciple, and then Timothy was to teach to reliable men, who were to teach those things to others. This was a multiplication principle of discipleship.

⁴³ "Commandment" [1 Tim 1:1], *SDABC*, 7: 285.

⁴⁴ "Nicolaitanes" [Rev 2:6], *SDABC*, 7: 745.

⁴⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, UBC, 240.

Timothy has known the Scripture from infancy because of the faith of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5). Nevertheless, Timothy's only defense against deceptive teachings would consist in his firm dependence upon the instructions of Paul and the other disciples.⁴⁶ The emphasis is put on Timothy being Paul's disciple before being charged to make other disciples reliable to teach others.

The concern of the church in Crete was different from Ephesus. Paul had given one mission to Titus and stated the reason why he had left him in Crete. It was that Titus might strengthen out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town (Titus 1:5). The primordial responsibilities of Titus were (i) to make additional corrections, and (ii) to appoint elders. The corrections concerned to address opposition on doctrinal grounds (Titus 1:10-15). Benjamin Fiore commented on this verse by emphasizing a structural change in the church organization with the introduction of elders/overseers, because in Ephesus elders and overseers already existed but needed some reform (1 Tim 5:19-22).⁴⁷ Beside the concern of church elders in Crete, Titus was to deal with people of all ages and genres, and slaves (Titus 2:1-10); because the grace of God that brings salvation had already appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). The discipleship model of Paul, Timothy, and Titus was based on teaching and modeling. The disciples were to imitate their disciple-maker in being, and doing.

Peter's Discipleship Model

Christ the Good Shepherd knew the dangers that his disciples were going to face soon because of his arrest and crucifixion. Therefore, he warned Peter to encourage his fellows after he would be converted. Jesus had prayed for Simon, that

⁴⁶ "Learned" [2 Tim 3:14], *SDABC*, 7: 344.

⁴⁷ Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 197.

his faith might not fail. And when Peter would turn back, he would strengthen his colleagues (Luke 22:32). What an encouragement to know somebody is praying for you so that you will not fail forever; and yet Jesus Christ was not somebody. He was the Son of Almighty God praying for Peter to turn back once he failed. The *SDABC* in this passage explained how the bitter experience through which Peter of denying his Lord, wrought in him a transformation evident to his fellow disciples.⁴⁸

Failure is never someone's choice, but it can and is one of the best methods of instruction for somebody who does not harden his heart. Peter had failed to stand firm for Jesus during his trial. He had even denied his Lord three times in one night. However, after his turning back, he publicly confessed before the Sanhedrin that Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they crucified but whom God raised from the dead, was the stone builders rejected, and has become the capstone (Acts 4:10-11).

When Peter was addressing the elders of the churches in Asia Minor, he passed on the command that he once received from Christ, to feed His lambs, and to care of His sheep (John 21:15,16). Peter did not ask his colleague elders to do what he could not. He exhorted his fellows to be shepherds of God's flock willingly (1 Pet 5:2). As he was writing this letter, Simon Peter was fulfilling Christ's specific command to feed his sheep. Harink found that drawing his fellow elders into the truth and the authority of his own extraordinary life in the Messiah, and that Peter had instructed them in the way of messianic leadership.⁴⁹ He, therefore, asks the elders to perpetuate the feeding until the Chief Shepherd appears (1 Pet 5:4) by being examples. Then the

⁴⁸ "Converted" [Luke 22:32], *SDABC*, 5: 868.

⁴⁹ Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 122.

same author concluded that elders were to be model Christians, true representatives of the faith that other believers could safely imitate.⁵⁰

As Peter was Christ's disciples, he took over the responsibility of making other disciples who would be overseers of God's flock. The most important thing in his instructions was being an example. He was the example of Jesus, As far as the discipleship process is concerned, the outcome of it should be perpetuated in all believers for all generations. The next section elaborates on discipleship in the writings of Ellen G. White.

for he witnessed his suffering. That is why he urged his fellow elders to feed and take of the believers by setting good examples. The church has to enhance the discipleship principle of every believer to serve as an example for the fellows. In the discipleship process, the intended outcome should be passed down through all believers for generations to come. The next section elaborates on the concept of discipleship found in the writings of Ellen G. White.

Theological Foundations of Discipleship

The theological foundation underpinning the discipleship program for local church leaders in the Kigombe district is based on biblical principles related to discipleship, leadership, and the mission of the Church. Below are the key theological aspects that establish the foundational framework for this program.

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus' command to His disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations" serves as a fundamental principle for any discipleship program. Church leaders are responsible for following Christ and nurturing disciples who will grow in their faith,

⁵⁰ "Ensamples" [1 Pet 5:3], *SDABC*, 7: 585.

understand God's Word, and live according to His directives. The Great Commission emphasizes the importance of leaders being equipped, empowered, and commissioned to disciple others.

The Necessity of Personal Discipleship (Luke 6:40)

Jesus teaches that a disciple is not greater than their teacher; however, once they have completed their training, they will be like their teacher. This principle underscores the importance of ongoing personal discipleship for church leaders. It is vital for local church leaders to continually deepen their relationship with Christ, remaining dedicated to learning from and following Him. Such growth requires a deep engagement with the Scriptures, committed prayer, and the cultivation of godly character.

The Power of the Holy Spirit in Discipleship (Acts 1:8)

The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is crucial for every disciple and leader. A discipleship program should emphasize the importance of the Holy Spirit in equipping church leaders for their missions. The Holy Spirit enables local church leaders to carry out effective ministry, and without His guidance, even the most dedicated training efforts may produce minimal results.

The Importance of Scripture in Discipleship (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The Bible is the ultimate source of wisdom, guidance, and instruction. Church leaders must be firmly rooted in the Word of God, using it as the foundation for all their teaching and ministry efforts. A strong emphasis on Bible study and biblical

literacy should be central to any discipleship program, equipping leaders to interpret Scripture accurately and effectively disciple others.

In conclusion, a discipleship program for church leaders in the Kigombe district should be based on the understanding that discipleship is a lifelong journey that requires a transformation of both the heart and mind. By equipping local church leaders with deep biblical knowledge, spiritual formation, and practical skills, the program aims to cultivate leaders who can make disciples that will multiply and contribute to the Kingdom of God.

Discipleship in the Writings of Ellen G. White

Christian discipleship is a transformational process in the lives of believers. The Christlikeness of the disciple is the ultimate purpose of discipleship. In her writings, Ellen G. White had wide views on the characteristics of true disciples. Then, she had thoughts about the cost of discipleship.

Characteristics of a True Disciple

For the sake of time and space, only some of the characteristics of a true disciple are listed: love, obedience, unity, meekness, daily conversion, faithfulness, prayerful meditation, fruit-bearing, and witnessing.

Love. Ellen White comparing love and profession, said that no matter how high his profession, he whose heart is not imbued with love for God and his fellow men is not a disciple of Christ.⁵¹ For her, and it should for every true disciple, what matters the most is the love of God in the Christian life.

⁵¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church: With a Biographical Sketch of the Author* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1946), 5:168.

Obedience. The Lord had spoken that obedience to his commandments is never separate from love as the mark of true discipleship. Ellen White affirmed that the true sign of discipleship is obedience expressed by the service of allegiance of love.⁵² She even emphasizes that obedience is the test of discipleship.⁵³ Obedience in terms of Christian life is the submission of man's free will to God's will. Therefore, obedience is central to compliance with the word of the Lord. That compliance is the basis of the sustainable discipleship of every believer.

Unity. Here, unity is expressed as a perfect cohesion of individuals. In his pastoral prayer, Christ pleaded with his Father for the unity of all believers. Ellen White warns that disciples are not to sacrifice one single principle of truth for the sake of unity. She added that it should be a constant aim of a disciple to reach this state of unity. This is the evidence of true discipleship.⁵⁴ Here unity does not arise accidentally, it is something for which the believer should long for in his everyday life. The idea of a constant aim denotes that unity is the result of an intentional process the believer is working on.

Meekness. This term denotes submissiveness, peacefulness, or docility. This is the most precious character of Christ's followers. It is the opposite of pride of any kind. A meek disciple will easily adapt himself to every condition of life except that of sin. Ellen White revealed to readers that meekness is patient and labor to be happy under all circumstances. She continued that meekness is always thankful and makes

⁵² Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Omaha, NE: United Publishers, 1974), 60.

⁵³ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Co, 2016), 146.

⁵⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets: As Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 520.

its melody in the heart of God. She concluded that meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, but will not retaliate.⁵⁵

Daily conversion. This one has the expression of a transformational process. Discipleship is a lifetime experience. It never ceases to advance. It is changing life for the better. For more understanding, Ellen G. White said every living Christian will advance daily in divine life. For her, the progress made toward perfection helps to experience a conversion to God every day. Then, she concluded that conversion is not completed until the disciple attains to perfection of Christian character.⁵⁶ It consists of daily repentance of any kind of sin by commission or by omission. The attainment to perfection in Christian life is what discipleship is all about.

Faithfulness. It is based on trust. Discipleship is *built on and* made possible by trust. Trust and faithfulness must work together in life. They are interdependent on one another.

None can pretend to be Christ's disciple while nobody can trust him. At the same time, faithfulness requires a disciple to trust others. Trust should be mutual so that faithfulness would be rooted in a true relationship. True discipleship requires faithfulness in great things and small businesses as well. Ellen White declared that every sincere Christian will be a guide and an example to others in faithfulness... in unswerving fidelity to the cause of truth.⁵⁷

Prayerful meditation. This is about spiritual meditation on a biblical text. The Christian life is all about prayer. A prayerful life based on the understanding of Scripture is recommended to the believers. Ellen White calls it the formation of a right

⁵⁵ Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 56.

⁵⁶ White, *Testimonies*, 2:505.

⁵⁷ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2002), 12.

character. She calls it the work of a lifetime. She advised that the outgrowth of prayerful meditation should be united with a grand purpose.⁵⁸ Prayer and Bible study are twins and useful tools for discipleship.

Fruit-bearing. Every single life must bear fruits to mean it is worth living. However, not every fruit should be the product of an intentional Christian journey. Bearing spiritual fruit is a sine qua none evidence of a true discipleship. Jesus told his hearers that every disciple is recognized by his fruit. Bearing fruit should be a character rather than being a reputation, because character is what a believer really is, while reputation is what others want a believer to be. Ellen White wrote that the object of the Christian life is fruit bearing, the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others.⁵⁹ In conclusion, Ellen White added that daily growth into the life of Christ creates in the soul a heaven of peace; in such a life there is a continual fruit bearing.⁶⁰

Witnessing. This is the most inevitable characteristic of true disciples. Discipleship cannot exist without witnessing. Addressing young people, Ellen White affirms that if people truly belong to Christ.⁶¹ Then they will have opportunities to witness for him. Thus, they will not try to form excuses to not testify to their Lord.⁶² The advice can apply to the believers of every generation.

⁵⁸ Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education: Instruction for the Home, the School and the Church* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1992), 87.

⁵⁹ Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1990), 67.

⁶⁰ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Washington, DC: Pacific Press, 1957), 633.

⁶¹ Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 370.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Cost of Discipleship

Love and meekness as characters of true discipleship will necessarily cost a lot of other things to the disciple as it was for Jesus and His other disciples of ancient. Paul, Peter, and others endured hardship for the sake of preserving their Master's likeness. Therefore, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and cross-bearing are not avoidable in the process of discipleship.

Self-denial. Ellen White has written that for the sake of the One who has abandoned heaven to this world to save humanity, everyone should reflect on the idea that being a Christian disciple involves self-denial.⁶³ Those who follow Christ live not to please themselves; they keep themselves distinct and separate from worldly pleasures.

Self-sacrifice. Ellen White stated that Christ's followers must study His life closely and walk in the light of His example, at whatever sacrifice of self.⁶⁴ Here, discipleship is to follow the pathway of the Master. This sacrifice should be motivated by love and not intending any kind of reward.

Cross-bearing. This word is to be better understood not in a physical aspect. It means to accept to bear a burden that could have been avoided for the sake of others. It is to endure hardship not as a consequence from any weakness of the disciple but for the purpose to be and do right for the glory of the Master. Ellen White wrote wicked men oppose a form of godliness and reject any ministry that presents any cross for them to bear.⁶⁵ True disciple cannot do.

⁶³ Ellen, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1940), .288.

⁶⁴ White, *Testimonies*, 4:568.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:344.

Summary

The section has recapitulated four major segments. First, the biblical concept of discipleship was reviewed into two Greek terms *mathētēs* from *mathāno*, to mean *disciple* or follower, and *menō* for *abide*. Second, two sets of biblical discipleship models were developed, one in the Old Testament that had proven discipleship started with the Creation. God Himself initiated the discipleship process in Eden through admonition, and patriarchs were to follow His pattern. Third, the New Testament recounts Jesus' discipleship model was the model per excellence. The apostles' models were a reproduction to mirror the Lord's example. Last, this chapter has looked at the discipleship process in the books of Ellen G. White. Two important points retained the attention of the researcher, the characteristics of a true disciple, and the cost of discipleship. The next chapter will consider the Christian discipleship process throughout other different literatures.

CHAPTER 3

DISCIPLESHIP IN LITERATURE

The chapter recapitulates the views of different scholars who have spent time and energy on this subject matter. Discipleship is described from different points of view, what it is, and what it is not. Two major elements of discipleship are disclosed. Various characteristics of true disciple are articulated. The section displays the hindrances of discipleship and some of the spiritual disciplines that could nurture discipleship growth. Last, the chapter elaborates on discipleship through mentoring.

Discipleship

In the formulation of the topic of this work, the word ‘discipleship’ is considered as a vehicle tool for the Christian life. Hirsch underlines discipleship as a key factor for Christian maturity and affirms that the lack of discipleship undermines all else we seek to do.¹ Consequently, the mature believer will work for the development of his/her fellows. Though it has been defined in Chapter One, it needs to be more elaborated in this section. In his dissertation, after a short discussion on discipleship, Taylor has retained one definition. He said that Christian discipleship is the process by which the teacher engages and facilitates the training of a follower in

¹ Alan Hirsch and Debra Hirsch, *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 59.

self-denial to produce godliness.² Here, he introduced a new component of discipleship, training. Then he added that the essence of discipleship is one person helping another person grow in Christlikeness. Onyinah wrote that from the Christian point of view, discipleship is the process of an individual toward Christ's likeness.³ Quoting Akanni, the same writer continued that discipleship is the process whereby a believer who voluntarily surrenders himself to the Lord Jesus Christ is being made to become like Jesus Christ by various exposures, activities, and determination of the Lord himself.⁴ Watson said that discipleship involves a life of realism and sharing.⁵ In other words, Christian discipleship is a life of being and doing. The common ground in all these quotes is that the discipleship process is not a life in isolation. Rather it is a shared experience, and those who talk about experience understand a learning process.

Therefore, the follower of Christ commits himself/herself to living Christ's life and to sharing Christ's love and truth with others. That is why Jones and Armstrong explain from the Christian perspective, discipleship encompasses all the aspects of our lives. It is not just an amount of knowledge. It is a lifetime journey toward Christlikeness.⁶ Therefore, discipleship means the process by which believers become and encourage others to become mature in Christ. It is a process of leaving

² Douglas E. Taylor, "The Essence of Discipleship: An Evangelical Perspective," paper presented at THEO 997: Seminar on the Theology of Discipleship, Liberty University, 2013, accessed 11 January 2024, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=symp_grad.

³ Opoku Onyinah, "The Meaning of Discipleship," *International Review of Missions* 106, no. 2 (2017): 216-227, accessed January 11, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1111/irom.12181>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ David Watson, *Discipleship* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2014), 48.

⁶ Gregory L. Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 53.

what is childish to embrace what is mature. It is childish at the beginning because it reflects less adherence to the biblical truth.

Hull said that discipleship means the state of being a disciple.⁷ In the same textbook, Hull traced the difference between being a Christian and becoming a true disciple. He said that by faith a Christian accepts his Savior, inherits eternal life, and is safe and secure in God's family. By contrast, he argued that a disciple is a more serious Christian active in the practice of the spiritual disciplines and engaged in evangelizing, training, and bringing others to become disciples. The activity of practicing godly things is the core characteristic of discipleship.⁸

What Discipleship Is Not

The other way to understand discipleship at large is to know what discipleship is not. In *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, the author enlisted six ways people have misunderstood discipleship. Using these six negatives helps to understand the other way around what discipleship means. First of all, *discipleship is not a program* because it concerns the lifetime. Secondly, *discipleship is not for new converts* alone, but the basic beliefs that are to be enhanced in the hearts of all believers. To this Hull wrote that too many Christians no longer practice the basics and are out of shape spiritually, because of the mistaken concept that discipleship is only for beginners.⁹ All believers need to be trained to remain on track. Third, *discipleship is not a production line*. The church's numerical growth must parallel with a comprehensive

⁷ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Lexington, KY: Lexington Accessible Textbook Service, 2007), 35.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Note: The six negatives are adapted from *The Complete Book of Discipleship*. Hull quoted the apostle Paul from 1 Tim. 4:7. Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 38.

effort for transformation. Fourth, *discipleship is not for leaders*, but it is inclusive for all believers, leaders as well as followers. Fifth, *discipleship is not for the highly literate*. The aim of discipleship is more about character transformation rather than information. Hull reacted that God meets people where they are, based on who they are, and using the tools they have available.¹⁰ God can use the same way the less literate as well as the most educated. Finally, *discipleship is not for people who like structure* because structure and organization are all needed to achieve an important goal, but discipleship is more the concern of a single individual. Hull quoted the apostle Paul admonishing Timothy that people can't be godly without discipline.¹¹ Nobody can benefit from and progress in a disorderly setting.

Faith-Sharing

Faith sharing denotes two elements: Christian faith and faith sharing. Nobody can share something he does not have. To fulfill the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, three dimensions are to be taken into account: deliverance, development, and deployment. The making-disciples entails delivering the message or sharing the faith. Then it consists in developing character and capacity in the new disciple to obey through a teaching experience. And the final step is sending the disciple who is already trained.

Sharing the Christian faith does not necessarily mean trying to persuade others to adopt a point of view, but rather it means pointing people to Jesus Christ. However, believers need to have that faith to share it with others. Eddie used five elements to describe Christian faith: centeredness, individual, relationship, trust, and

¹⁰ Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 40.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

compliance.¹² Christian faith is centered on Christ who is personal and alive. The trust in Him is founded in a closer relationship and expressed by obedience as a response to His call. Therefore, faith sharing does not refer to introducing people to a plan, a proposition, or a tight argument of doctrines. Rather, effective discipleship through faith sharing is to introduce people to a Person (Jesus Christ) and His kingdom.

Elements of Discipleship

The Great Commission of the Lord to His church of all ages aims to make disciples. This is a mission that never ends before the return of the Lord. As it is a cross-generational, the Lord's command to His followers entails two supplementary elements of a lifetime process. Boyd has affirmed that disciple-making involves two elements of a continual process: winning others to Christ through *baptism* and *teaching* the commands of Christ.¹³ The church today is perpetuating this command, but while much is done in baptizing. Less is done in teaching. The Scriptures, especially, the New Testament, use different facets of teaching such as learning, strengthening, encouraging, training, and many others.¹⁴ This study has retained training as the most important element of discipleship as far as the process is concerned.

Chris said that when a person commits his life to Christ, it is the turning point of a lifetime process of relationship with Christ. He added that through the baptism the disciple now has to grow toward Christlikeness. He concluded that baptism is the

¹² Eddie H. Fox and George E. Morris, *Faith-Sharing: Dynamic Christian Witnessing by Invitation* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 33.

¹³ Boyd, "Discipleship and the Church," 269.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

turning point into effective discipleship.¹⁵ The second component of discipleship is teaching. It is the most important and most challenging because it takes the whole life of the disciple while baptism occurs once. Chris said that teaching develops fundamental characteristics of the effective disciple.¹⁶ He added that the study and application of biblical principles provide experiences that foster discipleship.¹⁷

Characteristics of Disciples

Discipleship is a Christian process of life that depends on personal choices as a response to God's call. People do not transform themselves, although they do have a part to play. Decision-making is key evidence of maturity. Like a baby cannot feed him/herself, church members cannot grow spiritually by themselves. Followers need to be trained on how to behave as they journey toward Christlikeness. Meanwhile, disciples need to be rooted in faith by knowledge and practice so that they can disciple others.

Disciple-Making as a Learning Approach

Saines speaking about disciple-making introduced the component of learning, and wrote, that teaching for learning is not simply a matter of imparting information but entails conceptual change.¹⁸ That knowledge and practice are the result of effective training under the influence of God's guidance. Connie spoke about disciple-

¹⁵ Chris Shirley, "It Takes a Church to Make a Disciple: An Integrative Model of Discipleship for the Local Church," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 50, no. 2 (2008): 217, accessed 14 January 2024, <https://equipthecalled.com/swjt-journal-article/it-takes-a-church-to-make-a-disciple-an-integrative-model-of-discipleship-for-the-local-church/>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Don Saines, "Learning to be the Church: The Value of Learning Theory for Discipleship and Mission," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 28, no. 3 (2017): 290-307, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1030570X16683967>.

making as a communication style and wrote that it is a creative communication style serving well not only for pastors and teachers but also for lay leaders who truly long to teach for transformational growth toward maturity in Christ.¹⁹ Jerry Bridges emphasized that allowing ourselves to be transformed by the Word of God goes beyond simply gaining knowledge about what the Scriptures say.²⁰ Simply accumulating knowledge of Biblical facts or doctrinal truths without applying them to one's life can result in spiritual arrogance.

Therefore, there is a need to go through the characteristics of true discipleship to avoid spiritual pride when speaking about growing in faith. The list below might not be exhaustive, but these most important traits are evident landmarks of spiritual transformation: humility, caring for one another, discernment, trust, accountability, teamwork spirit, and obedience. They are essential in any other aspect of life, but most importantly they are basics in discipleship journey. The section below gives details on every single attribute.

Humility

Porter and colleagues describe humility as a thoughtful disinterest in one's own significance.²¹ They explained the importance of humility in the growth of discipleship, stating that it is crucial because humility directly counters pride, which is

¹⁹ Connie Rasilim, review of *Strategies for Transformational Learning: How to Teach for Discipleship*, by Jane Thayer, *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 16, no. 2 (2019): 391-395, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0739891319848433e?journalCode=ceja>.

²⁰ Jerry Bridges, *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 76.

²¹ Stephen L. Porter et al., "Religious Perspective on Humility," in *Handbook of Humility: Theory, Research, and Applications*, eds. Everett L. Worthington Jr., Don E. Davis, and Joshua N. Hook (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 47-61, accessed 15 January 2024, <https://books.google.co.ke/books?hl=en&lr=&id=QDolDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA47&dq=christian+humility&ots=>.

considered humanity's most pervasive spiritual issue.²² They wrapped up by highlighting three key aspects of humility. They noted that many Christian perspectives on humility imply that it involves (i) a rejection of pride and arrogance, (ii) an acceptance of our human limitations and imperfections, and (iii) a voluntary surrender of oneself to God.²³

Furey described humility as the acceptance of our place in the universe. Then he added that with humility, believers open themselves up to the possibility that God exists. He concluded that humility does not point people to God and yet it allows them to receive God.²⁴ Humility is a virtue that allows individuals to know themselves as they are. But today, people prefer to go the other way around. The *Encyclopedia of Theology* reveals that man's growing power to master and manipulate his destiny and the pressing need to do so in this age of technology nourishes a cast of mind that gravely obscures the values of humility.²⁵

Since humility is considered a virtue, the following three reasons make it easier to understand how it contributes to discipleship. First, perfect humility helps to accept human imperfections in life. That acceptance of imperfections creates an uncomfortable state which leads to the next step, which promotes in an individual the desire to change what is not right. Because the defects of the believer displease him/her, he/she then goes further one more step. Finally, it promotes the idea of spiritual non-satisfaction which pushes the individual to look forward all the time.

²² Porter et al., "Religious Perspective on Humility," 59.

²³ Ibid., 56.

²⁴ Robert J. Furey, *So I'm Not Perfect: A Psychology of Humility* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1986), 7.

²⁵ Alvaro Huerga, "Humility," *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1975), 671.

Nelson stated that there's no way ahead into spiritual health and growth apart from this humbling self-recognition.²⁶

Caring for One Another

The expression 'caring for one another' calls for reciprocal action. It denotes a two-way ministry, characterized by giving and receiving support. In the process of discipleship, Christ's followers must feel the obligation of being *my brother's keeper*. Gabasiane said that relational is mutual. He wrote that because human beings are relational beings, they will care for one another reciprocally and mutually.²⁷ Whitney said that maturing disciples must prioritize a commitment to and through knowledge of scriptures to help others to stand on their own feet.²⁸ The discipleship journey is based on a mutual concern of the believers who care for one another in the process of their faith in Christ who cared for all of them. David introduced three ways for caring one another in the church. He said that because believers are members of one another, interdependence should be exercised in three ways, and he cited them: united worship, mutual watch care and exhortation, and common labours for the reclamation of the impenitent world.²⁹ In support of this, Nelson gives five steps that help God's people to grow together: to walk together in the battle against sin, to cultivate the attitude of

²⁶ Peter K. Nelson, *Spiritual Formation: Ever Forming, Never Formed* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 122.

²⁷ Gabasiane Olaotse, "Relational Care as Ministry to the Marginalized," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 6, no. 2 (2010): 15, accessed 14 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol6/iss2/3/>.

²⁸ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 164.

²⁹ Robert David Jones, "A Biblical-Theological Study of the New Testament Church as God's Designed Agent and Setting for the Ministry of Mutual Christian Care" (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2015), 29-35, accessed 14 January 2024, Unisa Institutional Repository. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/43177280>.

shared humility, to share the truth of the Scriptures, to support and serve each other to receive God's healing to overcome sin, to learn to fight the problem of as individual and as a corporate.³⁰

The Christian walk together is essential and supportive to promote discipleship for people who care for each other. Christian discipleship journey is a two-fold-dimension relationship. As the individual relationship with God grows, it necessarily affects his/her relationship with fellow believers. Speaking about early Christianity, Conn stressed the basis for caring for one another, and he wrote that spiritual maturity, in this era, continued to be envisioned as union with God and love of neighbor.³¹ Along the pathway, at every step of his/her life, the disciple must be wise enough to decide which is the best way to go. The relational care between disciples is to be nurtured by their relationship with God.

Trust

Trust is confidence in reliance upon another. Trust as a spiritual aspect is that characteristic that governs the relationship between God and His people throughout time. For Sedgheh, trust is one of the most important of effective relations.³² The relationship between the Son and the Father is the model of trust par excellence. It is

³⁰ Nelson, *Spiritual Formation*, 136-137.

³¹ Joann Wolski Conn, *Spirituality and Personal Maturity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 18.

³² Tootian Esfahani, Sajjad Sedaghat, and Sedighe Tootian Esfehiani, "The Relationship Between Spiritual Leadership and Vertical Organizational Trust," *Journal of Scientific Research and Development* 2, no. 5 (2015): 166-171, accessed 14 January 2024, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sedighe-Tootian-Esfehani-2/publication/351442219_.pdf.

in this regard that Benner argued that in the garden of Gethsemane and subsequently on the cross itself, the Son trusted the Father that obedience to his will led to glory.³³

Moreover, discipleship within a community of believers can be manifested in the way they trust each other. Trust as a moral duty between believers will follow the pattern of their relationship with God. Therefore, all individuals can work appropriately to develop trust in their fellows. Furthermore, Conn believed that where trust abounds there cannot exist use of absolute control over the other.³⁴ When people trust and respect each other, then they have developed a real sense of maturity. Mature Christians trust in God as they respect their faithful fellows. Trust can then contribute to building strong and mutual relationships between members of the community of faith as they gradually remain trustful to their Lord. Bridges confirmed the sustainability of a good relationship built on respect and trust, and these two elements hold it to be mutual. He then, concluded that for the friendship not to crumble, respect and trust should be complementary.³⁵ Trust is a good mark of discipleship. Church members, mature and beginners, should long for it as a fruit of their integrity.

Discernment

The Latin root of the word *discernment* (*discernere*) means to separate or distinguish; while the Greek root (*diakrisis*) means to test or distinguish good and evil.³⁶ Spiritual life is not a status, rather it is a journey that requires the voyager to

³³ David G. Benner, *Soulful Spirituality: Becoming Fully Alive and Deeply Human* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 166.

³⁴ Conn, *Spirituality and Personal Maturity*, 92.

³⁵ Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 133.

³⁶ Tony Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Journey of Faith* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 63.

make decision at every step on the itinerary. Therefore, spiritual discernment is a Christian virtue that is needed the most.

The following two Bible texts state that a discerning son heeds instruction (Prov 28:7) so that he may be able to discern what is best (Phil 1:10). The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* explains that discernment is an act of wisdom or detection of what is well marked by an insight into a person's character or by an event that comes through insight that goes beyond the facts given.³⁷ For example, Solomon and Lot are distinct examples of having or not having discernment. Solomon asks the Lord for a discerning heart, and his request is granted (1 Kgs 3). In contrast, Lot has proven a real lack of discernment quite several times. He selected the rich soil close to Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen 13).

Believers and especially church leaders must long for it to make wise judgments in their daily business. They need it to distinguish whether they are leading God's church on the right track or not. Horsfall argues that discernment is vital in the life of the church. Through the process of discernment, we are seeking to be led into the right path, the way of truth and love. We need discernment to understand our hearts, to interpret what may be done in our lives and the church, and to decide the best course of action at moments of transition.³⁸ Mature disciples, leaders, and members will understand that discernment comes most easily as they surrender fully to God and when they are open to doing His will whatever it may be.

Thus, spiritual discernment in the process of spiritual growth depends upon the constant relationship a disciple maintains with God. Relying on God's guidance for

³⁷ Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (2010), s.v. "Discernment."

³⁸ Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 66.

making decisions stems from the trust that a person has cultivated through their personal experiences with the Lord.

Integrity

Integrity is also a nuclear part of Christian discipleship. It is a noble character that is needed in every domain of life. This is what Kumi-Larbi said the Christian who has integrity is sound, reliable, trustworthy, and therefore could be described as dependable.³⁹ In addition to that, Kent Hughes said integrity is one of the greatest needs of the Church today. He explained that the Church needs people who not only refrain from blatant lying but are free from hypocrisy. He concluded that a substantial number of people outside the four walls of the Church will eagerly embrace the faith of believers who model the honesty and integrity for which they long.⁴⁰ As long as Christians will remain integral and honest in their actions, their influence in the neighborhood would confirm their true discipleship.

Being honest as Christians entails a consistent uncompromising adherence to their beliefs. Therefore, integrity contributes to the discipleship development of individuals as it requires them to act at all times by their principles. For this reason, believers should practice integrity in every single detail of their lives if they want their discipleship to be effective. Amandi-Nche was concerned with church leaders, and deplored that church leaders are losing integrity, and compared integrity to morality. He has found that more worrisome also is the fact that while some church leaders in the 21st century spend more effort in theological formation, little or no attention is

³⁹ A. N. Y. Kumi-Larbi, "Living a Life of Integrity as a Christian," in *A Glorious Church to Possess the Nations*, 64-81, The Church of Pentecost General Headquarters, PDF file, January, 2020, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://thecophq.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020-Theme-Expositions-1-1.pdf#page=66>.

⁴⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 127.

given to moral discipline. Then he asked, what should be the attitude of church leaders in matters of morality at home, society, and church.⁴¹ Though they are in the position of leadership of the church, they are still to stay on a good track as long as the discipleship process concerns all believers, followers as well as their leaders. Kent reiterated that Christians must disciple themselves, to tell the truth; with habitual honesty and integrity being the goal in their dealings. He then urged them to discipline themselves and not to succumb to the so-called small things.⁴² This brings to the fact that church members, without any distinction, should mature to the extent of refraining from indulging or even slightly twisting the truth. In all their daily businesses, integrity should be the seal of their transactions.

Perseverance

The saints of old have been marked by their perseverance. Peterson was concerned about the lack of perseverance in today's society. He wrote that people have been trained to expect the immediate and the instant, and it has seeped into their theology and understanding of Christian discipleship.⁴³ Perseverance is the good mark of Christian discipleship as Bloesch affirmed. He then concluded that true discipleship involves living amid the world's afflictions for the greater glory of God.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Church-Hill Amandi-Nche, "Integrity: A Vital Tool for the 21st Century Church Leaders in Nigeria," *Nigerian Journal of Christian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2022): 144, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/njcs/article/view/220829>.

⁴² R. Kent Hughes and Carey Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Young Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 132.

⁴³ Sam Ashmore, review of *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, by Eugene H. Peterson, "Living Well in the Ordinary: A Review of a Long Obedience in the Same Direction," accessed 11 January 2024, https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1106&context=staff_work.

⁴⁴ Donald G. Bloesch, *Spirituality Old & New: Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 30.

Perseverance is the steadfastness that motivates true disciples to continuously achieve the right things despite their hardships. Perseverance is a real mark of people's commitment to what they truly believe. In the course of life, struggle is a must, especially for the Christian life. Challenges are a common agenda on everyone's table in every domain. Pue has remarkably seen that facing challenges as a Christian developed an indispensable trait that he saw in all successful Christians. He called that trait perseverance.⁴⁵ In other words, no one can endure hardship unless they have plain assurance that they follow the right pathway. Therefore, true disciples need to exercise perseverance in their relationships and in every condition they must be in.

Teamwork Spirit

The creation story and the redemption plan are fascinating examples of the teamwork spirit that must prevail among church believers. Utsua, Owusakyo, and Shagari have established the benefits of teamwork and wrote that teamwork is good because it increases efficiency and effectiveness by bringing different minds to focus on the same problem to encourage mutual support.⁴⁶ Regarding teamwork, Burrill asserted that all three members of the Trinity were actively involved in the salvation of humans. Then he recommended that humanity must work in cooperation as team workers with the divine agency.⁴⁷

If the Godhead works together for salvation, it is imperative that the disciples, church believers, promote the team spirit in their midst to achieve their duties.

⁴⁵ Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 222.

⁴⁶ T. Peter Utsua, Ishaya Oyiwosei Owusakyo, and Danasebe Shagari, "Ethical Evaluation of Teamwork and Church Development in the 21st Century," *Journal of African Innovation and Advanced Studies* 29, no. 2 (2023): 103-111, accessed 14 January 2024, https://www.africanscholarpublications.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/AJAIAS_Vol29_No2-7.pdf.

⁴⁷ Russell Burrill, *How to Grow an Adventist Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2009), 48.

Disciples in their community of faith can work together when each one of the team endeavors to help his/her neighbor to grow together. Discipleship will be based on mutual accountability and evaluation of common achievements because none of the disciples/believers holds an isolated ministry. Complementarity must prevail over rivalry or strife for supremacy to create synergy in the church mission. Discipleship is not some kind of life that one can design in isolation. With the suffix of *ship* discipleship denotes the concept of more than one individual.

Obedience

In his article, Karlberg concluded that salvation is by grace alone, but obedience is the consistent confirmation of abiding in Christ.⁴⁸ Earley and Dempsey underline that not only obedience is the standard of a mature believer, but it is also the condition of the beginner as they state. They added that before anyone can be a disciple, they need to begin *obeying* everything Jesus commanded [emphasis in original].⁴⁹ For mature Christians, obedience is their response from faith as a recognition of God's right to rule and to command. Peterson spoke of *new born again* Christians (believers from some Pentecostal churches as they call themselves) and wrote that many claim to have been born again, but the evidence for mature Christian discipleship is slim. He realized that there is a great market for religious experience, but there is little inclination for the patient apprenticeship in their lives.⁵⁰ This is valuable evidence of how obedience is the standard par excellence of discipleship.

⁴⁸ Mark W. Karlberg, "The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007): 423-428, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/211230808>.

⁴⁹ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Spiritual Formation Is...: How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academy, 2018), 39.

⁵⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 12.

Coleman argued that sincere disciples of Christ accept His rule of conduct, as in a school, bringing every thought into obedience to their Master.⁵¹ Obedience to Christ, at large, implies also showing respect to others, colleagues, and superiors as well. If obedience is taken for spiritual discipline, it would come as a next step to trust. Indeed, most of the characteristics of true disciples stand for spiritual disciplines too.

Hindrances to Effective Discipleship

Effective discipleship suffers irremediably from many conscious vices, but the most dangerous are the unconverted heart and envy. Christ's followers can never be successful partners in the work if they persistently blind their eyes behind a bad habit hidden peacefully in their minds.

Unconverted Heart

Therefore, the unconverted heart is an obstacle to discipleship. Edward said that the unconverted heart is the opposite of the Christian's spirituality. Because for him, the Christian's spirituality originates and flows from a personal relationship with God.⁵² The persistent lack of relationship with God results always regression and loss of the discipleship process. Ellen White indicated that the unrepentant heart is greatly affected by sin's overpowering influence, causing a prolonged lack of awakening to the need for repentance over months and years.⁵³ She appealed to the purity of heart

⁵¹ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell Co, 1998), 84.

⁵² Edward Collins Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 1.

⁵³ White, *Testimonies*, 5:139.

inviting every believer should be pure in hear, and bear in mind that every sinful practice, however secret is open to the view of Him with whom we have to do.⁵⁴

Envy

This bad habit is the root of many other vices. It started with Satan in heaven. Tanya and Leigh found it worse. They wrote that envy damages relationships, it disrupts teams. But they added that most of all, envy harms the one who feels it.⁵⁵ Ellen White has written that men often confess and forsake other faults, but there is little to be hoped for from the envious man. She added it is because he shuts his eyes to the good qualities and noble deeds of others.⁵⁶ Envy will always go together with selfishness because it denigrates the qualities of neighbors to cherish his selfish desires. Envy is deadly because it perverts principles and clouds judgment.⁵⁷

Self-exaltation

Thomas warned Christians against self-exaltation because it hinders the process of discipleship. He wrote that the reciprocal interaction of pride, and sensuality creates within human beings an attitude and disposition of rebellion against God and enthrones the autonomous self as the center of man's nature.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1948), 79.

⁵⁵ Tanya Menon and Leigh Thompson, "Envy at Work," *Harvard Business Review*, April 2010, accessed 14 January 2024, <https://hbr.org/2010/04/envy-at-work>.

⁵⁶ White, *Testimonies*, 5:56.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5:392.

⁵⁸ Thomas A. Tarrants, "Hindrances to Discipleship: The Devil," *C.S. Lewis Institute* (Winter 2012): 2, accessed 15 January 2024, [https://cslewisinstitute.org/resources/hindrances-to-discipleshipthe-devil/#:~:text=\(This%20is%20part%20one%20of,Part%203%2C%20Part%204.\)&text=There%20are%20three%20major%20hindrances,come%20to%20faith%20in%20Christ](https://cslewisinstitute.org/resources/hindrances-to-discipleshipthe-devil/#:~:text=(This%20is%20part%20one%20of,Part%203%2C%20Part%204.)&text=There%20are%20three%20major%20hindrances,come%20to%20faith%20in%20Christ).

Cultural Seductions

Stephen said they include the blatant lure of wealth, possessions, success, and entertainment. In conclusion, he said these seductions produce spiritual anemia instead of growing discipleship.⁵⁹

Many Personal Issues

The same author said that many personal issues thwart discipleship growth. He added that they often cause to turn to substances and behaviors such as workaholism, to numb the pain. Then he concluded that if they are not overcome, they block meaningful discipleship.⁶⁰ The following section talked about spiritual habits to fight against these obstacles.

Spiritual Disciplines for Discipleship

Nouwen said that Christian spirituality is enhanced by practicing a rule of life or spiritual *askesis*. This term is from the Greek, *askeô*, to mean *train* or *exercise*.⁶¹ Wilson, in his attempt to define spiritual disciplines has interchangeably used spiritual formation. He equated spiritual formation to discipleship in the context of Jesus' ministry on earth.⁶² He then considered spiritual formation synonymous to discipleship in a contemporary expression of a better relationship between believers

⁵⁹ Stephen Lim, "Why Churches Don't Disciple and How Yours Can," *Enrichment* (Winter 2008): 48-54, accessed 15 January 2024, <https://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/Issues/2008/Winter-2008/Why-Churches-Dont-Disciple-and-How-Yours-Can>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (London: Fount, 1996), 89.

⁶² Wilson Teo, "Christian Spiritual Formation," *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 10, no. 1 (2017): 126-137, https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/vol10iss1/ELJ_Vol10_Iss1_full_issue.pdf#page=115.

and their Master.⁶³ Lastly, he established positive effects of spiritual disciplines: (i) believers' transformational journey toward Christlikeness, (ii) the transformation process is a lifetime ongoing process, (iii) it is Trinitarian, (iv) the Holy Spirit is involved in the transformation process, (v) God's glory is restored when the above take place.⁶⁴ Forster explains spiritual disciplines as a means of aiding spiritual growth in a life of committed discipleship. Disciplines are the believer's activities in sowing to the Spirit (Gal 6:8). They are our provision of the right conditions for its growth.⁶⁵ Foster mentioned that the practices enable us to present ourselves to God, allowing Him to change us.⁶⁶ Their purpose is to bring the disciple closer to God who alone has the power to transform lives.

Dallas Willard identifies spiritual disciplines in three types inward or outward, individual, and corporate. Others are classified as abstaining from certain things and engaging in others. Then, he concludes that spiritual disciplines, or exercises unto godliness are only activities undertaken to make us capable of receiving more of his [God] life and power without harm to ourselves or others.⁶⁷ Beverly highlighted that the practices of prayer, meditation, and studying scripture are frequently regarded as essential components of the faith journey.⁶⁸ Spiritual disciplines, in themselves, are

⁶³ Teo, "Christian Spiritual Formation," 126-137.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ R. T. Forster, "Disciplines, Spiritual," *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, ed. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 311.

⁶⁶ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 7.

⁶⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2014), 156.

⁶⁸ Beverly Vos, "The Spiritual Disciplines and Christian Ministry," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 36, no. 2 (2012): 100-114, accessed 11 January 2024, https://professorphanor.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SpiritualDisciplines.Simplicity.Week6_.Highlighted.pdf.

not the result but they are means, God's power is the finisher of believers' transformation. Calhoun concluded, "Spiritual disciplines are intentional practices, relationships, and experiences that give people space in their lives to 'keep company' with Jesus."⁶⁹ Though the book enlists several disciplines and not being exhaustive, this dissertation discusses only some of them: prayer, journaling, worship, accountability, fasting, belonging, and home visitations.

Prayer

Prayer has a key role to play in any spiritual business. All the great figures in the Scriptures were men and women of prayer. Nelson indicates that prayer is essential in our lives as it prepares us to receive God's Spirit and helps us grow spiritually.⁷⁰ Prayer plays a crucial role in the spiritual growth of any believer. It is essential for a genuine disciple.

Prayer as a discipline is a way to talk with God. Nouwen stressed that the prayerfulness of the heart is deeper and ultimately more important than particular prayers that are said.⁷¹ Prayerfulness is the habitual practice of prayer. It is the regularity and consistency in praying. It is the heartfelt attitude of a praying believer. In agreement with this, Calhoun underlines that breathing is an unconscious thing, the same breath prayer reminds believers as they just can't live on one breath of air, also

⁶⁹ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005), 17.

⁷⁰ Alan E. Nelson, *Spirituality & Leadership: Harnessing the Wisdom, Guidance, and Power of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016), 76.

⁷¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, Michael J. Christensen, and Rebecca Laird, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2018), 56.

they can't live on one breath of God.⁷² Breath prayer is a regular and continual habit of praying genuinely.

The contemporary evangelist in the Adventist Church, Mark Finley, establishes a relationship between true revival and prayer. He addresses a certainty regarding genuine revival, and he says that prayer initiates, sustains, nurtures revival, and follows revival.⁷³ He then elaborates more on the importance of prayer in the life of God's people. He says in prayer believers humble their hearts before God, acknowledging a total dependence upon Him. He concludes that prayer opens people's lives to God's cleansing power, and draws them into an intimate relationship with Jesus.⁷⁴ There is a combination of actions in prayer whereby the disciple avails himself to be impacted by God's unbelievable tenderness. Jesus Christ Himself, even though He was God, He modeled a prayerful life. If this has been the case of godly people of all time, it should be the principle of the church believers today as they are called to be faithful disciples of the Lord.

Journaling

Martin has given this assertion that journaling as a spiritual discipline involves the contemplation of life in light of the spiritual center.⁷⁵ He then deducted two benefits of the exercise. Firstly, journaling allows individuals to reflect on and articulate their thoughts, emotions, and ideas. Additionally, maintaining a journal can

⁷² Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 205.

⁷³ Mark A. Finley, *Revive Us Again* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2010), 9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁵ Jim Martin, "Journaling as a Spiritual Discipline," *Leaven* 2, no. 4 (1992): 25-28, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2066&context=leaven>.

reveal behavioral patterns that one might not consciously recognize.⁷⁶ Journaling is a spiritual exercise that combines the reading and meditation of the Word. It consists of four steps: reading a Bible text, meditating upon the passage, finding the reader's place in the passage, and writing down the individual commitment. Calhoun explains disciples have to listen and reflect on their experiences in the presence of the Holy Spirit to learn from them. Journaling is a way of paying attention to their lives – a way of knitting the vast ball of their experiences into something with a shape that attests to the state of the soul.⁷⁷ Experiences do not necessarily bring wisdom. They cannot even automatically transform human beings. But they inevitably impact lives as they are continually exercised.

In a time of consuming society, Christians often try every new strategy that would keep them familiar with the Scriptures. Others adopt a daily Bible study in a formal way whereby some church leaders are tempted to search for new topics for their next presentations. The exercise of spiritual journaling does not require any structural form of reading or writing, nor does it concern others rather than the reader. What is necessary is to get a Bible, read a chosen passage, and find ways how it can personally speak to the reader.

Journaling keeps one meditating upon his/her decisions as he/she takes time to revisit the writings. Whitney gives eight core benefits of journaling. He says it helps in self-understanding and evaluation, meditation, expressing thoughts and feelings to the Lord, remembering the Lord's works, creating and preserving a spiritual heritage, clarifying and articulating insights and impressions, and maintaining the other

⁷⁶ Martin, "Journaling as a Spiritual Discipline," 26.

⁷⁷ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 57.

spiritual disciplines.⁷⁸ Church believers need to be familiar with the Scriptures by trying to situate themselves into the Word, so that they may be able to train and help others to become effective disciples of the Bible by the exercise of their journaling.

Worship

Robin integrated a life of discipleship and worship. He said that each disciple is called to respond to God's grace and to begin the life of discipleship because this life holds them accountable for the quality of their daily living and their worship.⁷⁹ He then retained the benefits of true worship. He said that for worship to fulfill its rightful role in helping become disciples, the service should be: full of grace in all its manifestations, an integral part of practicing and doing justice, a school of lovingkindness, part of a humble, God-centered, corporate journey of faith.⁸⁰

Worship is a word associated with all kinds of religions. In the Christian Church, worship is rendered to God alone. Having said that, true worship is broader than a mere service on a Sabbath morning. Neither does worship refer to midweek prayers nor any individual's style or positioning in the sanctuary. Thus, many writers have spent much time on the concept of worship as a relationship between man and God.

Constance Cherry establishes the foundation of true worship by revealing that God invites people to worship; therefore, worship is not an invention, rather it is the invitation of God. He continues by saying that God always acts first, approaches,

⁷⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 214.

⁷⁹ Robin W. Knowless, "Worship and Becoming Disciples," *A Journal of Theological Resources of Ministry* 23 (Summer 2003): 137, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/6098140/vol23no2summer2003-libre.pdf>.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

calls, and invites people to the holy meeting between him and His people.⁸¹ God himself is the initiator of the true relationship between Himself and humankind. Therefore, the believers' response is their part to play.

Derek Prince underlines that by the act of worship, believers declare just who is their God.⁸² Worship is the believers' recognition of God's sovereignty. Borror and Allen qualify worship as experience and expression.⁸³ Worship is a practical confession of a genuine faith.

Moreover, Tom Kraeuter brings in another element to prove true worship is costly. He says that worship that is heart alone is passive, and worship that is action alone is not true worship, because God wants heart and action.⁸⁴ The disciple who is committed to worship in truth will spend time and resources to commune with God in recognition of the divine love and His providence.

Smalley reiterates that heart and action must be present in any kind of worship, in any circumstances. He declares that when we commit ourselves, by an act of the will and an investment of the heart, to worship God in all circumstances, our lives can't help but be enriched.⁸⁵ Discipleship progress can be experienced among church believers when they avoid their routines and practice worship with wholeheartedness.

⁸¹ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 4.

⁸² Derek Prince, *Entering the Presence of God: Moving beyond Praise and Thanksgiving to True Worship* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2007), 83.

⁸³ Gordon Borror and Ronald J. Allen, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1982), 16.

⁸⁴ Tom Kraeuter, *Worship Is ... What?!: Rethinking Our Ideas about Worship* (Lynnwood, WA: Emerald Books, 1996), 41.

⁸⁵ Gary Smalley, *Your Relationship with God: Drawing Closer to God Every Day* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 88.

Moreover, Donald cherishes the gathering as another type of worship.⁸⁶ The idea supports worship as a personal and corporate discipline that contributes to discipleship as a spiritual journey. The Scriptures encourage togetherness as one way of worship. Jesus Christ participated faithfully in the public worship. He always prayed in the night on the Olive Mount either alone or with some selected disciples. Therefore, Donald concludes by citing the familiar Puritan commentator, Matthew Henry, and says public worship will not excuse secret worship nor the secret hinder the public.⁸⁷

Fasting

Fasting is a biblical practice because most of the great spiritual figures went through this exercise. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus fasted for forty days and nights each. Esther, a Jewish woman and queen of a Persian king fasted with all the Jews exiled for their deliverance. Nehemiah has fasted for months after he got bad news from Jerusalem. Daniel and his three friends fasted for ten days in Babylon. It was from that perspective that Dozier has attempted to describe fasting as a Christian practice. He said that fasting is not a hunger strike to effect social or political change. It is not for health or losing weight (although it can have beneficial physical results).⁸⁸ Monaghan highlighted the spiritual significance of fasting, expressing it clearly by stating that fasting involves refraining from something for spiritual purposes.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 92.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸⁸ Dan Dozier, "The Discipline of Fasting," *Leaven* 2, no. 4 (1992): 32, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2067&context=leaven>.

⁸⁹ Reid S. Monaghan, *Spiritual Disciplines* (North Brunswick, NJ: JacobsWell, n.d.), 15, accessed 11 January 2024, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5021315e24acdbbf56e6893f/t/58b872f8b3db2b27f6440a2a/1488483067306/disciplines_web_jw.pdf.

Based on the kind of abstinence and the length of time the fasting takes, Feola enlists four basic types of fasting.⁹⁰ First, an absolute fast is a fast from all food and liquids for a few days. Second, a supernatural absolute fast requires refraining from eating and drinking for a greater period than the absolute fast. Third, a liquid fast involves eliminating food for some time and consuming only water, fruit juices, and vegetable juices. Last, a partial fast requires the removal of certain foods from the diet for a specific length of time. It is also called the Daniel fast. Whoever wants to practice fasting may find what type is healthier for his/her body.

Authors have given the meaning and purposes of true fasting. For example, Lynne described Christian fasting as the voluntary denial of something for a specific time, for a spiritual purpose, by an individual, family, or community.⁹¹ From this definition, it is evident that fasting is a spiritual experience alone, with one or two partners, in small groups, or community. Thomas adds an important aspect and says fasting that is pleasing to God is accompanied by a spirit of humility, repentance, and true sincerity of heart. He then concludes that fundamentally, fasting represents offering one's self to God in the spirit of openness, readiness, and obedience, inviting the action of the Holy Spirit.⁹² This quotation emphasizes that fasting is not a means to coerce God into fulfilling human desires; instead, it is initiated by God. According to Whitney, here are ten significant reasons for fasting: to enhance prayer, to seek divine guidance, to mourn, to request deliverance or protection, to show repentance

⁹⁰ Kristen Feola, *The Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 13.

⁹¹ Lynne M. Baab, *Fasting: Spiritual Freedom beyond Our Appetites* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 16.

⁹² Thomas P. Ryan, *Disciplines for Christian Living: Interfaith Perspectives* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 186.

and return to God, to humble oneself, to demonstrate concern for God's work, to support others in need, to resist temptation and commit oneself to God, and to express love and worship towards God.⁹³ True disciples need practical and spiritual fasting.

Bible Study

Sandy cherished Bible study as the main spiritual practice. He said that many spiritual disciplines facilitate the spiritual growth of believers; however, Bible study is fundamental, as it not only helps believers gain insight into God and the Christian faith but also regarding what it means to be Christlike.⁹⁴ Bible study is fundamental to discipleship. Traina has observed a common weakness among all classes of Bible students. He said this weakness [of trial-and-error fashion] exists not only among laymen, where it might be expected but also among many who have had special training in the field of Bible study.⁹⁵ Therefore, he introduced a direct and independent Bible Study, which is founded on the Bible as its interpreter. He wrote that the Bible itself and not books about the Bible should be the basic textbook of the Bible student.⁹⁶ Wink specified the goal of the Bible study in all its forms. He said that the goal of the Bible study is not merely understanding or even new insights but the incarnation of the Word, enfleshing it, getting it into the substance of people's

⁹³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 176.

⁹⁴ Sandy Chery, "Best Bible Study Methods for Discipleship Formation: How Bible Study as a Spiritual Discipline Shapes Believers" (MDiv thesis, Southeastern University, 2023), iv, accessed 11 January 2024, FireScholars, <https://firescholars.seu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=mdiv>.

⁹⁵ Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

living.⁹⁷ Lindsay has shared how to experience God in the Word. The writer said that by meditating on the Bible every day, she could experience God at my right hand.⁹⁸ Then she explained the motive behind the Bible study: that she didn't pick up her Bible because of her commitment to spiritual disciplines. She determined that encountering God through the Bible was absolutely essential.⁹⁹ In this project, the aim was not to present an academic methodology of a Bible study. The researcher chose to adopt the informal Bible study method as it was defined by Wink, giving its principal goal.

Accountability

The concept of accountability refers to a relationship between two distinctive parts. In his abstract, Davied underlined accountability as a mark of discipleship. He said that being the disciples of God creates a need for agreeing to hold each other accountable in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Later he warned that although accountability would be a recommended experience to grow spiritually, the practices might be unknown to the pastor or the church's members if there is no clear intention to do it.¹⁰⁰ Cole discovered that relationship brings responsibility, and with responsibility comes accountability and obligation.¹⁰¹ Therefore, a disciple needs a

⁹⁷ Walter Wink, *Transforming Bible Study: A Leader's Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 12, accessed 12 January 2024, https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=bible+study&oq=.

⁹⁸ Lindsay, Olesberg. *The Bible Study Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to an Essential Practice* (Downers, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2012), 19.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Mangadar Simbolon and Davied Zebedeus, "Spiritual Accountability Practices in Discipleship," *Jurnal Koinonia: Fakultas Filsafat Universitas Advent Indonesia* 14, no. 1 (2022): 71, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.35974/koinonia.v14i1.2845>.

¹⁰¹ G. A. Cole, "Responsibility," *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, ed. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 736.

companion with whom he/she will share every single secret of his/her spiritual life, successes, or failures. Although, this companion does not replace the influence of the Holy Spirit in the individual's life.

When opposing that Christians are meant to live as self-reliant or independent operators, Calhoun declared that accountability partners help people face into the truth of who they are in Christ. He adds that together, accountability partners walk into the temptations and difficulties of life, and regular and prayerful companionship becomes a life-changing vehicle of God's grace.¹⁰² He then gives five important reasons for which accountability partners are most needed. He said that accountability partners are particularly valuable for those who: are reticent to share struggles, feel stuck in the faith journey, need help facing temptations, tend to journey alone, and want to grow in appreciating the love of the body of Christ.¹⁰³

In this age of isolation and more privacy, when one wants anyone to interfere in his/her private life, church leaders need to understand and exercise the discipline of accountability partners for their growth and for that of the rest of the believers. Burge emphasizes that accountability varies based on an individual's development of moral awareness; and ultimately, the divine requirement for accountability underpins the recurring biblical invitation for decision-making.¹⁰⁴ In this case, an accountability partner can best fit if he/she is the spouse of the couple. But in terms of the church as a corporate, one must choose either his/her spouse or somebody else outside the

¹⁰² Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 123.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Gary M. Burge and David Lauber, *Theology Questions Everyone Asks: Christian Faith in Plain Language* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 303.

marriage. Whichever may be the accountability partner, the relationship must stay blameless.

Service

Service was the masterpiece of Jesus' ministry on earth. Calhoun said God designed that through His holy nation the whole world would be blessed. Therefore, God intends to bless the nations through us and our lives of service. Christians are the very presence of God to others.¹⁰⁵ Two distinctive authors have explained Christian service through their definitions. Elmer says that serving is the ability to relate to people in such a way that their dignity as human beings is affirmed and they are more empowered to live God-glorifying life.¹⁰⁶ Then, Thomas Ryan adds, that service can be understood as all the activity, in union with the Spirit. He continues that it is the engagement in outside times of formal prayer to responsibly collaborate in the great mission of the Church according to the perceived vocation of the true disciple.¹⁰⁷ Service that impacts life for the needy is a living expression of God's love through and for His children.

These two definitions clearly state that service is not aiming for personal satisfaction, rather it is for others' benefit so that they can glorify God's power working in the ones who serve. Then Richard Foster was right to say that the believer forsakes all, he even has the chance to glorify martyrdom. He concludes that but in service, Christians are banished to the mundane, the ordinary, the trivial.¹⁰⁸ Service to

¹⁰⁵ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 145.

¹⁰⁶ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 146.

¹⁰⁷ Ryan, *Disciplines for Christian Living*, 146.

¹⁰⁸ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 110.

neighbors does not elevate people to the rank of saints, but it proves the sense of responsibility and accountability of a true disciple.

Service is vital for discipleship. Willard says that all serving will, or should be, disciplined serving. However, he remarked that those who want to train themselves for Christlikeness will find it one of the surest and most practical means of growth in grace.¹⁰⁹ In fact, service as a spiritual discipline must be generated from sane impulses. In addition, Whitney outlines six important biblical reasons that are significant in serving God: obedience, thankfulness, joy, forgiveness, humility, and love.¹¹⁰ All these characteristics combined do not denote a single trait of selfishness but stream from a compassionate heart.

Disciples are to imitate their master if they want their influence to be effective among their fellows. They are to minister to each other. In this regard, Ellen White underlines the individual work saying that Christ commits to His followers an individual work – a work that cannot be done by proxy. She then closes by saying that individual responsibility, individual effort, and personal sacrifice, are requirements of the gospel.¹¹¹ For this reason, there must be a clean way to assess the people's needs. The friendly way to go is by home visitation.

Home Visitation

The period after genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda was known as a time of multifacet changes: political, economical, and social transformations. The Church in Rwanda is going through the same experience, particularly after the Total Member

¹⁰⁹ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2014), 182.

¹¹⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 122.

¹¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2014), 263.

Involvement (TMI) campaign of May 2016. TMI is a world-church evangelistic program that involves every member, every church, every administrative entity, every type of personal or public outreach ministry, and institutional outreach. That campaign was crowned by more than a hundred thousand new converts. Churches are full of worshippers on Sabbath to the point that it may not be easy to distinguish who has attended and who did not, despite the Sabbath school classes program. Therefore, a home visitation ministry is one of the most effective methods to attend to thousands of church members. For this and many other reasons, Ellen White advises ministers/lay leaders to meet people where they are. She says that there is much time that can be used to great advantage in visiting from house to house and meeting people where they are.¹¹² This appeal is for everyone in the local church leadership because the pastor alone cannot attend to thousands of church members. This is where the work of every church member is needed the most.

Ellen White highlights two benefits of home visitations: the opportunity for believers to get to know each other better and the support that helps individuals become more established in their faith.¹¹³ First, church members become acquainted with people outside the church; therefore, they can assess their needs. Once they know what are the people's needs, now they know how to attend to them. As they attend to those needs, people become friends and get established in the faith.

It was the Lord's method to go house to house to meet people where they were. It must be the method of His disciples if they want their ministry to be meaningful. Ellen White writes that Jesus Christ visited homes, and met every form of

¹¹² Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry: Compiled from the Complete Published Writings of the Author, and from Unpublished Manuscripts* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 132.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 433.

human woe and affliction, then He brought hope and strength to all with whom He came in contact.¹¹⁴ Visitation by fellow church members is effective discipline to discipleship, both sides; the visit energizes church members, while the exercise encourages the one visiting to move forward. Thus, when church members exercise these spiritual disciplines, their good influence will not fail to impact the rest of their community. Many times, the spiritual level of the church is reflected in the relationships between its members. If the church wants its members to become true disciples, they have to start from their circle before going for outreach. The following section speaks about discipleship through mentoring within the local church.

Discipleship through Mentoring

The mentoring program is the most contemporary method widely used for the succession and perpetuation of strong relationships in every aspect of life. In this study, the concept under discussion is in a spiritual context. By definition, mentoring is a relational process between two individuals, the mentor and mentee/mentoree/protégé. Desmond described the mentoring experience as a positive influence one person has on another person.¹¹⁵ He added that mentorship includes various traits such as the individual's belief systems, character, attitudes, values, behavior, spirituality, inter-relationships, and vision.¹¹⁶ Then he declared his conviction on how discipleship and mentoring interrelate. For him, mentoring is wider

¹¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 113.

¹¹⁵ Desmond Gaius Boldeau, "Developing a Mentoring Model, Based on Christ's Approach to Discipleship, for Intern Pastors in the British Union" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2014), 21, accessed 12 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=dmin>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

than discipleship. However, this particular section aims to present how mentoring serves as a tool for discipleship.

In this partnership, the mentor is an experienced and trusted person while the mentee is the one to be advised, and trained. Robinson describes mentoring as a trusted partnership where people share wisdom that fosters discipleship and leads to transformation as mentors and mentees grow in their love of Christ, knowledge of self, and love for others.¹¹⁷ Mallison defined that Christian mentoring is a dynamic, intentional relationship of trust in which one person enables another to maximize the grace of God in their life and service.¹¹⁸ The additional idea to intentional partnership is that mentoring is also a dynamic relationship. Mentoring is a relational process between the mentor and his/her mentee(s). Wahl described mentoring as an intentional process. He said it is possible to extrapolate that an intentional relationship between mentors could be developed to facilitate collaboration in the discipling process.¹¹⁹ Wahl emphasized the discipling process/disciple-making process, or discipleship process. Anderson and Reese go further to define spiritual mentoring as a triadic relationship between mentor, mentoree, and the Holy Spirit.¹²⁰ Both the mentor and mentee (mentoree) are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is triadic because the two people, mentor and mentee, need the third person, the Holy Spirit, to make spiritual mentoring different from other mentorship types.

¹¹⁷ Natasha Sistrunk Robinson, *Mentor for Life: Finding Purpose through Intentional Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 31.

¹¹⁸ John Mallison, *Mentoring to Develop Disciples & Leaders* (Lidcombe, Australia: Scripture Union, 1998), 8.

¹¹⁹ Wahl, Tyson, "Collaborating Mentors in the Discipleship Process" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2021), 26, accessed 12 January 2024, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4116&context=doctoral>.

¹²⁰ Keith Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 12.

Jesus has promised that wherever two or three are assembled in His name, He will be in their midst by His Spirit. Rick Lewis reasons this by saying that the Spirit of Jesus provides the power to first of all change the very being of the mentoree through personal transformation, then it enables that inner strength to be applied. He concluded that the work of the Holy Spirit is released through a Christian mentoring relationship, and that is what makes it distinctively empowering.¹²¹

Similarly, Robinson believes that mentoring is a deliberate form of discipleship.¹²² Mentorship can be done in various capacities: master to his/her follower(s), lord to his/her servant and vice versa, between peers, et cetera. Therefore, mentorship is intentional discipleship through which the mentor supports the growth and development of his/her mentee, and that is life transformation toward Christlikeness.

Throughout the Scriptures, there are several examples of mentorship as models of discipleship. Abraham mentored his servant Eleazar and his nephew Lot. Daniel mentored the king Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. A young maidservant mentored her master, Naaman the captain of the host of the king of Syria. Jesus mentored all His disciples in general, and His disciples did the same. These mentors have taken the lead of God's people during their times; Jesus being the mentor per excellence. On the same accord, Robinson highlights that not only is mentoring a means of intentional discipleship, but it is also a leadership factory that prepares people of all backgrounds, life stages, and experiences to lead well.¹²³

¹²¹ Rick Lewis, *Mentoring Matters: Building Strong Christian Leaders - Avoiding Burnout - Reaching the Finishing Line* (Chicago, IL: Lion Hudson, 2012), 24.

¹²² Robinson, *Mentor for Life*, 31.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 36.

God calls His people to a disciplined spiritual life. As church believers practice spiritual disciplines, God works on the hearts and strengthens the minds. He builds in people's lives the endurance for a victorious faith journey. In accomplishing the Great Commission, mature Christians are to teach and train others to make disciples. In other words, strong and mature disciples are perpetuating God's work through mentoring, in either formal or informal ways. The influence that impacts believers in general, and new converts in particular should originate from the strong relationship the mentor maintains with the Lord. It must be the kind of relationship that is obvious for the mentee to imitate.

Although mentorship is intentional and relational, it goes beyond mere friendship. Christian mentoring is friendship, but it is not reciprocal. Not every friendship is mentorship. There are boundaries set in friendship whereby peers may sometimes not be able to tell some truth that is sharp to bear. Rick Lewis says that just spending time together enjoying good company does not constitute mentoring. He adds that without such a negotiated agreement, the rigorous, focused, intentional accountability process within mentoring would be rude and presumptuous in the setting of a simple friendship.¹²⁴ Although Christian friendship does not necessarily equalize mentoring, however, it is a means to a mentoring partnership.

Mentoring is different from friendship by the element of mutual accountability that requires sometimes to be tougher than a mere friend. Carson Pue acknowledges that during times when Christians may lose awareness, it's crucial to strengthen various areas of vulnerability. He emphasizes the importance of having people in their lives who remind them of their identity as children of Jesus and help them stay

¹²⁴ Lewis, *Mentoring Matters*, 37.

conscious of their spiritual state.¹²⁵ The mentoring process is harder than a casual friendship that can easily break down at any incident between mentors and mentees.

Moreover, mentoring differs from friendship because it is a process that works on an agreement basis. Rick Lewis records how mentors and mentees can be on one's best behavior.¹²⁶ On one hand, Lewis recaps nine ways a mentor can give his/her best to spiritual mentoring. The spiritual mentor is to be, godly, safe, authentic, calm, relational, positive, self-aware, self-controlled, and other-centered.¹²⁷ Some of the characteristics above are common to every type of mentoring, others are specific to spiritual mentoring. In the process, the spiritual mentor has to abide with them. On the other hand, Rick Lewis recaps nine ways a Christian mentee can get the most from mentoring. The mentee has to be, devoted to Christ, open, determined, honest, thinking, active, responsible, respect boundaries, show appreciation.¹²⁸ Although mentoring is built on the trust and confidentiality of both parties, it is an intentional and integral part of the discipleship process because it aims for a lifelong transformation toward Christlikeness.

Summary

This chapter presented six major sections where accurate scholarly journals were the primary sources. First, discipleship has been described throughout different literatures other than the Biblical texts and the works of Ellen G. White. Second, the elements of discipleship were looked at, baptizing and teaching. Third, the

¹²⁵ Pue, *Mentoring Leaders*, 41.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Lewis, *Mentoring Matters*, 147.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 162.

characteristics of true disciples were reviewed under the same types of sources. Fourth, the hindrances to effective discipleship were looked at. The unconverted heart and envy are first listed as the stumbling blocks on the pathway toward Christlikeness. Fifth, the spiritual disciplines were developed as practical exercises of discipleship as experience and application. Last, another practical component of discipleship was developed, discipleship through mentoring. Some of the writers confuse the two concepts and don't know what includes the other. This section has proven mentoring as a means of discipleship.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE DESIGN

The setting of the church work lays down the background of this study. This chapter aims to systematically design the research process utilizing a questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. Then, it establishes the procedures for collecting the data and analyzing them. Last, it develops the intervention strategy articulated in training.

Ministry Context

Chapter 1 deals with the ministry context by succinctly covering important details. This section attempts to expand on it at large.

Macro-Context

Rwanda is a small country by size in the central Africa region. It comprises four provinces plus the capital city, Kigali. Rwanda is a landlocked country, with no exit to the ocean. The borderline is mostly marked by natural structures. In the east, the borders are largely rivers or lakes (Akagera River, Ihema Lake among others). Volcanic mountains form the northern boundary of the country and the province as well. This part of the country is mountainous. The northwest of the country receives more precipitation annually than the rest. Therefore, the country presents a temperate climate of tropical highland type.

The economy of the country is overwhelmingly agricultural. Subsistence farming is predominant, while coffee and tea are the spinal part of the export. Thus,

most of the unschooled population are peasant farmers, others are either traders or shop-holders. Tourism is the fastest-growing economic resource of the country. It is mostly centered on the attractive gorilla tracking in the Volcanoes National Park in the North. Moreover, it is reported that Rwanda has recently enjoyed strong economic growth, created new business prospects and lifting people out of poverty, improving the business climate dramatically between 2010 and 2016, increasing its rank from 139 to 62 on the annual World Bank Doing Business Report.¹

The Rwandan education sector is not yet of good quality after the tragic period of genocide against Tutsis in 1994. The politic of *Education for all* is a government program aiming to provide free basic education to every child for the primary level, with very few school fees for the secondary. The side effect of the program is the automatic promotion of all students to the next grade regardless of their low performance. However, the tertiary level is quite a bit challenging because school fees are very high. Public universities are the best in terms of quality education (reference done to the high level of graduates' scoring); hence they recruit only the best performers because they cannot accommodate all the students who graduate from secondary school. These public schools are the best equipped in terms of infrastructure and other academic equipment. Therefore, private schools are a host of the students of the middle class in terms of their performance, and they grant very cheap quality of education because most of them are looking to make money. Nevertheless, several denominational institutions and international private schools are proven to provide quality education. In the *Rwandan Journal of Education*, Ruyange wrote that the educational ultimate objective is the formation of character. He added

¹Ntthemuka David, "Rwanda Economic Growth and Trade," *Rwanda Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities and Business* 2, no. 1 (2014): 12-17, accessed 29 September 2020, <https://dr.ur.ac.rw/handle/123456789/814/discover>.

that the history of a country, and its political orientation set the guidelines that drive the rules and regulations of the optimum education. He concluded that the religious system in the country helps to successfully get to the desired objectives, at the secondary school level.

The Republic of Rwanda is a secular country. However, the Constitution and other laws prohibit religious discrimination and provide for freedom of religion and worship. Therefore, current censuses have proven that Rwandans are a religious people. The predominant Christian denomination is the Roman Catholic Church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church comes after the Pentecostal Church with its allies, the so-called 'born again' churches. Figures claim that Christianity is the largest religion in Rwanda. The most recent national census from 2012 indicates that 43.7% of Rwanda's population is Roman Catholic, 37.7% is Protestant, 11.8% is Seventh-day Adventist, 2.0% is Muslim (mainly Sunni), 2.5% claims no religious affiliation, and 0.7% is Jehovah's Witness.²

There has been a proliferation of small, usually Christian-linked schismatic religious groups since the 1994 genocide. In discussing the post-traumatic period after 1994 and the role of religion in Rwanda, Pargament, Desai, and McConnell noted that while spiritual beliefs may lead to challenges following a traumatic experience, spirituality can also contribute to posttraumatic growth during significant life crises. It can offer empowerment, a sense of meaning, or lead to changes in life objectives.³ This environment created opportunities for the Seventh-day Adventist

² Nkundabera Jean de Dieu, "Rwanda after Genocide," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 4, no. 2 (2003): 24-27.

³ K. I. Pargament, K. M. Desai, and K. M. McConnell, "Spirituality: A Pathway to Posttraumatic Growth or Decline?" In *Handbook of Posttraumatic Growth: Research & Practice*, ed. L. G. Calhoun and R. G. Tedeschi (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 121.

Church either to establish in new fields or to strengthen the existing structures in some other regions of the country.

Micro Context

The Kigombe District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the 34 districts that constitute the North Rwanda Field. It is located in the town of Musanze, a touristic city in the Northern Province of the country. Musanze City is home to many administrative headquarters and non-governmental organization offices: the Northern Province, Musanze District,⁴ and the judiciary courts at three different instances (primary, high, and appeal courts). The city lies at the feet of the Virunga Mountains which hold an attractive fauna of mountain gorillas, a unique species that live in three countries in the world: Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda. Good and classic hotels and guest houses attract visitors from abroad and create many jobs. A modern market and shops attract many business people to the city.

The Kigombe District has been the host of the office of the North Rwanda Conference since December 1997. The Conference office was relocated due to insecurity that prevailed in the northern part of the country at that time. Although it was a sad experience with the loss of human lives, the relocation of the Conference headquarters gave a new opening to the Adventist message to expand in the city and surroundings. Within twenty years after the macabre event of genocide, there has been an increment of membership from only one church in the city to twelve churches with about 15,000 believers under the pastorate of three ministers heading three districts.

A great concern for the churches in the Kigombe District is that their local church leaders are not trained on how they can run sustainable discipleship within

⁴ A 'district' is a local government structure under the Province. Rwanda has four provinces plus the capital city, and 30 districts. The Northern Province has five administrative districts.

their churches. It is a fact that in every aspect of life, leaders ought to set good examples before the people they lead. Church leaders are not exceptional. Regarding this Ellen White says that the Lord requires his ministers to be pure and holy, rightly to represent the principles of truth in their own lives, and by their example to bring others up upon a high level.⁵ Therefore, the concern is to see that local church leaders are true disciples able to disciple their flock.

Three major activities for the active population in the Musanze district and the city itself are farming, doing business, and civil-servant. The local church leaders of the Kigombe District are mostly found in business and civil servants. People in the city are very busy every single day of the week, the believers too. The church leaders are not available at mid-week prayers and other church activities. They can only meet on a Sabbath, for worship in the morning, and for church business meetings in the afternoon, but not many of them come back for such meetings. It has been observed that church elders and other leaders do not fulfill adequately their responsibilities in their respective churches for two major reasons: they either lack the skills to perform the duties well or they do not have enough time to spend in church businesses.

Furthermore, even though there could be very small groups of believers who are willing to keep alive discipleship, they still need the input of their church leaders to improve the discipleship growth of their communities. The membership is large in every church, and the rate of backsliding is very high, too. Relationships are established and developed through communication. Since the leaders do not spend a reasonable time with God on the one hand and with believers on the other hand, their relationships become dry, both on vertical and horizontal levels. When Christians do

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are "Laborers Together with God"* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2005), 163.

not communicate with God, such as by reading the Bible or in prayer, whether in private or in a meeting, their relationship with God stagnates. Church leaders and all believers should dedicate some of their time to connecting with God in order to become successful in making disciples.

At the very beginning of the project, it was apparent that it was hard to ascertain the degree of discipleship. Despite this, the irregularity of church leaders' spiritual practices indicates the level of their discipleship. To get accurate information, the instrumentation of the study indicated the standing of church leaders, and specific interventions were designed to improve their level of discipleship.

Research Design

A research design is not just a work plan. David asserts that the function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible.⁶ The study utilized a quantitative research method. The researcher prefers the quantitative type because it collects reliable and quantifiable data.

Appropriateness of the Study

The study was on the discipleship of local church leaders because the district is 20 square km in size. All the church leaders are almost of the same level of life in the surrounding community. Therefore, they are the leading participants to find answers to the questions asked because of their accessibility. The study had the goal to determine if certain interventions can enhance the discipleship growth of local church leaders. Because the researcher was serving as the president of the North Rwanda Conference which includes the Kigombe District and having his membership in one

⁶ David A. de Vaus, *Research Design in Social Research* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2013), 9.

of the churches, it was appropriate to do the research there. The research was conducted without identifying names, and the questionnaires given to participants did not include any personal information.

Population and Sample Size of Participants

The study was narrowed to church elders and local departmental leaders. The rationale behind this selection was that they might be local church leaders in one of the churches of the Kigombe District. Men and women were all subject to this selection. These leaders might be between the ages of 18 and 65. The researcher had extended an invitation to the leaders through the District Pastor to introduce the study. Church leaders, specifically elders and local departmental leaders were purposely targeted because the subject of the study was the local church leaders. There were 150 local church leaders because there are five churches in the Kigombe District, each of them has an average of ten church elders and twenty local departmental leaders, which makes a total of 150 participants. Thus, 90 local church leaders have responded to the invitation. Table 1 presents more details on population and sample size.

Table 1. Population and Sample Size

Code	Churches	Membership	Church Leaders/ Present	Instruments	Retrieved	Retrieval Rate
A	Kigombe	1,420	22	22	20	90.9%
B	Galilaya	943	14	13	12	92.3%
C	Yaounde	1,137	22	20	18	90%
D	Nyarubande	1,003	19	18	17	94.4%
E	Cyuve	646	13	10	7	70%
	Total	5,149	90	83	74	89.1%

Church elders were 30 over 74 or 41%; department leaders were 44 over 74 or 59%.

Criteria for Sampling Procedures and Selection

The researcher addressed the invitation to all church leaders of the Kigombe district through the district pastor to attend a meeting on Sunday afternoon. There were 150, but only 74 of them responded to the invitation.

The researcher used both the purposive sampling and the convenience sampling methods. Neetij and Bikash defined purposive sampling as a method of selecting several groups of units in such a way that selected groups together yield as nearly as possible the same average or proportion as the totality concerning those characteristics which are already a matter of statistical knowledge.⁷ Farrokhi and Mahmoudi defined the convenience sampling method as a kind of non-probability or nonrandom sampling in which members of the target population are selected for the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer.⁸ Neetij and Bikash compared the purposive and the convenience sampling methods. They specified that while purposive sampling selects sample members from well-defined criteria based on the researcher's expertise and knowledge, convenience sampling chooses its sample members based on proximity to the researcher. The researcher chose to limit his study to the elders and local departmental leaders based on pastoral

⁷ Neetij Rai and Bikash Thapa, "A Study on Purposive Sampling Method in Research," 5, accessed 22 January 2024, https://www.academia.edu/28087388/A_STUDY_ON_PURPOSIVE_SAMPLING_METHOD_IN_RESEARCH.

⁸ Farahman Farrokhi and Asgar Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, "Rethinking Convenience Sampling: Defining Quality Criteria," *Theory and Practice of Language Studies* 2, no. 4 (2012): 784-792, accessed 16 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.4.784-792>.

observation, but also considering the availability and willingness of respondents to participate in the research, and their easy accessibility to meet in any one of the churches of the Kigombe District when needed.

After the researcher had explained the purpose of the first meeting, an informed consent form was submitted to every participant. The retrieval rate was high except for one out of five churches: Kigombe (90.9%), Galilaya (92.3%), Yaounde (90%), Nyarubande (94.4%), and Cyuve (70%). The average rate of retrievals was 89.1%. Curiously, 74 individuals agreed and signed it, committing themselves to set aside time for different workshops. They all agreed to schedule the next meetings in the afternoon from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm once a week.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher explained to the participants that there was a list of ethical principles that would guide the process to guarantee free participation. First of all, the research required voluntary participation whereby participants are free to withdraw at any time without negative effects on their relationships with the researcher or anyone else. Second, the researcher sought the informed consent of the participants. The purpose of the project and the use of the findings were explained to them. Third, participants were assured that any identifying information would be kept confidential and accessed by the researcher alone (the codification of the churches). Fourth, the researcher urged participants to keep anonymous their identity without revealing their names or their churches. Fifth, the information would be gathered based on their relevance, and results would be communicated for the unique use of the project purpose with no harm to anyone. Last, the results would be accessed only by the researcher and advisors.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire to a sample of church leaders was administered by the researcher to get details on their status. The instrumentation of this research is a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed and articulated on spiritual disciplines, a variety of activities, and characteristics of true disciples that foster discipleship. They are categorized into two areas: ten questions under spiritual disciplines, and eleven questions about the characteristics of true discipleship. Then, an analysis of various answers to the questions was made, and the following remarks were made out of it.

The first section of ten questions dealt with the relationship the church leader has with God through spiritual practices. The section looked at the characteristics of true discipleship. The first six questions have to do with the intimate life the leader has with God. The first question dealt with the time one used to spend in prayer. The second question denoted the time spent in the family worship. And by extension, the family worship would reflect the discipleship model of the family at large. Question three concerned the time spent fasting. Question four referred to the habit of Bible journaling. Question five asked about the home visitation exercise. The sixth question aimed to determine the time spent searching to understand God's Word. The next four questions, seventh to tenth, have a specific connection with discipleship as a Christian practical experience. A mentorship program can positively affect both the leaders' and other members' discipleship growth. The exercise of faith-sharing allows the spiritual leaders to accomplish the mission that the Lord has given to His Church.

The last section of eleven questions, eleventh to twenty-first, focused on the characteristics of true discipleship as far as local church leadership is concerned. Question eleven concerns humility as one of the most needed characteristics the

church leader must display. Question twelve refers to the relationship that unit church leaders as brothers and sisters, whereby each one cares for his/her fellows. Question thirteen is about integrity even in small things. Joseph has displayed integrity in all his deals, public and private. Question fourteen looked at trust and reminded church leaders that to be effective in their respective responsibilities, they need to trust in the Lord, but at the same time, those under their care may be relying on them as trustful shepherds. Question fifteen talked about obedience. Question sixteen was about discernment. Question seventeen referred to teamwork spirit. Teamwork spirit does not mean to act uniformly, rather it denotes harmony. Harmony means that though church leaders are different individuals, their efforts must complement each other. Question eighteen speaks of the leadership quality of perseverance. The church leader must resist hardship, overcome discouragement, resist temptations, and positively deal with disappointment. Question nineteen dealt with leaders' services. Spiritual leadership is about relationships in service. The church leader grows spiritually as they enjoy serving others. Question twenty concerned the faithfulness of a church leader. Question twenty-one concerned fruit-bearing. Fruit-bearing was to be considered as the sign of true discipleship.

Data Collection Procedures

The targeted group was the local church elders and department directors in the Kigombe District. Before any other procedural step, the researcher sought permission to work with church leaders. A letter was written to the district pastor to allow the researcher to work on a project that would cover five churches in the district. After getting a favorable answer, the researcher wrote to the executive secretary of the North Rwanda Field on behalf of the administrative committee of the Field to allow him to undertake a dissertation project that would involve church members. After

getting approval from both sides, the District and the Field, the next step was to invite the local church leaders for the first meeting.

In an interview⁹ with different officials of the Kigombe District churches, the researcher randomly asked 11 church elders if they have had any spiritual retreats on how they can grow in their relationship with God. Only two elders (18%) had been trained once in a ministerial workshop organized by the Union for one week ten years back. The rest never knew about such an experience. He then asked different department leaders whether they had attended any discipleship seminars. Surprisingly, one out of 15 (6%) did attend training when he was a church elder, once in seven years of eldership.

The questionnaire was self-constructed and designed considering the researcher's pastoral observation. Then it was distributed to the church leaders during their meeting convened by the researcher on January 6, 2019. The researcher explained the process and assured the local leaders that their responses would be kept confidential without revealing any of their identification. All the information was assessed as a whole and no single participant was selected outside of the churches of the Kigombe District. Each participant submitted his questionnaire well filled on a table in the church. None was able to discover who had submitted which sheet of paper to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. The researcher collected them back for analysis.

Reliability and Validity of Data

Robert, Priest, and Traynor defined reliability and validity in research as ways of demonstrating and communicating the rigour of research processes and the

⁹ Group of church leaders, interview.

trustworthiness of research findings. They explained that reliability describes how far a particular test, such as a questionnaire, would produce similar results under the same conditions, while validity presents the closeness of what is being measured and what was intended to be measured.¹⁰ Tavakol and Dennick proposed Cronbach's alpha for the calculation of the reliability and validity of an instrument. They said that alpha was developed by Cronbach in 1951 to provide a measure of the internal consistency of a test or scale. It is expressed as a number between 0 and 1.¹¹ The same writers added that an instrument cannot be valid unless it is reliable. However, the reliability of an instrument does not depend on its validity.

A pretest of five questionnaires was carried out for five older church leaders of the Kigombe District, one per church. Helped by specialists in statistics, the reliability index of the instrument of this study was 0.7. Therefore, the instrument was considered reliable and valid for the study because the results of the pretest were found accurate to the expectations. These respondents were not subject to the sampling during the following steps of the research.

Analysis of the Questions

The analysis of data was done using two types of charts. For the demographics, the researcher used the Pie chart for both demographics and the questionnaires. The section below presents details of the information that had been gathered from the participants.

¹⁰ Paula Robert, Helena Priest, and Michael Traynor, "Reliability and Validity in Research," *Nursing Standard* 20, no. 44 (2006): 41-45, accessed 21 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.7748/ns.20.44.41.s56>.

¹¹ Tavakol Mohsen and Dennick Reg, "Make Sense of Cronbach's Alpha," *International Journal of Medical Education* 2 (2011): 55, accessed 22 January 2024, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4205511/>.

Demographics

The researcher used the clustered chart to analyze the demographic data because it is the easiest and clearest of charts to present different variables for different items. Figures 1 to 5 present the demographics of the respondents.

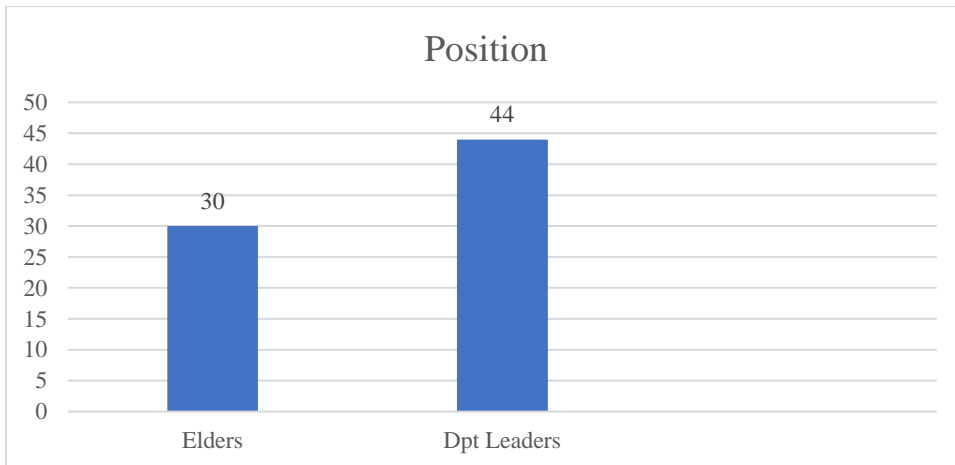


Figure 1. Position Held in the Local Church

Elders are 30 or 41% and local department leaders are 44 or 59%.



Figure 2. Occupation in Daily Business

For the daily businesses of respondents: 4 (5%) are church employees, 13 (18%) are civil servants, and 57 (77%) are self-employed.

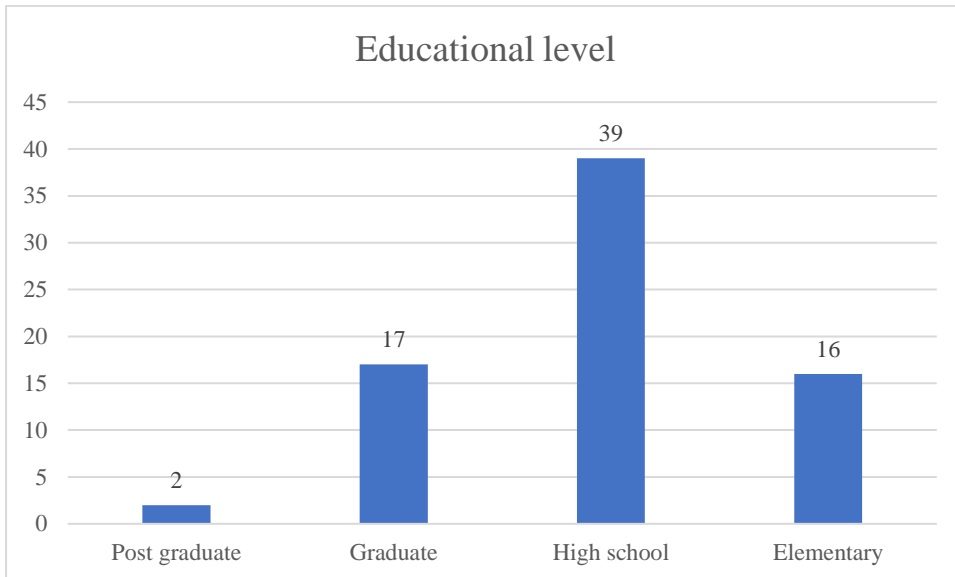


Figure 3. Highest Educational Attainment

The educational level of respondents varies from postgraduate to elementary: 2 (3%) held post graduate degree, 17 (23%) held a graduate degree, 39 (53%) held a certificate for high school, and 16 (21%) had an elementary level.

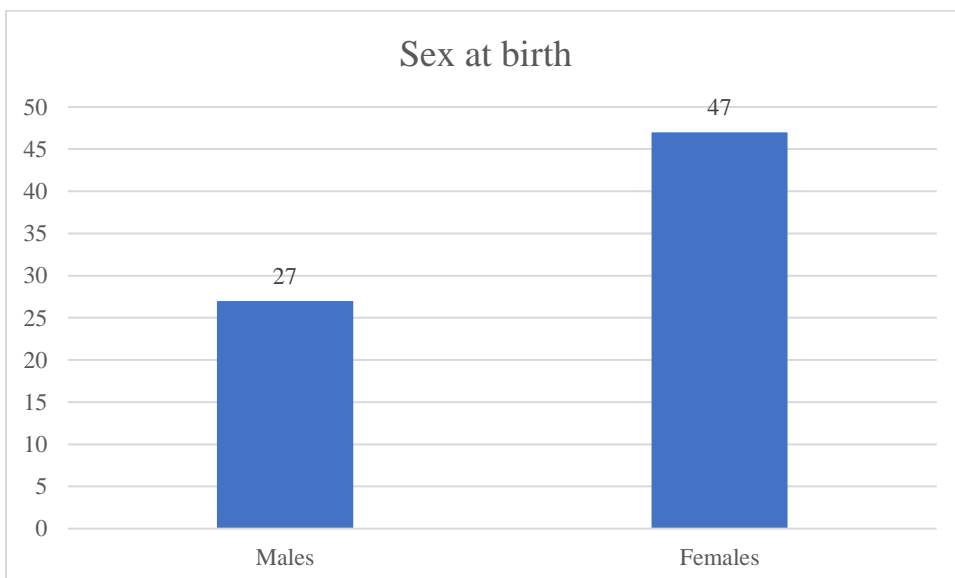


Figure 4. Sex at Birth

Among respondents, males were the majority, 47 (64%), and females were minority, 27 (36%).

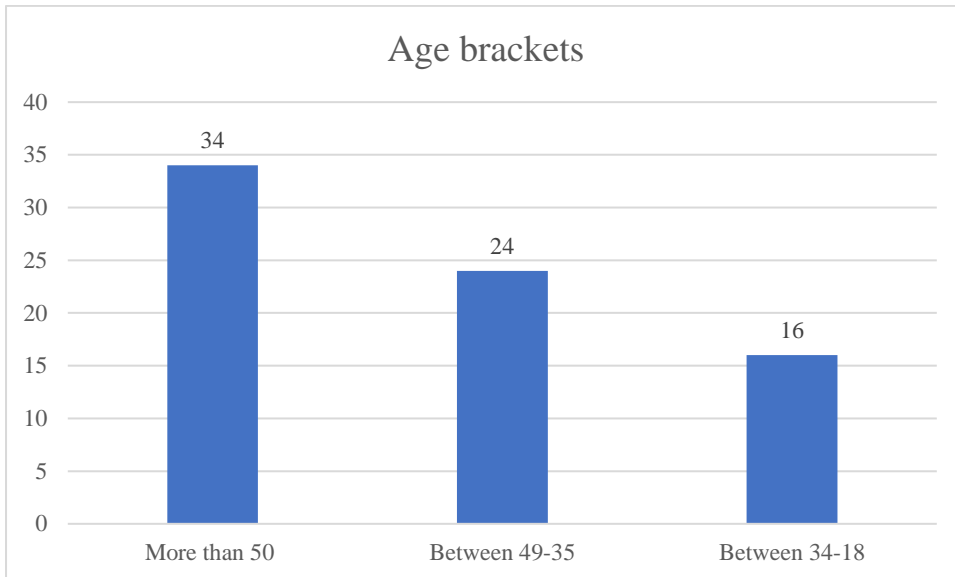


Figure 5. Age Brackets

The majority were more than 50 years old 35 (47%), between 49-35 were 24 (32%), and between 34-18 were 16 (21%).

Presentation of the Instrument Results

Table 2 below provides the summary of the questionnaire results from local church leaders, elders, and department leaders. Moreover, Table 2 pictures the condition of the church leaders in two spiritual areas: spiritual disciplines and characteristics of true discipleship.

Table 2. Responses to the Instrumentation

#	Questions	A	n	s	w	e	r	S	
Spiritual Disciplines									
1	Prayer	>1hr	3 (4%)	1 – ½ hr	12 (16.2%)	½ - ¼ hr	21 (28.3%)	< ¼ hr	38 (51.3%)
2	Family Worship	>1hr	13 (17.5%)	1 – ½ hr	12 (16.2%)	< ½ hr- ¼ hr	17 (22.9%)	< ¼ hr	32 (43.2%)
3	Fasting	Quarterly	9 (12.1%)	Monthly	10 (13.5%)	Weekly	11 (14.8%)	Sometimes	44 (59.4%)
4	Journaling	Daily	1 (1%)	Once/week	5 (6.7%)	Once/month	15 (20.2%)	Sometimes	53 (71.6%)
5	Home visitation	Daily	2 (2.7%)	Weekly	12 (16.2%)	Monthly	11 (14.8%)	Quarterly	49 (66.2%)
6	Bible study	>3hrs	4 (5.4%)	2hrs	14 (18.9%)	1hr	18 (24.3%)	<1hr	38 (51.3%)
7	Spiritual mentor	SA	3 (4%)	A	5 (6.7%)	D	9 (5.4%)	SD	57 (78.3%)
8	Spiritual partner	SA	4 (5.4%)	A	6 (8.1%)	D	10(13.5%)	SD	54 (72.9%)
9	Mentoring new converts	SA	5 (6.7%)	A	7 (9.4%)	D	12 (16.2%)	SD	50 (67.5%)
10	Faith-sharing	SA	3 (4%)	A	4 (5.4%)	D	7(9.4%)	SD	60 (81%)
Characteristics of True Discipleship									
11	Humility		28 (37.8%)		20 (27%)		15 (20.2%)		11 (14.8%)
12	Caring for one another		2 (2.7%)		3 (4%)		17 (22.9%)		52 (70.2%)
13	Integrity		40 (54%)		27 (36.4%)		3 (4%)		4 (5.4%)
14	Trust		7 (9.4%)		9 (12.1%)		23 (31%)		35 (47.2%)
15	Obedience		13 (17.5%)		22 (29.7%)		32 (43.2%)		7 (9.4%)
16	Discernment		36 (48.6%)		5 (6.7%)		24 (32.4%)		9 (12.1%)
17	Teamwork spirit		37 (50%)		24 (32.4%)		7 (9.4%)		6 (8.1%)
18	Perseverance		3 (4%)		10 (13.5%)		59 (79.7%)		2 (2.7%)
19	Service		3 (4%)		29 (39%)		8 (11%)		24 (32%)
20	Faithfulness		46 (89.1%)		10(8.1%)		6 (3%)		2 (3%)
21	Fruit-bearing		43 (58.1%)		24 (32.4%)		5 (6.7%)		2 (3%)

Research in theology and literature has demonstrated that spiritual practices are significant in the process of discipleship. The researcher used the clustered chart to interpret the instrument results as they were gathered. The respondents were 74 and the retrieved were 100%.

Figure 6 presents the time leaders spend in personal daily prayer.

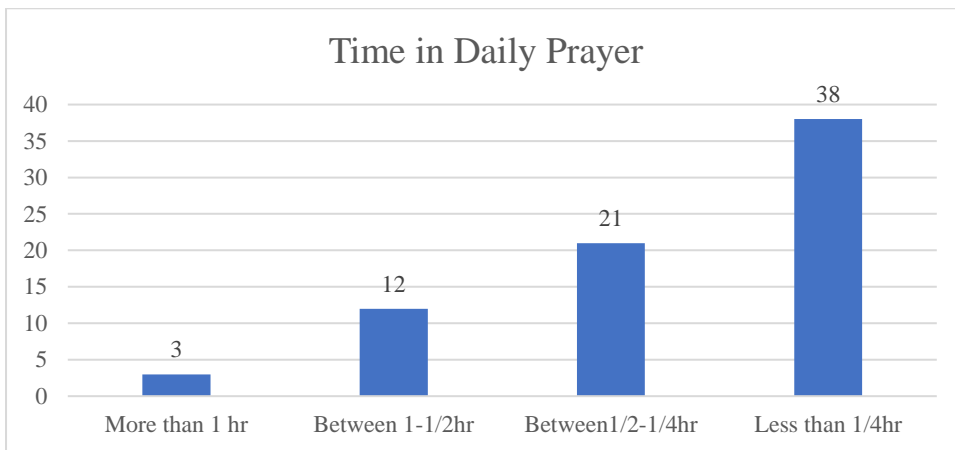


Figure 6. Time Spent in Daily Prayer

60% of elders spend less than ¼ hour in daily prayer, 45.4% of local department leaders do.

Figure 7 shows how long the family worship lasts.

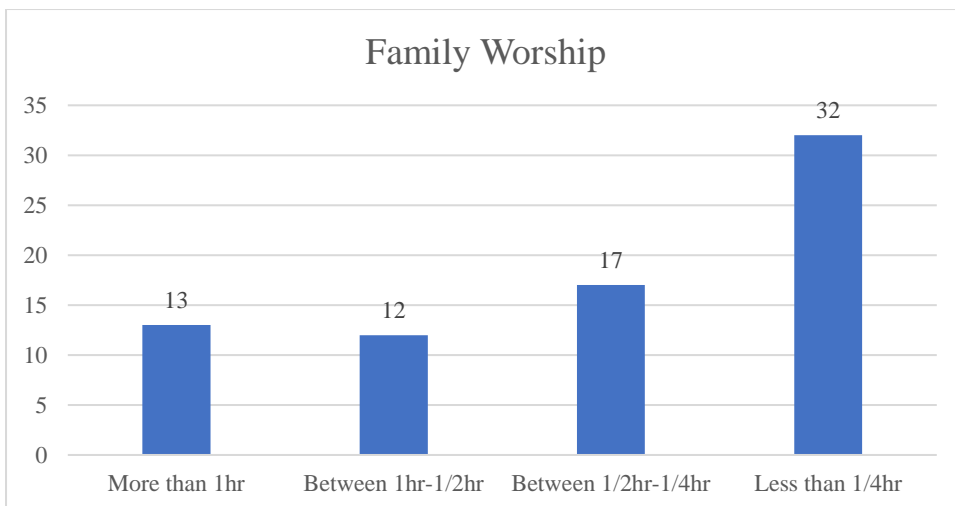


Figure 7. Family Worship

43.3% of elders spend less than ¼ hour in family worship daily, while 43.1% of other leaders do.

Figure 8 presents how often respondents practice spiritual fasting.

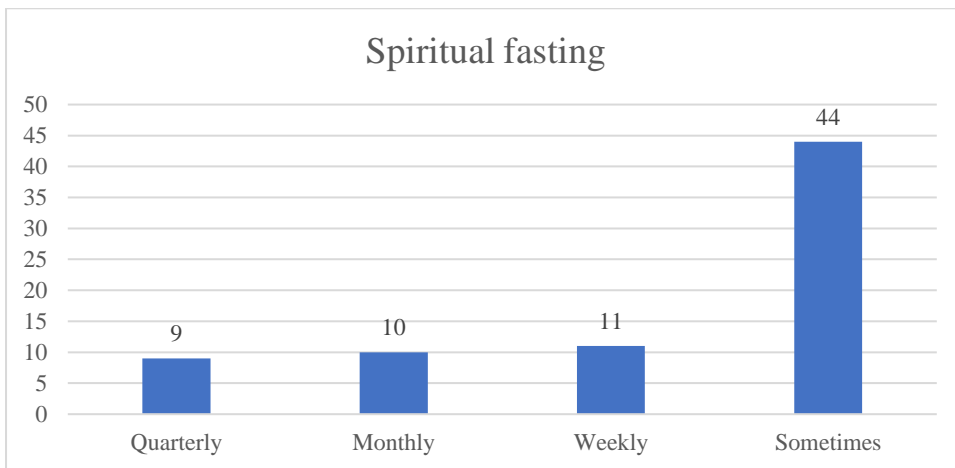


Figure 8. Time for Spiritual Fasting

63.3% of elders do fasting sometimes, while 56.8% of department leaders do.

Figure 9 indicates the frequency of spiritual journaling.

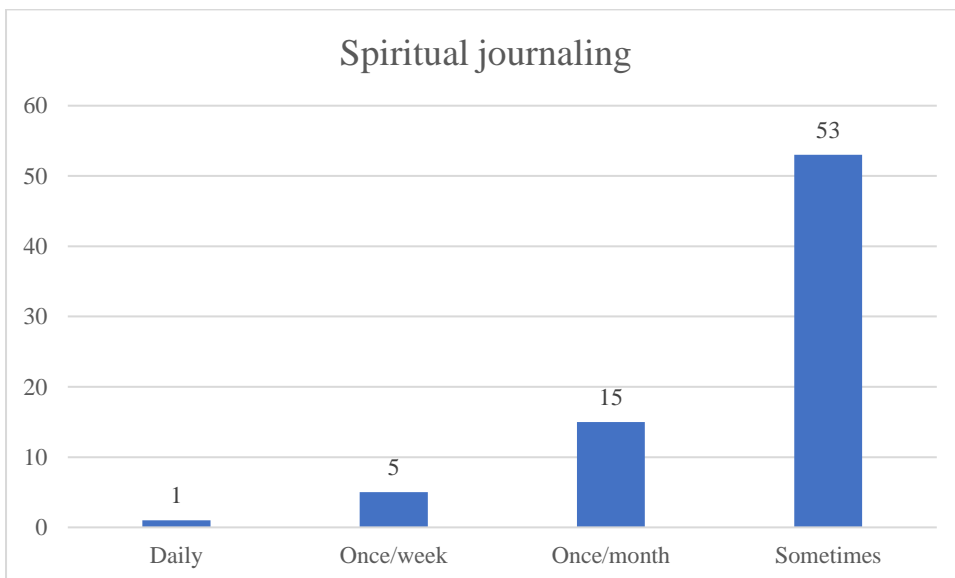


Figure 9. Time for Spiritual Journaling

50% of elders do spiritual journaling sometimes, and 86.3% of other leaders do.

Figure 10 records the frequency of home visitation.

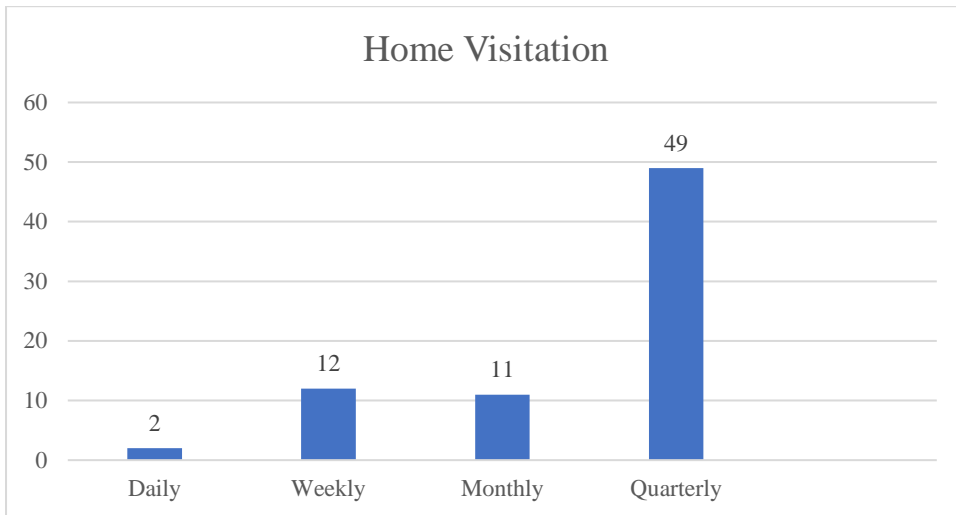


Figure 10. Home Visitation

70% of elders visit homes quarterly while 63.6% of local department leaders do.

Figure 11 recapitulates the time respondents spend in Bible study.

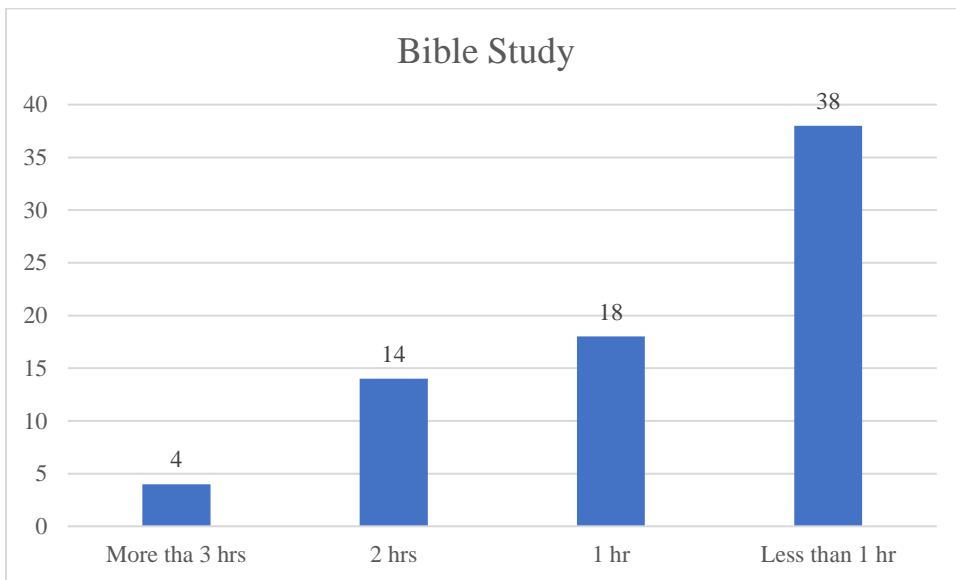


Figure 11. Bible Study

46.6% of church elders study the Bible for less than 1 hour at a time while 54.5% of departmental leaders do.

Figure 12 speaks about the attitude of respondents toward spiritual mentoring.

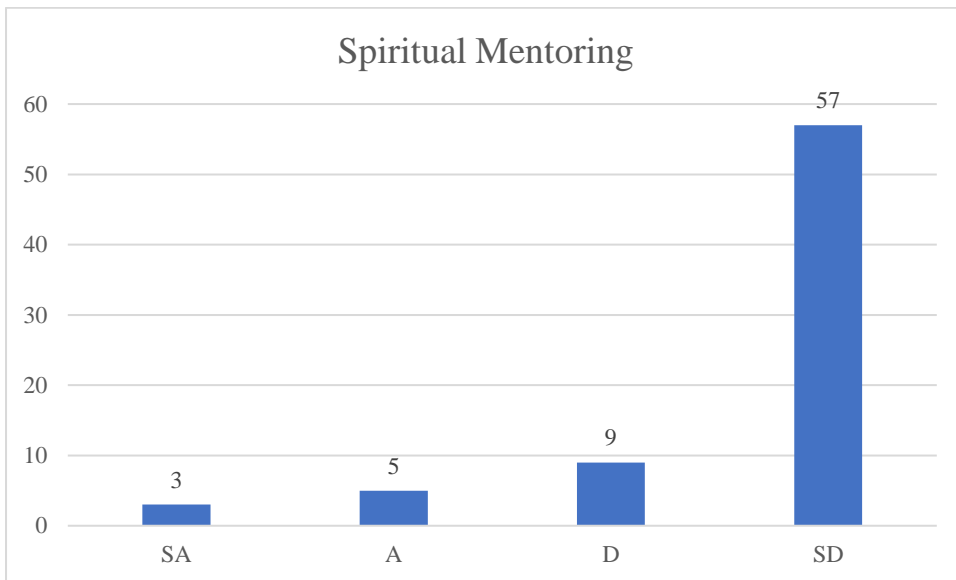


Figure 12. Spiritual Mentor

80% of elders strongly disagree with having a mentor while 75% of others do.

Figure 13 shows what respondents think about having a spiritual partner.

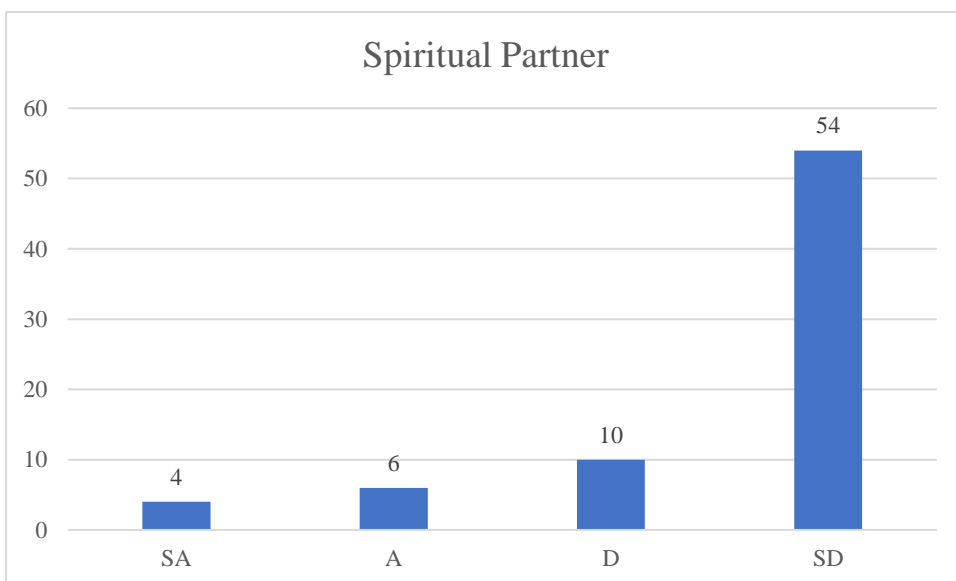


Figure 13. Spiritual Partner

73.3% of elders strongly disagree with having a spiritual partner while 72.7% of department leaders strongly disagree.

Figure 14 pictures how mentoring new converts is dealt with in the church.

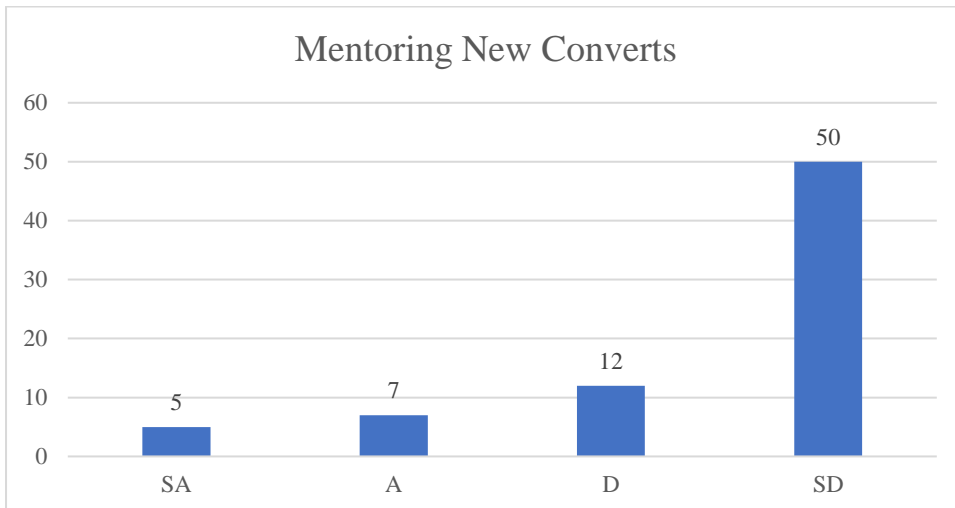


Figure 14. Mentoring New Convert

70% of elders strongly disagree they must mentor new converts while 65.9% of department leaders strongly disagree.

Figure 15 gives details on faith-sharing by respondents.

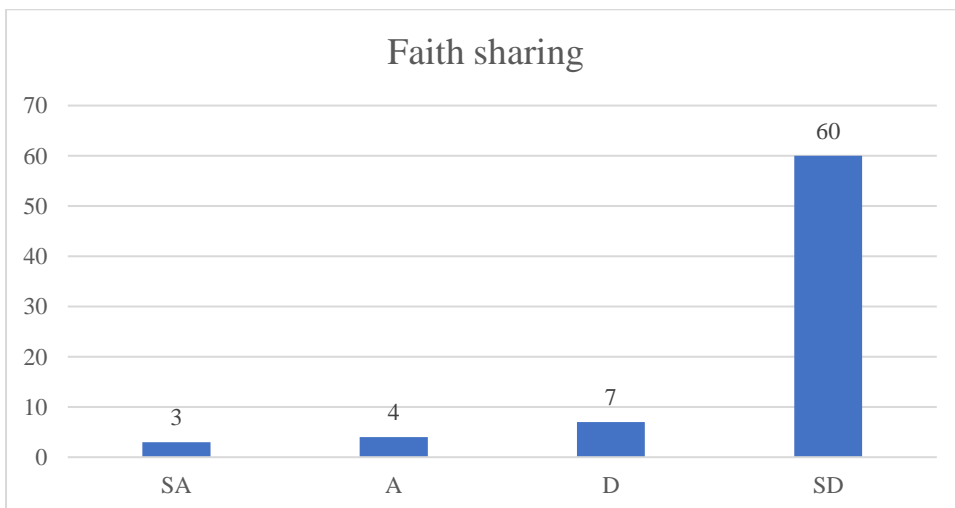


Figure 15. Faith-sharing

73.3% of elders strongly disagree they must share their faith while 86.3% of department leaders do.

Figure 16 presents how respondents display humility in their lives.

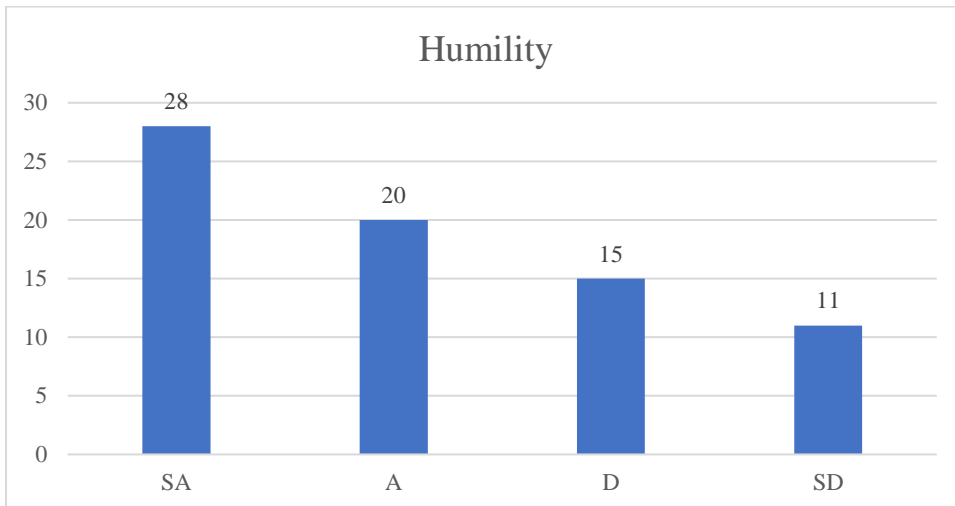


Figure 16. Humility

40% of elders strongly agree that humility should characterize church leaders while 36.3% of department leaders strongly agree.

Figure 17 displays the picture of how caring for one another is practiced.

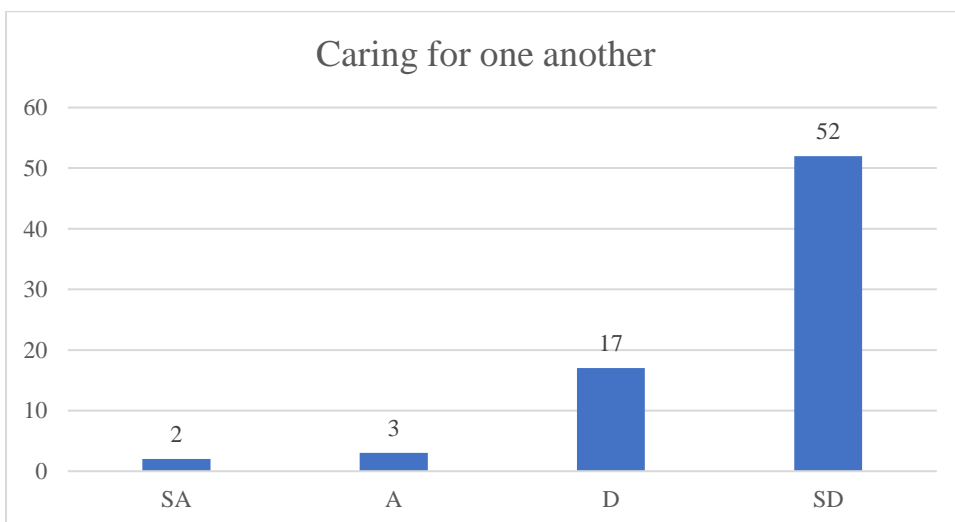


Figure 17. Caring for one Another

73.3% of elders strongly disagree that caring for one another should characterize local church leaders while 68.1% of department leaders also strongly disagree.

Figure 18 depicts how respondents display integrity in small things in their lives.

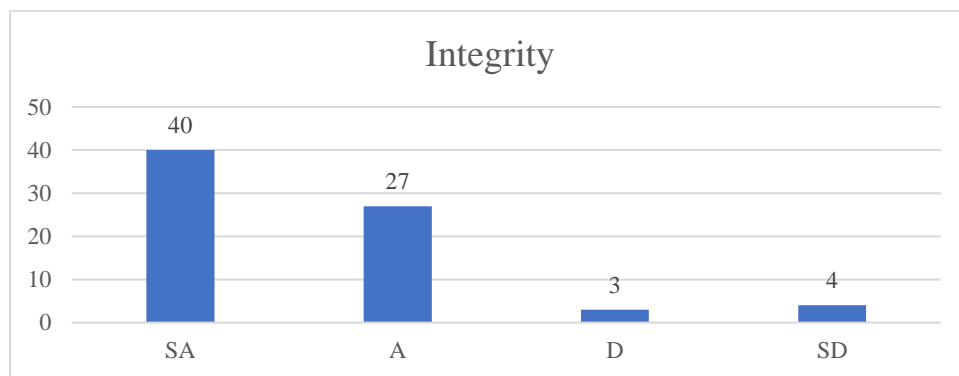


Figure 18. Integrity in Small Things

.6% of elders strongly agree that integrity in small things matters while 45.4% of department leaders also strongly agree.

Figure 19 speaks about the trust displayed by respondents.

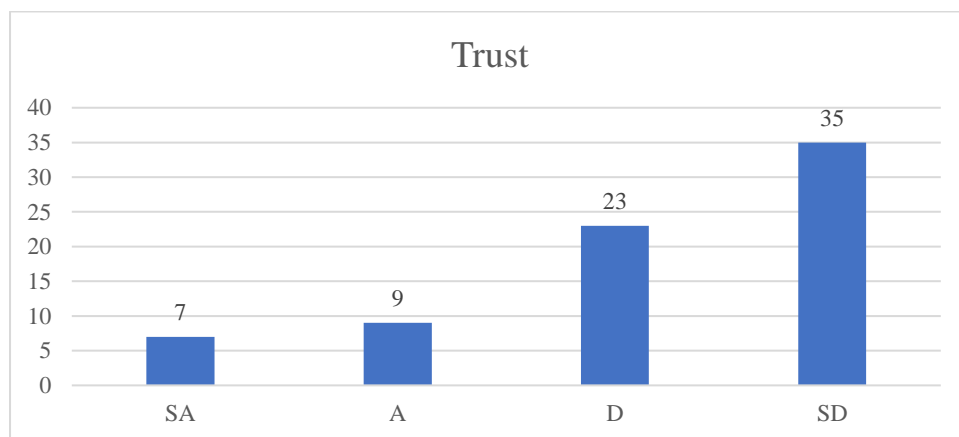


Figure 19. Trust

Only 13.3% of elders strongly agree that trust matters a lot in spiritual life while 6.8% of department leaders strongly agree.

Figure 20 talks about the practice of obedience.

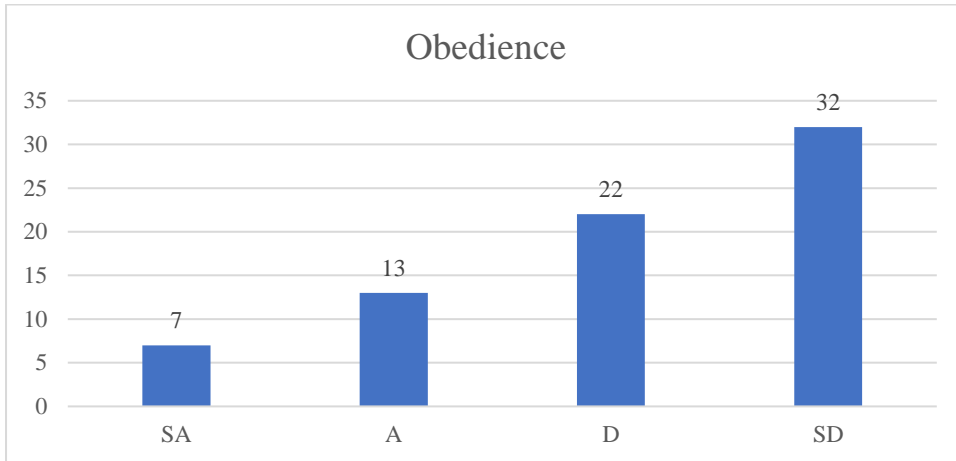


Figure 20. Obedience

Only 23.3% of elders strongly agree obedience is a must to a Christian while 13.6% of department leaders strongly agree.

Figure 21 recapitulates discernment as a spiritual discipline.

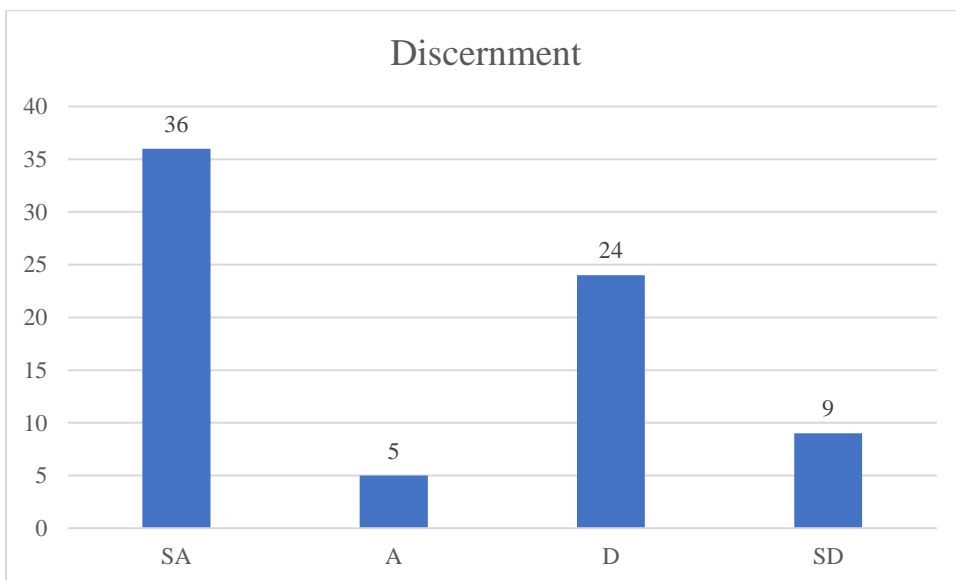


Figure 21. Discernment

66.6% of elders strongly agree discernment should characterize local church leaders in making decisions while only 36.3% of other leaders strongly agree.

Figure 22 presents how respondents consider teamwork as discipline.

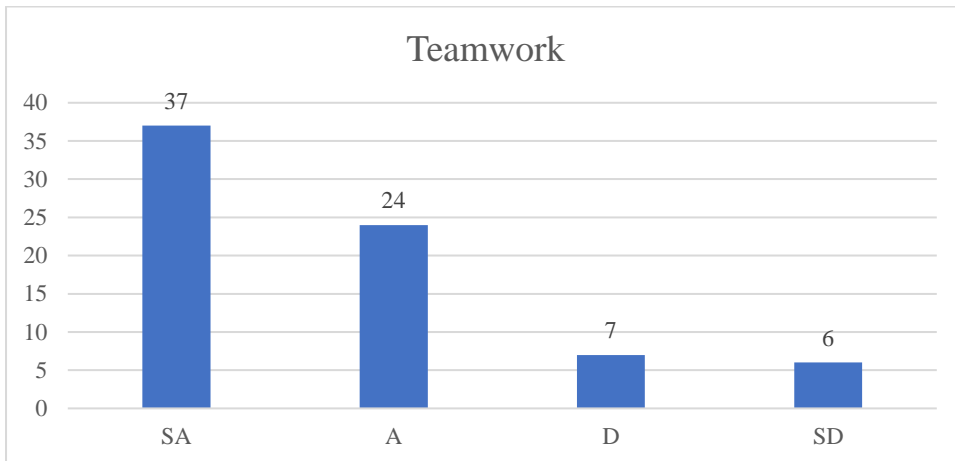


Figure 22. Teamwork Spirit

63.3% of elders strongly agree that teamwork spirit is essential in church leadership while only 40.9% of other leaders strongly agree.

Figure 23 details perseverance among respondents.

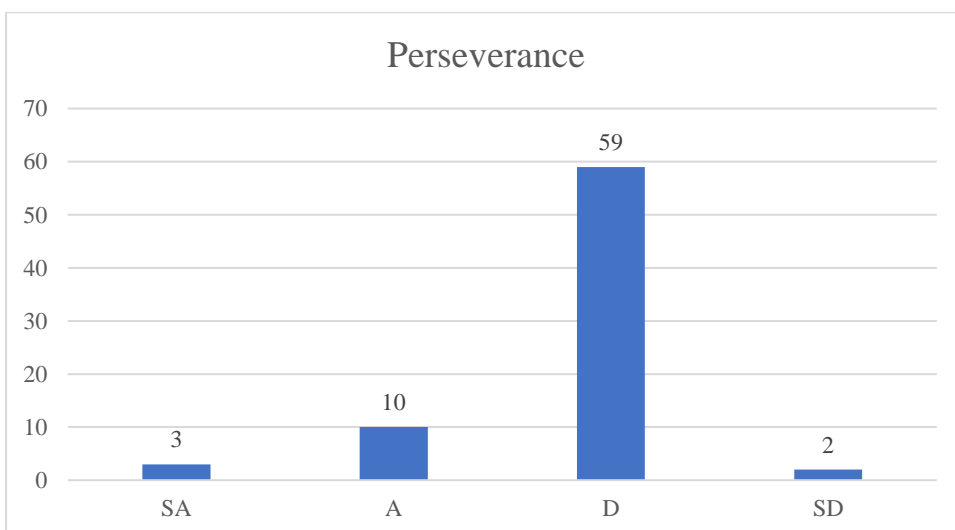


Figure 23. Perseverance

Only 3.3% of elders strongly agree to exercise perseverance towards the flock, while only 4.5% of department leaders strongly agree.

Figure 24 gives the records of how respondents understand serving others.



Figure 24. Service

Only 3.3% of elders strongly agree service to others fosters discipleship while only 4.5% of department leaders strongly agree with the statement.

Figure 25 presents the way respondents understand faithfulness.

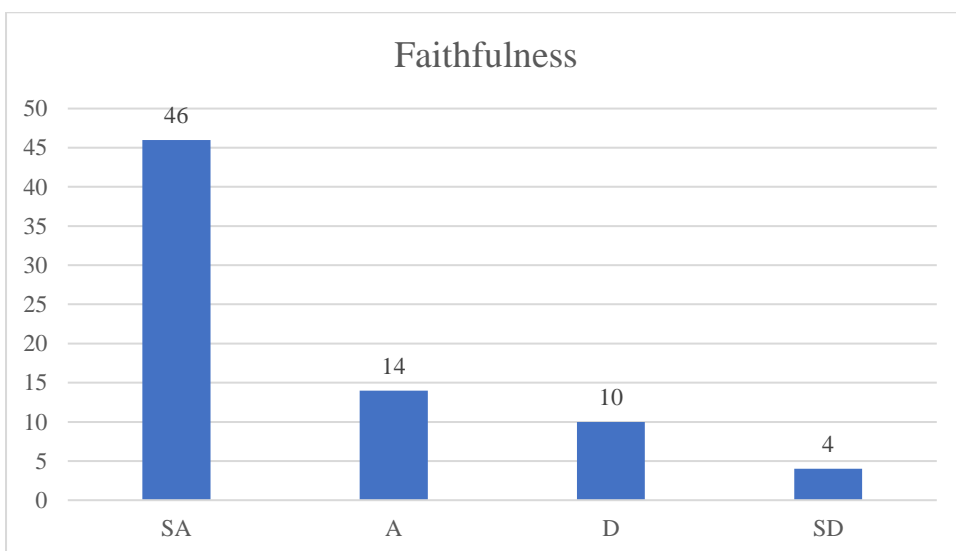


Figure 25. Faithfulness

76.6% of elders strongly agree that faithfulness is characteristic of true discipleship while 52.2% of other leaders strongly agree.

Figure 26 presents fruit bearing as one of the spiritual disciplines.

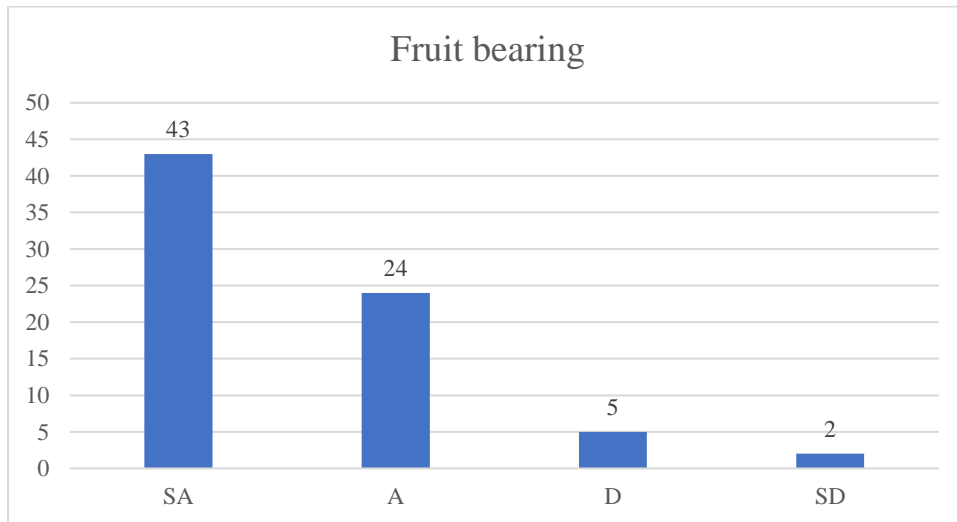


Figure 26. Fruit Bearing

66.6% of elders strongly agree fruit-bearing is characteristic of a true disciple while 52.2% of other leaders strongly agree with the statement.

Numerical Scale

The researcher used the Likert numerical scale to discuss the results of the instrumentation. Table 3 presents the scale, scoring, and verbal interpretation of the results.

Table 3. Scale, Scoring, and Verbal Interpretation for Spiritual Disciplines

Numeric Scale	Scaled Response	Numeric Likert Scale average	Scale Verbal Interpretation
4	Strongly Agree	3.50 – 4.00	Very High
3	Agree	2.50 – 3.49	High
2	Disagree	1.50 – 2.49	Low
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.49	Very Low

It is well understood that discipleship and other spiritual concepts are not easily measurable. However, the instrumentation was self-constructed to measure the level of local church leaders of the Kigombe District in terms of their discipleship development.

Discussions of the Results

Spiritual Disciplines

Table 4 shows the respondents' level of how local church leaders were practicing spiritual disciplines as shown by the means and standard deviations. The respondents of the study generally had *very low* levels of spiritual disciplines ($M = 1.48$, $SD = .526$).

Table 4. Respondents Spiritual Disciplines

Sub-variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Scaled Response	Verbal Interpretation
1. Prayer	2.19	.562	Disagree	Low
2. Fasting	2.09	.564	Disagree	Low
3. Bible Journaling	1.23	.629	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
4. Bible Study	1.75	.653	Disagree	Low
5. Spiritual Mentor	1.32	.423	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
6. Spiritual Partner	1.18	.479	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
7. Mentoring New Converts	1.13	.511	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
8. Faith-sharing	1.10	.429	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
9. Family Worship	2.52	.472	Agree	High
10. Home Visitation	1.46	.546	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
Spiritual disciplines	1.48	.526	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Scoring system: 4.00 – 3.50 = Strongly Agree = Very High; 3.49 – 2.50 = Agree = High; 2.49 – 1.50 = Disagree = Low; 1.49 – 1.00 = Strongly Disagree = Very Low

Prayer. Table 4 shows the respondents' level of daily and intentional prayer is *low* ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .562$). It means that local church leaders pray less daily. The implication is that respondents are not watchful when they pray less. They can easily be led into temptations. The research aligns with Coleman's definition of prayer as the soul's interaction with the Spirit of the Lord.¹² Calhoun underlined prayer is the breath of Christian life.¹³

Fasting. Table 4 shows that respondents' level of spiritual fasting is low ($M = 2.09$, $SD = .564$). This means that respondents practice fasting less than required. The implication is that it will be hard for them to self-sacrifice. Therefore, they cannot feel their spiritual emptiness. The research aligns with Monaghan's definition that fasting is the practice of abstaining from certain things for spiritual purposes.¹⁴ Thomas highlighted that fasting encourages the involvement of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Journaling. Table 4 indicates that respondents' level of journaling is very low ($M = 1.23$, $SD = .629$). This means that respondents almost do not exercise in spiritual journaling. The suggestion is that they struggle to effectively integrate other spiritual practices into their lives. This aligns with Whitney's perspective, which states that journaling supports the upkeep of other spiritual disciplines.¹⁶

Bible study. Table 4 indicates that respondents' level of Bible study is *very low* ($M = 1.75$, $SD = .653$). This means that respondents study the Bible rarely. The implication is that if local leaders do not study the Bible, they lose its understanding,

¹² Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 90.

¹³ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 205

¹⁴ Monaghan, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 15.

¹⁵ Ryan, *Disciplines for Christian Living*, 186.

¹⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual disciplines for the Christian Life*, 206-214.

and they will teach members what is not relevant. The research aligns with Sandy's viewpoint that studying the Bible provides an understanding of what it means to embody Christlike qualities.¹⁷ Lindsay determined that it is essential to encounter God through the Scriptures.¹⁸

Spiritual mentor. Table 4 shows that respondents' level of spiritual mentor is *very low* ($M = 1.32, SD = .423$). This means that respondents are neither mentored nor mentored. The implication is that respondents are not helping each other to grow spiritually. The study is in agreement with Robinson who says that mentoring is a trusted partnership where people share wisdom that fosters discipleship.¹⁹

Spiritual partner. Table 4 indicates that respondents' level of spiritual partner is *very low* ($M = 1.18, SD = .479$). This means that respondents do not have spiritual partners. The implication is that in their spiritual life, respondents do not have somebody with whom to share struggles. The study is in agreement with Calhoun who says that spiritual partners walk together into temptations and difficulties of life.²⁰

Mentoring news converts. Table 4 shows that respondents' level of mentoring new converts is *very low* ($M = 1.13, SD = .511$). This means that the practice to mentoring new converts is almost inexistant in churches of this study. The implication is that the new converts are not integrated in the church, therefore they backslide soon after the baptism. The study is in agreement with Mallison who said

¹⁷ Chery, "Best Bible Study Methods for Discipleship Formation," iv.

¹⁸ Lindsay Olesberg, *The Bible Study Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to an Essential Practice* (Downers, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2012), 19.

¹⁹ Robinson, *Mentor for Life*, 31.

²⁰ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 123.

that in Christian mentoring one person enables them to maximize the grace of God in their life of service.²¹

Faith-sharing. Table 4 indicates that respondents' level of faith-sharing is *very low* ($M = 1.10, SD = .429$). It means that respondents do not share their faith as it has to be. Their witnessing is very poor. The implication is that personal and public evangelism will suffer a lot to the point that not many will embrace the faith. The research aligns with Eddie's viewpoint that faith sharing constitutes the introduction of individuals to a Person, specifically Jesus Christ.²²

Family worship. Table 4 shows that respondents' level of family worship is *high* ($M = 2.52, SD = .472$). This means that the local church leaders were practicing family worship regularly on a daily basis. The implication is that at least local church leaders still have reverence for God in their homes, therefore, they are good disciples in that.²³

Home visitation. Table 4 indicates that respondents level of home visitation is *very low* ($M = 1.46, SD = .546$). This means that the local church leaders visit fewer believers in their homes. The implication is that church members are not well taken care of. Therefore, they go after any other errant teacher. The research aligns with White's perspective, highlighting two benefits of home visits: getting to know individuals and helping them establish connections.²⁴

²¹ Mallison, *Mentoring to Develop Disciples & Leaders*, 8.

²² Eddie H. Fox and George E. Morris, *Faith-Sharing: Dynamic Christian Witnessing by Invitation* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 33.

²³ Robin W. Knowless, "Worship and Becoming Disciples," *A Journal of Theological Resources of Ministry* 23 (Summer 2003): 137, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/6098140/vol23no2summer2003-libre.pdf>.

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 132.

In conclusion, the frequent *low* and *very low* levels of respondents of different spiritual disciplines mean that the local church leaders of the Kigombe District are spiritually weak. The implication is that they can easily shortfall and adhere to heretic teachings. Subsequently, church members would follow the same pattern and backslidings might increase. Therefore, a need to design a training program based on spiritual disciplines is imperative to foster discipleship in the ranks of local church leaders of the Kigombe District.

Characteristics of True Discipleship

Table 5 shows respondents' level of characteristics as shown by means and standard deviation. The respondents of the study generally had a *high* level of characteristics ($M = 2.66$, $SD = .573$).

Table 5. Respondents Characteristics of True Discipleship

Sub-variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Scaled Response	Verbal Interpretation
1. Humility	2.40	.654	Disagree	Low
2. Care one another	1.30	.567	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
3. Integrity	3.28	.486	Agree	High
4. Trust	3.42	.512	Agree	High
5. Obedience	2.29	.620	Disagree	Low
6. Discernment	3.45	.491	Agree	High
7. Teamwork spirit	3.12	.438	Agree	High
8. Perseverance	1.23	.352	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
9. Service	1.37	.613	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
10. Faithfulness	3.75	.451	Strongly Agree	Very High
11. Fruit-bearing	3.69	.549	Strongly Agree	Very High
Characteristics of True Discipleship	2.66	.573	Agree	High

Scoring system: 4.00 – 3.50 = Strongly agree = Very High; 3.49 – 2.50 = Agree = High; 2.49 – 1.50 = Disagree = Low; 1.49 – 1.00 = Strongly Disagree = Very Low.

Humility. Table 5 shows that respondents' level of humility is *low* ($M = 2.40$, $SD = .654$). This means that the respondents do not display humility at the level of good disciples. The implication is that they are short to serve others. The study is in agreement with Porter et al. who said that humility is significant to discipleship because it combats pride.²⁵ Furey describes that humility allows to know themselves as they are.²⁶ Humility is the footprint of Christ, it should characterize his follower.

Care for one another. Table 5 indicates that respondents' level of care for one another is *very low* ($M = 1.30$, $SD = .567$). It means that respondents are not taking of the flock they are supposed to shepherd. The implication is that they lose authority on the members, and the members are left to any blowing wind. The study is in agreement with David who says that for believers to care for one another they should exercise mutual watch care and exhortation, and common labours for the reclamation of the impenitent world.²⁷

Integrity. Table 5 shows that respondents' level of integrity is *high* ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .486$). This means respondents manifest integrity even in small things. The implication is that respondents are reliable for their faithfulness. The study is in agreement with Kumi when he says that a Christian who has integrity is sound, reliable, and dependable.²⁸ However, the study disagrees with Amandi-Nche who deplores that church leaders are losing integrity.²⁹

²⁵ Porter et al., "Religious Perspective on Humility," 47-61.

²⁶ Furey, *So I'm Not Perfect*, 7.

²⁷ Jones, "A Biblical-Theological Study of the New Testament Church as God's Designed Agent and Setting for the Ministry of Mutual Christian Care," 29-35.

²⁸ Kumi-Larbi, "Living a Life of Integrity as a Christian," 64-81.

²⁹ Church-Hill Amandi-Nche, "Integrity: A Vital Tool for the 21st Century Church Leaders in Nigeria," *Nigerian Journal of Christian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2022): 144, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/njcs/article/view/220829>.

Trust. Table 5 discloses that respondents' level of trust is *high* ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .512$). It means that local church leaders trust each other and they are also trusted by church members. The implication is that they are dependable, therefore, they should draw believers close to the Lord. The study agrees with Bridges who says that trust builds sustainability of good relationship.³⁰

Obedience. Table 5 shows that respondents' level of obedience is *low* ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .620$). This means that respondents are not obedient as it was expected from church leaders. The implication is that their discipleship level decreases. The study is in agreement with Karlberg who says that obedience is the consistent confirmation of abiding in Christ.³¹ Abiding in Christ is discipleship growth.

Discernment. Table 5 indicates that respondents' level of discernment is *high* ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .491$). This means that respondents are good at decision-making. The study is in agreement with Horsfall who argues that discernment is vital in the life of the church.³²

Teamwork spirit. Table 5 indicates that respondents' level of teamwork spirit is *high* ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .438$). This means that respondents cherish the idea of shared responsibility. The implication is that church activities survive because of the synergy of their leaders. The study is in agreement with Utsua, Owusakyo, and Shagari who

³⁰ Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 133.

³¹ Mark W. Karlberg, "The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007): 423-428, accessed 11 January 2024, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/211230808>.

³² Tony Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Journey of Faith* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 63.

say that teamwork is good because it increases efficiency and effectiveness, bringing different minds to focus on the same problem to encourage mutual support.³³

Perseverance. Table 5 shows that respondents' level of perseverance is *very low* ($M = 1.23, SD = .352$). This means that respondents are easily discouraged in their Christian life. The implication is that their discipleship journey does not grow through experiences of life. The study is in agreement with Peterson who says that to expect the immediate and the instant seeps into the understanding of Christian discipleship.³⁴

Service. Table 5 shows that respondents' level of service is *very low* ($M = 1.37, SD = .613$). This means that respondents are less involved in serving people in and out of the church. The implication is that the needy strive in their midst which brings them to find help elsewhere, therefore he leaves the faith. The study is in agreement with Calhoun who says God intends to bless the nations through our lives of service.³⁵ It also agrees with Ryan who says that service can be understood as all the activity in the union with the Spirit.³⁶

Faithfulness. Table 5 indicates that respondents' level of faithfulness is *very high* ($M = 3.75, SD = .451$). This means that respondents are faithful in their transactions. The implication is that they are reliable, therefore they can help the church to add more members. This study is in agreement with White who declared

³³ Utsua, Owusakyo, and Shagari, "Ethical Evaluation of Teamwork and Church Development in the 21st Century," 103-111.

³⁴ Ashmore, review of *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, by Peterson, "Living Well in the Ordinary."

³⁵ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 123.

³⁶ Ryan, *Disciplines for Christian Living*, 146.

that every sincere Christian would be a guide and an example to others in faithfulness.³⁷

Fruit-bearing. Table 5 shows that respondents' level of fruit-bearing is *very high* ($M = 3.69, SD = .549$). It means that respondents bear fruit that are seen from outside. The implication is that they are good asset for the multiplicaxation of members. This study is in agreement with White when she says that the object of the Christian life is fruit-bearing, the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others.³⁸ It is also in agreement with her belief that daily growth into the life of Christ creates in the soul a heaven of peace; in such a life there is continual fruit-bearing.³⁹

In conclusion, the frequent *high* and *very high* levels of respondents of characteristics of true discipleship mean that local church leaders of the Kigombe District are a good character. The implication is that they are teachable, and they can remain on the spiritual journey and train others if they are trained.

Intervention Design

Throughout the findings in this project, most of the local church leaders of the Kigombe District were willing to serve their church in different capacities. They did not practice almost any of the spiritual disciplines for their Christian life. Church members were being affected because they would not practice spiritual disciplines that they had not been taught, the mid-week prayers registered low attendance, and the tithe givers were a very small number (13%). Worse than that, church members

³⁷ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2002), 12.

³⁸ Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Reveiw and Herald, 1990), 67.

³⁹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Washington, DC: Pacific Press, 1957), 633.

started to look for other teachers outside their churches which led to the introduction of false teachings and backslidings. The table below presents that the results of nine out of ten spiritual disciplines showed that church leaders practice them at a very low level.

Based on the analysis of data, the researcher designed an intervention program that would promote the discipleship process among the church leaders thereby would motivate the believers to join the journey. The intervention consisted of developing training material on six topics. The topics were selected based on the responses from the participants. Because of the different educational backgrounds of the participants, the duration of each lesson was two hours. A presentation was prepared and copies were distributed to the participants at the end of the lesson. During the presentation, to keep participants awakened, the researcher provided a notebook and a pen to all of them (these writing tools served for the six presentations). The North Rwanda Conference volunteered to cover the cost of supporting the project. Every participant was asked to bring his/her Bible.

The researcher set the objectives of the training to serve as guidelines for the lessons. First, to awaken the interest of church leaders to get acquainted with the Scripture daily by journaling: to find a Bible text of their choice, reflect upon it, extract the implications, and apply it to daily life. Second, to train church leaders in the easiest way to study the Bible for personal growth and for sharing with others. Third, to teach the participants another model of discipleship through mentoring. Partners were to agree on sustainable growth through mutual spiritual support whereby the more experienced disciple would train the lesser one to mature in discipleship, and the lesser one would support the experienced one either by appreciation or by genuine disagreement. Fourth, to renew the sense of teamwork and

caring for one another through small group activities. The local leaders were to form small groups of more than two people, based on their location and availability, to pray and work together in various church activities. Fifth, to educate local church leaders on their responsibility to visit their members to encourage them to be strengthened in their faith and to actively be involved in the church mission. Last, to inspire the interest of church leaders to preach the Word formally and concisely. Focus was put on knowing what and how (what is the central message, and how to deliver it in public).

Limitations

Two limitations might slightly have biased the findings:

1. The misconception attitude of local church leaders toward the spiritual disciplines was a block on the pathway. Local church leaders thought spiritual disciplines depended only on God's giftedness of Christians.
2. Some of the respondents were slow to bring back the questionnaire in due time. It delayed the analysis, but not too long.

Summary

The chapter presented the data that have been collected from questionnaires that were distributed to church leaders. This section has established a discussion of the results of the questionnaire. Based on the results, two observations could be made. It has been proven that leaders know the characteristics of discipleship, and they have them all at different levels. It has been also observed that the knowledge gap that the leaders had, affected the church members. To solve that problem, it is required to develop a training program on six spiritual disciplines.

Recommendations

There are two recommendations from the findings:

1. The characteristics of true discipleship are *high*. However, three of them are *very low*, care for one another, perseverance, and service. They need to be emphasized in teachings.
2. The results have shown that the practice of spiritual disciplines is *very low* among church elders and local department leaders. Therefore, there is a need to develop a training program on the spiritual disciplines to help local church leaders engage in transforming discipleship.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE OF THE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

After the theological study, the literature review, and the intervention design for the project, then came the initiative implementation. The aim of this chapter is to emphasize the steps involved in putting the discipleship program into action. The monitoring process was done during and after the implementation. The results of the intervention and their implications are considered. This section sets out a discussion and evaluation of the research. In the end, it determines the success of the intervention and establishes the possible reasons for limitations that impede the expected outcomes.

Chronological Implementation of Intervention

The North Rwanda Conference has been organizing annual local church leaders' advisory since 2013. Different topics on church spiritual transformation were discussed, but very little was done to improve the situation. Therefore, the researcher decided to embark on a project to train local church leaders for their discipleship that would effectively reshape the rest of the believers.

The spiritual condition of the local church leaders in Kigombe District was gradually dropping. This has negatively impacted the discipleship of other church members under their leadership. Only 4% of leaders attend the midweek prayers, and 4.9% of members do. While the total presence at the divine service is 80%, the Sabbath School program counts 35% of leaders and 40% of members. Prayer

meetings are not well prepared or conducted. Therefore, they are dry in form and substance.

The following section discusses various activities that were conducted in the implementation of the project.

Description of the Design

The project is about training local church leaders for transformational discipleship. In planning the intervention, the researcher envisaged the steps as described below. Since 2013, the North Rwanda Conference has regularly organized a three-day advisory for church elders from every local church in the Field for specific items. However, some limitations hindered the effectiveness of such advisories. One church elder out of five or six other elders would not make it at times. Also, this elder may not qualify to fully share the information he would acquire from the advisory. The other hindrance has been that the elect elder does not remain permanently in the same office for quite a long period. Therefore, he/she might not apply the acquired skills when he/she has been out of the office. But the worst of the stumbling block has been that quite often some local churches would prefer to send elders to the three-day advisory not according to their capability of assimilation but because of their availability, being aware that at their return they will not make any effort to share what they have been taught.

February 10, 2019. The researcher met with the participants in a meeting convened via the Kigombe District pastor. It was held in the afternoon. The venue was the Kigombe Central church. After quite a moment of devotion, the researcher explained the background of the study. Then, he distributed the informed consent to 90 participants. After the researcher together with the participants had read it, he asked them to sign it. The informed consent was signed. Out of 90 participants, 83

agreed to contribute to the study until its closing phase. Last, the instrument was distributed to 83 participants, and they agreed upon the submission date. The participants were involved in the process.

February 17, 2019. The instrument was handed to the participants in the previous meeting. The instruments retrieved were 74, and the retrieval rate was 89.1%. Through the guidance of the researcher, they agreed on the need to foster discipleship at the local church level. They agreed upon the next meeting.

February 24, 2019. The session training covered the different spiritual disciplines. These spiritual exercises have been selected concerning their contribution to boosting the discipleship growth of believers. The list comprised prayer, journaling, worship, fasting, accountability, service, and home visitation. The researcher has elaborated more in a special way on journaling, using the double PR strategy (PRPR), the easiest method for beginners in Bible journaling.

March 3, 2019. The meeting concerned the Bible study methods. Much has been done to prepare lay people in sermon preparation and delivery, but there is yet much to do with Bible study technique. The project would develop an easy method based on four steps. It is called *Bible Study Strategy: One Story One Verse*.¹

The first step concerns attentive reading of a Bible text. The three next steps are introspective questions.

The first question is, (*What does the text say?*). The best way is to start with a biblical narrative, like parables or miracles in the NT. The reader or/and the listener are to know what the story is talking about, and who is the important figure.

¹ The “Bible Study Strategy: One Story One Verse” is a Bible study method that helps beginners in Bible study to start by reading Bible narratives and focuses on a key verse that summarizes the central message of story. The best way is to begin with the parables.

The second question is, (*What does the text tell me to do?*). The text may invite the reader/listener to do something he was not used to doing, and yet recommended in the biblical passage.

The third question is, (*What does it tell me to avoid?*). This question may be a warning to leave the evil-doing, or an appeal to avoid evil habits that characterize the person.

Lastly, (*What does the text tell me to teach to others?*). This one invites the reader/listener to apply the biblical principle taken from the reading to his/her neighbors.

March 10, 2019. The topic of the second session was discipleship through mentoring. This spiritual partnership had the element of accountability, and mentoring involved discipling new converts. Therefore, the session covered the basics that would help participants understand the role it plays in the spiritual life of an individual, especially for the new convert.

March 17 and 24, 2019. These two meetings dealt with two practical points that foster discipleship progress in the lives of church leaders: small group activities and home visitation. These two elements would refer church leaders to the reciprocity of benefits from fellowship and service. The social aspect of fellowship mixed with the duties of leadership would converge all to serve fellow believers first, and their neighbors at large.

At the end of the training series, the researcher would make sure every participant has been equipped with all the training materials to further his/her skills. Then, the trainees would be assigned tasks to accomplish in applying the Bible truths to oneself or the church's life. To monitor the different activities undertaken by church

leaders and for effective evaluation, the local leaders have to form small groups of activities and plan for home visitation in teams of two leaders at least.

March 31, 2019. The next meeting was about the homiletics principles. To deliver the sermon properly, the speaker must have enough knowledge about the truth in the Scriptures, but he/she also needs to have basic guidelines on how to deliver the message in a conducive manner. The two months of April and May 2019, with the provision of one week to go beyond May, were to be consecrated to implement what they have been taught. It is prohibited to gather during the second week of April (7 to 13), for any other purpose except for the commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsis that took place in Rwanda in April 1994. The church leaders would form small groups per church. Every trainee is to be part of a teamwork like Bible study and home visitation. Every teamwork was formed around an elder who would not necessarily be the team leader. After they have organized themselves, they would choose their team leader. For the mentorship aspect, participants were advised to even look for somebody outside their group.

Other spiritual practices, including personal daily prayer, meditation, and family worship, were not explored in this study, even though they are recognized as essential elements of any spiritual renewal. In these cases, participants were advised to dedicate quite reasonable time to every single discipline to get a good starting point. The spiritual habits will not easily be checked up on their effectiveness until the whole Christian life is impressed. Therefore, these exercises were to be emphasized and looked at at every stage of the project and beyond.

The last step consists of evaluation. The researcher would examine and analyze the outcomes of the whole exercise in each one of the five local churches that form the Kigombe District. The expectations were to actively create an awareness in

the body of church leaders that their discipleship journey would automatically have much effect on the rest of the church members, both intentionally and randomly.

Before embarking on the implementation, the participants ought to sign an engagement letter as proof of their commitment to undertake the journey of discipleship among leaders and the entire local church. However, the exercise would not run as it was intended because of some hindrances.

Activities and Resource Schedules

The first step to establish the objectives of the study was to set a goal for the intervention program. The goal of the project is to develop a discipleship program for the church leaders of Kigombe District which will impact the Christian life of the rest of the members. The next step was to set up a training program to meet the needs of the local church leaders; needs that were revealed by the instruments retrieved.

Gathering Preliminary Information

The first activity was to gather local church leaders from five churches in Kigombe District in one place, the Kigombe Central Church building. Through the channel of the District Pastor, the researcher has extended an invitation to specific church leaders: elders and departmental directors. Once gathered and after a brief but concise introduction, the next step was to submit a questionnaire to the leaders. It was well explained to the participants that their responses should be given anonymously, and reveal nothing like the identification of respondents. The questionnaire was elaborated on, and distributed to be filled out. Last, they were collected back one week later.

Their responses have somehow confirmed the presuppositions of the researcher on the issue of discipleship among local church leaders. There was a

serious gap in terms of the essence as regards discipleship. Therefore, it laid up a foundation to conduct the next activity, the training program. Throughout all the responses to the questionnaire, it has been proven that most of the local church leaders in Kigombe District have never had a chance to be trained formally or informally in any of the six areas listed below.

Training Program

The information gathering in the previous chapter intended to identify the needs of the church leaders in terms of their discipleship as they disciple other members. Hence, the gap was known, and it helped to develop training material for church leaders. The training program aimed to equip church leaders with the basics of the discipleship process which is fundamental for the spiritual transformation of all believers. The preparation of training materials included: spiritual journaling, Bible study, spiritual partnership through mentoring, small group activities, home visitation, and principles of homiletics.

First of all, the researcher and participants agreed upon the Sabbath day afternoon to be the convenient time for the training. The venue was the Kigombe Central Church because it was the easiest to access in a short time. It required six consecutive sessions to cover the training program. The topic was prepared and presented in a simple way, not in an academic teaching style because participants were from different educational backgrounds. The duration of each lesson was around two hours: one hour of presentation, and another hour for exercise and discussion, or questions from the trainees for further understanding.

Then, the researcher distributed a notebook and a pen to every participant free of charge. He asked participants to write down something they found important during every presentation. It was well understood that besides these two writing tools,

every participant was to bring his own Bible not only because it is fundamental but also needed for references, to see how the Scriptures match with every topic, and for some exercises, too. The next paragraphs give details for each subject matter of training. However, the content of each presentation covered only essential features of the topic of the day in a way that participants could grasp the information received. The first session dealt with journaling.

Lesson 1: Bible journaling (Double PR or PRPR strategy). The first Sabbath afternoon (February 24, 2019), the topic was Bible journaling. Discipleship is a lifelong process. The end of it all is a spiritual transformation, and it doesn't occur overnight, it is rather a journey. Among other spiritual practices, the researcher chose Bible journaling. Then, the researcher explained the meaning, steps, and benefits of the Bible journaling exercise. The following section was adapted from Magness.²

Meaning – By explaining the meaning of this particular spiritual habit, the researcher used the notes of the Spiritual formation class by Boubakar Sanou. It is noted that Bible journaling is a Bible reading of a given passage, or writing.³ In this activity, the emphasis is about writing down notes.

Steps – The researcher has put down the steps to any Bible journaling under the acronym (PRPR). Each letter stands for one activity. The first (P) stands for *prayer*. The journaler has to pray over the Word before he begins. It is the humble way to approach the Word of God. The first (R) stands for *read*. You must read and study a biblical passage you have selected. It should be precise and reasonable for the study. The second (P) stands for three words, *put-pen-to-paper*. That is to write down

² Nathan Magness, "What Is Bible Journaling," February 2016, accessed 13 September 2023, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/bible-journaling-for-beginners>.

³ Boubakar Sanou, class notes for CHMN 727 Biblical Spiritual Formation, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, September 2018.

your notes in order not to forget your thoughts or feelings on the given Bible text. The second (R) represents *reflection*. You reflect on your thoughts and try to memorize the Scripture that has given you new insights.

Benefits – Lastly, the researcher has explained that the outcomes of Bible journaling are numerous. He listed only five such as spiritual growth, self-reflection, creative expression, memorization, and community building. This exercise of journaling allows you first, to draw closer to God and to deepen your relationship with Him, and this is what discipleship is all about. Second, it helps to gain a better understanding of yourself and how true is your relationship with God. Third, it is a very therapeutic and relaxing experience because it allows you to express yourself creatively. Fourth, the Scripture that speaks to you is easier to remember as you apply it to your daily life. Lastly, this practice is a better way to connect to other believers by sharing with them what was found helpful in your Christian life.

To conclude this spiritual practice, the researcher emphasized that purposeful Bible journaling is far different from mere Bible reading. The daily Bible reading is also a good exercise, but the difference occurs when it comes to the final results. He underlined that the journaling habit makes it easier to understand what the reader wants for a better relationship with Jesus. He added that Bible journaling helps you learn to understand your real spiritual condition. Below is a module that explains the different activities undertaken, the time allocated to one activity, the facilitator of each activity, the requirements at every step, and the cost for each activity if any.

Table 6 presents a module on Bible journaling.

Table 6. Bible Journaling (Module 1)

#	Activity	Time	Facilitator	Requirements	Cost
1	Select a Bible text	N/A	Trainer	Bibles	N/A
2	Pray over the selected Bible text	5 min	One of the trainees prays audibly	The rest of the trainees follow and pray silently	N/A
3	Read the select Bible text	15 min	Every trainee reads silently in his/her Bible	Everyone has his/her Bible	N/A
4	Write down thoughts from the Bible text	20 min	Every trainee writes down his/her notes	Notebook and a pen	The researcher provides a notebook and a pen to every participant
5	Reflect on the thoughts	15 min	Every participant reads his/hers	Reflect prayerfully	N/A
6	Pray over new insights	5 min	2 selected trainees pray	Other participants pray silently	N/A

The presentation lasted for an hour, and the second hour was consecrated to the journaling exercise. The researcher asked one of the participants to select a Scripture. The choice was Luke 18:1-8; another one read the passage loudly. Then, he took them throughout the text verse after verse. He said, "Let's ask ourselves questions after the reading of some of the verses, as we reflect on them."

V2. Do we fear God in our various capacities? Everyone can find out an answer.

V3. Do I realize there are people in my surroundings who need my help? Who are they? what are their needs? How do I respond to their requests?

Vs 4,5. How long does it take my office to render service to people of low class?

Vs 7,8. Do we trust God in His word?

The researcher told participants to write down answers to these questions one after another. The exercise can continue even at home. He urged them to be honest with themselves as they respond. Then, he invited them to conclude with spiritual lessons. Here are some of the lessons from this passage:

- My daily life is a struggle. Therefore, we are to keep praying for God to answer our supplications.
- Our Lord is a faithful God who is always ready to listen to our prayers. Therefore, I do not have to lose heart. Let's keep our faith until Jesus comes back.
- As an active believer, I should always seek to serve the needy as much as I can.

Lesson 2: Bible study (One story one verse). The second Sabbath afternoon (March 3, 2019) was for another interesting topic, the Bible study. Most of the time when someone speaks about Bible study in an Adventist setting, many people tend to think of Bible prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The researcher announced to the participants that Bible study requires different skills and resources that might not be available to all, such as Bible commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and biblical languages which are for scholars. However, he encouraged participants to start an easy way of Bible study for beginners. He then introduced the *Bible Study Strategy: One Story One Verse*. This is a Bible study method that helps beginners in Bible study to start by reading Bible narratives and focusing on a key verse that summarizes the central message of the story. The researcher told participants the best way is to begin with the Gospels or Epistles.

For further information, he indicated to them other resources, the Spirit of Prophecy books, that can help to interpret some of the Scriptures. He explained that when the Bible study is based on the Old Testament, the student must search through the following Ellen G. White books: *The Story of Redemption*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, and *The Great Controversy*. If the Bible study comes from the New Testament, the student will search for more clarity from the following

books of the same author: Desire of Ages, Acts of Apostles, Christ's Object Lessons, and The Great Controversy.

The researcher taught the four steps to the process, but he drew their attention to the last step which is all about answering questions. He highlighted that learning from the Bible is a lifelong journey. Therefore, a Bible study requires consistency. The first three steps are preliminary. The first step consists of beginning the study with prayer. This helps to humble oneself before the Author of the Word. The second step leads to choosing a topic from your spiritual need or want. It might be about faith, joy, love, or unity. The step invites you to select a Bible text to study. It can be a chapter, a section, or a verse. For this class, the focus should be on one verse. The third step comprises three simultaneous activities: reading, listening, and understanding. The last step is very key in this exercise. It is all about answering questions of three categories. The following paragraphs deal with them all in detail.

Moreover, beginners should start with the Gospels or Epistles. The researcher informed participants that seven questions must guide the Bible study. Three questions are to stimulate observation, two questions to identify principles, and two questions to promote application or obedience. The researcher reminded the trainees that they had to always have their notebook, pen, and Bible at hand for the reading and writing down notes, thoughts, feelings, and insights as they read for understanding.

Questions of observation – The three first questions are to create observation in the mind of the reader: what is new in the story that you have not yet heard before? what interests you the most? what do you not understand? The researcher correlated the keyword of each question to different layers of understanding the Word. In the first question, *something new* creates a general observation. In the second question,

interest nurtures curiosity. The third question, *what do you not understand* gives way to discovery.

Question of principles – The researcher said that the two following questions prepare the reader to take action in the next step: what will you apply to your daily life from today (what to do or to not do)? what lesson do you find out for children, youth, and for the family? He continued by saying that the fourth question inspires changes in the life of the reader in a way that he/she has to shape his/her acts according to what he/she reads. The fifth question facilitates the appliance of the principle to every Bible student. This application takes place in the next step.

Questions of application – The researcher informed trainees that this step is more practical than theoretical. Questions are the following: who can tell the story in his/her own words without reading, but without distorting the content? what will you share with others this week? The researcher stressed thinking about *what* and with *whom* to share. Then, he went on to teach that the sixth and seventh questions stand for the application of all the acquired knowledge. The sharing of the biblical message being the aim of the whole process, can be done in two different ways; either the Bible student can speak to one individual as in personal evangelism, or he/she may speak to a large group in sermon or as a public evangelism.

Table 7 presents a module on Bible study.

Table 7. Bible Study (Adapted from Gerard Karasira) – Module 2

#	Activities	Time	Facilitator	Requirements	Observation
1	Pray for the humbleness of the heart	5 min	One of the participants	Have a Bible, a notebook, a pen	
2	Select a Bible text	5 min	For this class the trainer selects a text		For the exercise, every participant be free of his/her choice
3	Read the text	15 min	First, one trainee reads the text audibly while others listen. Then, every trainee reads carefully and silently	Have the Bible open in the selected book	The trainer will make sure every participant is doing something
4	Ask questions:				
	a) Observation	10 min	Participants write down answers to every question	Have a notebook and a pen and answer to every question	For this section, there are no common answers. They differ from each participant.
	-What is new in the text?				
	-What interests you the most?				
	-What do you not understand?	10 min	Participants write down what they think is the answer to every question		
	b) Principles				
	-What will apply to your daily life from today?	15 min	-		
	-What lesson for children, youth, and family?		Participants write down the story in their own words, and then one of them can read it loudly.		
	c) Application				
	-Try to tell the story in your own words without distorting the meaning.		-Everyone writes down his/her what to share		
	-What will you share with others this week?				

After one hour of presentation, the researcher suggested a Scripture to work on as an exercise, Mark 10:46-52. He asked participants to follow the patterns of questions: observation, principles, and application. Before the class was over, the researcher asked one of the Bible students to present his/her work. In this example, one can choose v.50, another 51, or v.52. For this exercise, the class has chosen vs. 47, 48.

Questions of observation (3):

- What is new in the story that you didn't hear before?

A/ Nothing is new to me.

- What interests you the most?

A/ The disciples and a great multitude walked with Jesus, but all of a sudden, the text is narrowed to one man, a blind man.

- What do you not understand?

A/ The blind man heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, but as soon as he cried out, he called Him 'Jesus, son of David'. He did it twice (vs. 47, 48).

Questions of principles (2):

- What will be your life application from today? (*what to do or to avoid*)
- A/ To walk closer to Jesus despite the cloud trying to obstruct my way to Him.
- Find out a lesson for children, youth, and family.

A/ For children: do not despise vulnerable people, take care of them.

A/ For youth: Jesus cares even within a careless multitude.

A/ For family: family members should work together for their salvation.

Questions of application (2):

- To be able to tell the story in his/her own words without reading or distorting the content.

A/ The trainee has been able to do so.

- What will you share with others this week?

A/ Jesus of Nazareth is the son of David. He is the prophesized King and the Messiah. He is our Lord and is asking for what we want Him to do for us. Let's have faith and bring to Him our spiritual blindness so that we may receive true sight.

Lesson 3: Spiritual mentorship. On the third Sabbath afternoon (March 10, 2019), the researcher introduced a new topic, spiritual mentorship. Spiritual partnerships are the most fulfilling, substantive, and deep relationships possible. Gary Zukav wrote that spiritual mentorship is a relationship between two individuals who agree on spiritual discipleship.⁴ This writer has set three pillars for such a partnership to benefit everyone: mutual respect is the foundation, help each other grow as individuals, and prioritize individuality and acceptance.

Common friendship by itself is likely to be used not to bond together two partners. There are times when friends can hurt each other. But when it comes to mentorship, each party signs an agreement of honesty and mutual respect. Therefore, the researcher introduced mentoring in such a way it has to be a guideline for that relationship. Mentorship has to be the vehicle of the relationship to support each other mutually and grow together. The aim of this habit is the discipleship of church leaders, the researcher has found it fit to introduce this form of mentorship among fellow believers. When speaking about spiritual partnership, Ellen White used the

⁴ Gary Zukav, *Spiritual Partnership: The Journey to Authentic Power* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 189.

term cooperation. She said that cooperation should be the spirit of the schoolroom, the law of its life.⁵ Then she advised everybody to do something in which he excels.⁶

Table 8 presents the template of mentoring development.

Table 8. Mentoring Development Template (Adapted from Nadine and David) – Module 3

#	Description	Observation
1	Date and place	Mentor and mentee agree on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dates: starting and finishing - Time: period of each session - Place: convenient place allowing free space for the mentee
2	Agenda items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mentee exposes his/her wants, and the mentor prepares careful questioning to establish crucial feedback. - Based on the mentee's needs, the mentor and mentee agree on different agenda items to discuss at every meeting, depending on progress made by the mentee.
3	Issues discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both mentor and mentee take notes of the issues that are being discussed or mentioned during the meetings. - The mentor's main task is to support the mentee to realize his/her progress. - Both mentor and mentee need to develop listening skills that will help everyone to focus on what the partner is saying.
4	Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the end of each meeting, the mentee should come out with a list of action points. - Action points help the mentee to progress and move forward to the final goals.
5	Date of next meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the end of each meeting, both mentor and mentee agree on the date of the next meeting.

Thereafter, the researcher established the difference between the two relationships: a partnership under usual friendship and discipleship through mentorship. He explained that on the one hand, friendship is all about being kind to one another, and sometimes it can exist within a wrong environment that is harmful to

⁵ White, *Education*, 286.

⁶ Ibid.

the two partners (friends in this case). On the other hand, mentorship is that kind of relationship whereby sometimes partners would disagree, but for the good of the weaker. He made known to the trainees that mentorship is a specific relationship in such a way that it requires honesty even when it comes to saying difficult things.

In this study, there is no mentor or mentee, the two partners are both. To avoid temptations and suspicions, the researcher warned participants never to partner with people of the opposite gender. It is safer for believers of the same gender to partner together, specifically in such a practice. It is advisable to do so because mentorship requires that partners spend quality time together, and in privacy, for prayer, Scripture reading, sharing experiences, confessing weaknesses, and seeking advice.

The researcher emphasized that mentorship is a practice that requires patience because spiritual transformation is a lifetime process. It is also about building trust on both sides. Therefore, this exercise needs partners to be focused, decisive, supportive, and committed to accomplishing what they have agreed upon.

Discipleship through mentorship has been of great importance to the entire church during the COVID-19 time. Several measures were taken to limit the contamination, among others the lockdown. Churches were closed for a long time, but at least two neighbors could meet to pray and study together. They met for comfort, encouragement, and mutual edification. However, it was not easy to remain faithful to the Bible teachings because false teachings were scattered all over. Thus, the informal mentorship benefited many believers, except for some who followed false teachings. In this regard, accountability among fellow believers had a significant role to play in this discipleship model.

Lesson 4: Home visitation. *Home visitation ministry* – On the fourth Sabbath afternoon (March 17, 2019), home visitation was tackled with purpose in this

dissertation as another subject, but it can be done by individuals or by groups. First of all, the researcher told participants that visitation is not an optional component of discipleship. The absence of home visitation disqualifies the church leader to be a watchman. He added that the visit is made by a team of two church leaders at least. They can visit the home of a church member or a family. The purpose of the visit is to pray for and comfort those in difficulties or to discuss the spiritual vitality of their Christian life. He added three guidelines for a practical way of visitation: organize your visits geographically, keep the address list up-to-date to indicate who you visited and when, and visit people over the phone if they are inaccessible at their homes.

The trainer helped the trainees to discover the benefits of visitation. The objectives delineated include the enhancement of relational proximity and the establishment of trust between ecclesiastical leaders and their congregants. Additionally, there is an emphasis on acquiring insights into previously unrecognized circumstances related to the spiritual welfare of believers. Understanding the needs and concerns of church members is also prioritized, along with the development of workshops and sermons that are specifically tailored to address the unique requirements of the congregation. Then, the researcher remarked on how to get to these blessings. For this to happen, the visiting team must be humble, teachable, listen more and talk less, and pray earnestly for the people. He then urged them to neither be tempted to discuss politics or trends in the media because it would divert them from their purpose of visitation. The researcher said that although it is taught as a responsibility for church leaders to visit church members, it also benefits the leader because visitation is a ministry of proximity. Ellen White explains the content of the

purpose of visitation. She said that there is visiting to be done, not having a pleasant chat, but to do the work required of a watchman.⁷

An effective visitation ministry benefits both the visiting person and the visited. It brings a closeness that paves the way to openness, and trust. These two characteristics build strong relationships between church leaders and church members. Although it is not prohibited to run a personal ministry as an individual, church activities require sometimes ministering in small groups.

Lesson 5: Small group activities. *Small group activities* – On the fifth Sabbath afternoon (March 24, 2019), the researcher indicated to participants that the book of Acts of the Apostles gives more examples of how small groups were small units of the greater church. Here are some examples: Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:7, 44-49), Paul and Silas (Acts 17:10-12), and Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26). They were fulfilling five purposes of the church: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism.

The researcher added that the goodness of working as a team is that there is multi-directional growth in relationship development, care and concern, faith growth, prayer practice, comfort and safety, edification and encouragement, and message retention. Then, he concluded with the main activities of small groups: fellowship, worship, ministry to one another, and evangelizing the lost; the outcome being transformational discipleship. For the application, the researcher asked participants to form small groups based on their geographical location. Then he assigned the task to start simple. First a prayer small group exercise at home would open doors to fellowship, social activities, mutual nurturing, and so forth.

⁷ White, *Pastoral Ministry*, 224.

Lesson 6: Homiletic principles. The last presentation was about Homiletics (March 31, 2019). If the flow of the spiritual exercises in this intervention is to be considered, then throughout the home visitations, church leaders have come to know at least some of the spiritual needs of their fellow believers. The leaders have already gotten skills in the Scripture through Bible journaling and Bible study exercises. They now needed to go into another discipleship experience. They needed to get more skills on how to share what they learned from the Word of God as they minister to their fellows. One of the usual methods of sharing the Word with more people is through preaching. Below is a module with three major sections: sermon preparation, sermon sections, and sermon delivery.

Table 9 presents the preparation, sections, and delivery of a sermon.

Table 9. Sermon Preparation, Sections, and Delivery - Module 4

#	Designation	Activities	Observation
1	Sermon preparation:		
	a) Spiritual	-Pray for inspiration. -Have a good relationship with God (confess your sins and shortcomings). -Have good relations with your family and the society.	-The Holy Spirit inspires those who humbly want to listen to Him.
	b) Intellectual	-Read, study, and understand the Scripture.	-Compare Bible books and verses.
	c) Physical	-Know your congregation. -Write down the message to convey. -Be fit, healthy -Be watchful in dress and style	-Use other resources: SOP books.
2	Sermon sections:		
	a) Introduction	-Present the problem -Invite the congregation to follow	-It should be concise -It is the largest part
	b) Body	-Organize ideas in equal units -Explain every detail	-It can be a Bible verse, an illustration or a question
	c) Conclusion	-Summarize ideas -Invite to make a decision -Recommend applying principles	
3	Sermon delivery	-Use appropriate words -Use audible voice -Fix not the eyes in one corner -Avoid noisy gestures on the pulpit. -Have the Bible and other notes	

The researcher observed different trends of preaching being developed all over the churches in the North Rwanda Conference by lay preachers. These two preaching styles were void of substance, but in the beginning, many believers would run after them. First, the Literature evangelists would pile books of the Spirit of Prophecy onto the pulpit and would preach from these books one after another, with one or two Bible texts to have their reading approved. Such preaching denotes only a mixture of many topics within one presentation. The congregations would appreciate the speaker as someone who has read many books, and this would attract some local leaders to copy that style of preaching, but it would not bear any fruits. Second because of a lack of adequate time to prepare the sermon, when they were assigned to speak, many church leaders would rush into Google to search and download sermons the content for which they did not even understand. Theirs was just to have something to read or tell on the pulpit (which is detailed with professionalism) without touching the needs of their congregations.

On the sixth Sabbath afternoon (March 31, 2019), bearing in mind that the class was a mixture of people with different educational backgrounds, the researcher did not find it wise to define the word “homiletic” by using ancient languages such as Greek and Latin. He simply could put it this way Homiletic is the art of preaching the Word or writing sermons. The researcher used the syllabus of Amorim who was a lecturer of Homiletics at the Adventist University of Africa, in Rwanda (1988-1991). He did not go deep into every single detail of hermeneutics, rather he spent time on five major components: preparation, sections, resources, illustrations, and delivery. The researcher told participants that preaching is not an easy task to be done anyhow; hence, he introduced them to the structure below.

Preparation of a sermon – The speaker has to prepare himself on three dimensions: spiritually, physically, and intellectually. A spiritual preparation considers the speaker's relationship with God, how he relates to his family, and how he lives out his faith with others. This kind of preparation should be prayerful to get inspired by the Holy Spirit. The physical preparation requires the speaker to be fit, and watchful in terms of dress. The intellectual preparation has to do with Bible reading and understanding, knowing the congregation, and writing down the message to convey it in an orderly manner.

Sections of a sermon – The researcher told participants that it is imperative for a sermon to have three distinctive sections: introduction, body or development, and conclusion. The introduction presents the problem and invites the congregation to follow. It should be short but concise. The body is the largest part of a sermon whereby the speaker explains in detail the message he wants to convey. The body itself must be developed into different segments equally organized, presenting each idea or point of the same unity. The conclusion summarizes what has been said, and invites the congregation to make decisions, to apply the principles that have been taught. He emphasized that many speakers have failed in this area because they did not pay attention to these essential points. He then informed the participants of different forms of conclusions. The speaker can conclude with a related Bible verse, an illustration to cement the biblical principle or a question that is understandable by all.

Resources of a sermon – The purpose of a sermon is to uplift Jesus and present Him as the unique solution to the problem. Therefore, the resource that speaks of Him the most is the Bible. The Word of God is by virtue the fundamental resource of any sermon. Therefore, the Bible is the source of a sermon per excellence. The researcher

mentioned that a Bible text should be compared to another of its kind or parallel to it for more understanding. The Spirit of Prophecy books are other resources to use to prepare a sermon. They contain plenty of commentaries. The book of Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, and the Story of Redemption by Ellen G. White speaks of the Old Testament. The New Testament is commented on in the books of the same author throughout Desire of Ages, Christ's Object Lessons, and Acts of Apostles. Those who have a certain experience can even refer to other literature from other writers if these can be tested by the Bible and found safe and not in contrast with the Biblical faith.

Illustrations – The researcher has explained to participants that illustrations in a sermon are like windows in a house, they bring in fresh air. He then compared illustrations to the recipes in cookery. However, he warned them that the walls of the whole house could not be made of windows all over. It is the same as a sermon. A sermon should not be built on illustrations, one after another. He added that illustrations must be decent, apolitical, accurate, and understandable to all. Illustrations are from life experiences and books of illustrations. In both cases, illustrations should be related to something realistic.

Sermon Presentation – The researcher underlined that even when the previous sections are well done, the last part is very crucial because it is the application part of all that the speaker has prepared. The following items are to be considered during the sermon presentation: words, voice, eyes, gestures, the Bible, and other notes. The speaker has to select appropriate words to let every listener grasp the information being made known. The speaker should avoid words that require searching for the listeners to understand because this will bring into them what is called *internal noise* while the following information is being communicated. Another element in this

section is the use of the voice. The voice, the tune, and the volume that spread the word are very significant. It has to be audible to all in a nice way. The preacher should not fix his eyes on one corner of the congregation all along the preaching. He will not turn his eyes in the air over the congregation.

Then, the research drew the attention of the participants to the gestures of the speaker. They are important and must convey the right message that is being spoken, especially the use of fingers, and the positioning on the pulpit. The researcher concluded this section with the use of the Bible and other writings on the pulpit. The Bible must be uplifted in the hands of the speaker and the rest of the writings put on the pulpit, to be used in due time. In the end, this spiritual exercise is beneficial to discipleship growth in that it requires honesty, trust, and accountability from the speakers. The speaker of the Word must preach and encourage the congregation to live what he believes and lives.

Monitoring of the Intervention

The researcher has set up a platform that enlisted all the participants. At the end of each session, he would assign a task whereby participants would apply what they had been taught. Even though some of the participants in the project had missed one or two sessions, because of sickness, the average of attendance was 98.8%, and the average of reports was 98.3%. Respondents were 74, elders were 30 or 41%, and local department leaders were 44 or 59%.

The homiletics item recorded the highest attendance, 80 over 83 or 96.3%, with the highest report of 97.5% from 78 over 80. The reason behind this is that conscious church leaders were tired of the two (damaging) preaching styles that did

not meet the needs of the believers: the LE⁸ style of piling books on the pulpit, and the Google style of downloading sermons through the internet. It seemed that all of them were expecting changes as regards sermon delivery.

For the following items the attendance was good: journaling, Bible study, and home visitation. The Bible journaling recorded an attendance of 74 over 74 or 100%. The task was given to every attendee to do the exercise on journaling for a week, one exercise per day. Those who reported were 74 over 74 or 100%. For the Bible study, the number of attendees was 74 over 74 or 100%. They were given a task to study the Bible using the strategy of *One story one verse*. The report was 72 over 74 or 97.2%. The task that had been given was to develop a Bible study based on seven different questions (three questions of observation, two of principles, and two of application). The home visitation noticed 72 over 74 attendees or 97.2%. The task was to visit two homes a week in a group of two members of the same church. They reported 69 over 72 or 95.8%. The spiritual mentorship registered a low attendance, 72 over 74 or 97.2%. However, it has recorded reports of 71 over 72 or 98.6%. Small groups registered an attendance of 73 over 74 or 98.6%. They were assigned to work in small groups that would last longer but for their exercise to be evaluated in a short time, they were requested to initiate a prayer small group at home. The report was 72 over 73 or 98.6%. They have formed eight groups of five. The table below recapitulates the records. Last, the homiletics scored 100% in attendance and report.

Table 10 records the attendance and reports of respondents.

⁸ LE is the acronym of Literature Evangelist used in the Department of Publishing of SDA. A LE is a layperson who ministers to people through colportage. He/she gets the books from the SDA book center. Among other assignment, he is invited by local churches to speak during the evangelistic campaign.

Table 10. Attendance and Report

Items	Attendance	Task assigned	Report
Journaling	74/74 – 100%	Journaling for 1 week	74/74 – 100%
Bible study	74/74 – 100%	One story one verse strategy	72/74 – 97.2%
Mentorship	72/74 – 97.2%	Mutual accountability	71/72 – 98.6%
Home visitation	72/74 – 97.2 %	Visit 2 by 2 (2 homes a week)	69/72 – 95.8%
Small groups	73/74 – 98.6%	Organize small groups for various church activities	72/73 – 98.6%
Homiletics	74/74 – 100%	Prepare and present sermon to a small group: family, and/or colleagues	74/74 – 100%
Average Attendance	98.8%	Average Report	98.3%

Evaluation of the Results

The researcher has used the numerical scale to evaluate the results of the intervention to ensure it is applicable. He used the same instrumentation but took only the section on spiritual disciplines because the intervention dealt with that very section alone. Respondents were 74 and retrieved were 100%.

Table 11 presents the scale, scoring, and verbal interpretation of the results.

Table 11. Scale, Scoring and Verbal Interpretation

Numeric Scale	Scaled response	Numeric Likert Scale average	Scale Verbal Interpretation
4	Strongly Agree	4.00 – 3.50	Very High
3	Agree	3.49 – 2.50	High
2	Disagree	2.49 – 1.50	Low
1	Strongly Disagree	1.49 – 1.00	Very Low

Table 12 shows the comparison of changes in spiritual disciplines.

Table 12. Comparison of Changes in Spiritual Disciplines

Sub-variable	Before Intervention		After Intervention	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.Prayer	2.19	.562	3.72	.329
2.Fasting	2.09	.564	2.80	.467
3.Bible Journaling	1.23	.629	3.43	.431
4.Bible Study	1.75	.653	3.82	.624
5.Spiritual Mentor	1.32	.423	1.47	.352
6.Spiritual Partner	1.18	.479	1.67	.521
7.Mentoring New Converts	1.13	.511	2.92	.612
8.Faith-sharing	1.10	.429	3.77	.359
9.Family Worship	2.52	.472	3.34	.685
10. Home Visitation	1.46	.546	3.62	.349
Spiritual Disciplines	1.48	.526	3.14	.472

The respondents' level of spiritual disciplines was generally *very low* ($M = 1.48$, $SD = .526$) as was shown by the results of the instrumentation. After the implementation of the intervention, the means and standard deviation showed that the respondents' level of spiritual disciplines was generally *high* ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .472$). The implication is that the respondents had practiced the spiritual disciplines better than before the study began. Therefore, the churches of the Kigombe District had recorded many practical transformations. The outcomes of the intervention were noticeable in four churches out of five.

Evaluation of the Initiative

The implementation of the project lasted for six months (February to July 2019). The final evaluation was done in the last quarter of the same year (September

to November 2019). It has shown outstanding progress in many areas: church attendance increased, organization of prayer meetings, tithing returning, home visitation, effective small group activities, and new church buildings in four out of five local churches of the case study. However, one church out of five, Cyuve local church had little progress due to some conflicts that were perpetuated in the local church leadership. It is well understood that discipleship is not measured in statistics however good numbers were proof of great commitment. Despite the pandemic disease of Covid-19 that struck the whole world and spread all over (end of 2019 beginning of 2020), church leaders together with their fellow believers in the Kigombe District manifested a greater commitment than it was before. Visible facts could attest to their engagement even during the COVID-19 period. Churches were closed due to lockdown measures, and four out of five churches opened online churches.

The first achievement was that during the lockdown, the small group activities were now more effective than ever before. Every church leader was assigned a group of members to minister to. They were able to teach and preach what they had read through the practices of Bible journaling and Bible study by themselves. The mid-week prayer program, Sabbath school lessons, and worship program were done through conference calls. Pastors including the researcher were to monitor different platforms. It has been of great help to resist the false teachings of erroneous people who scattered all over heretic information about the COVID-19 vaccine being the mark of the beast. This confused some of the church members.

The second great achievement was the effectiveness of small groups in social activities. Many church members had lost their jobs. Every church created small zones within itself to reach the believers. Every zone was assigned to a group of

leaders so that they could organize people to attend to the needy. It worked very well as never before. In the same way, church members could attend to their neighbors including the non-Adventists. These two activities: different Bible studies through conference calls into small groups (WhatsApp) and assistance to the needy regardless of their faith, added new converts to these churches. The first Sabbath when the church was resumed, there were plenty of new converts ready for baptism when conditions would allow.

The third accomplishment was that three churches out of five (Kigombe, Galilaya, and Yaoundé) were the first Adventist local churches to reopen their doors after the lockdown ceased. It was because their members stayed connected even during the lockdown that they were eager to gather together for fellowship. All over the country, they were the only churches to reopen on that single Sabbath. It denoted the determination of church members to start afresh effective worship and fellowship with their local leadership.

Last but not least, church members in two churches, Kigombe and Yaoundé, were able to put in place new church buildings, one structure each. Though they were not allowed to meet for worship, they put together all their means to get to such an achievement, in a difficult time of global economic crisis due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was proof of the commitment and transformational process at the local church level. Such progress was the result of the transforming discipleship exercise in the ranks of local church leaders and eventually impacting the rest of the church members. The third one, Galilaya church completed the finishing works of the new building soon after the lockdown. Finally, Nyarubande church, the fourth excelled over the rest in terms of serving the community tirelessly during the lockdown periods.

Limitations

There were three unexpected challenges. First, prolonged conflicts between leaders of Cyuve Church had been a stumbling block to implementing the project in that particular church. Second, time management was another factor that challenged the process of implementation. Some of the church leaders did not keep the time, even though it was not alarming. They were late to come in for the training and quick to go out for a break to the point that, sometimes, it required double the duration of one class. Last, during the evaluation of the intervention, two participants fell sick, and could not attend the training on mentorship and home visitation. They were not even able to report for Bible study assignments. One of them could attend the training in small groups but was not able to report. This was the reason behind the variations in attendance and reports.

Summary

This chapter looked at the implementation of the intervention and its results. The training program being the basis of the intervention was built on six different topics that foster the discipleship growth of a Christian. The results of the instrumentation for the spiritual disciplines generally scored very low level. Paradoxically, after the implementation of the intervention, the results generally scored high level. However, one out of three items for mentoring scored very low level still after the intervention.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The Kigombe district of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was established in 1996, two years after the tragedy of genocide against the Tutsis that struck the country of Rwanda. People were killed in millions, while some others fled abroad. The period after the genocide was very challenging in every domain of life. The rehabilitation period was a tougher one. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not spared. This research aimed to address the clear deficiency in the training of local church leaders in the Kigombe District. Therefore, the project aimed to design a discipleship program to enhance their spiritual transformation in a way that would impact the spiritual lives of their believers.

Preliminary findings on the spiritual disciplines indicated that the participation of church leaders is very low, between 3% and 7%. The random pretest has shown that 18% of local church leaders had participated in a retreat on the spiritual life, while 6% revealed they were trained on discipleship once in 7 years of their eldership. In the course of the implementation of the project, the participants have shown more interest than before.

The practice of spiritual disciplines played an important role in getting the results. Home visitation, small group activities, and mentoring new converts had been useful in the course of the implementation of the intervention. The respondents of the study generally had *very low* levels of spiritual practices based on the instrumentation

results. The evaluation of the intervention indicated that respondents' results to the same instrumentation generally had a *high* level of spiritual exercises. The outcomes were numerous. At the beginning of this project, the presence of the church leaders in different church services was at 4%. At the end of the study, findings on variables indicated that participation in various church activities had increased to 51%. Tithe givers increased from 13% at the beginning to 40% at the evaluation of the results. Church attendance moved from 4.9% to 39%. The Sabbath School attendance recorded an increment of 25% (35 to 60). The backsliding decreased at a rate of 30% (50 to 20) in a year.¹

Conclusion

The researcher embarked on this project to meet the challenges that were contributing to the inadequacy of the church leaders' ministry in relationship with their spiritual transformation. It was concluded that after implementing the intervention, positive changes have taken place. The results evaluation of the intervention showed that there was satisfaction in attendance and reports because the lowest rate of attendance was 97.2%, and 95.8% of reports. The construction of two new church buildings and the completion of a third church building under the pressing conditions of COVID-19 was a good indicator that the local church leaders of those respective churches had started a new spiritual transformation journey. Moreover, it indicated that the church members were more committed than before to the spiritual life of the whole church.

¹ Kigombe District Pastor's Office of Seventh-day Adventists, "Church Pastor's Annual Report/Kigombe District Business Meeting" (Musanze, Rwanda: Kigombe District 25-December 2021), 8.

In the Bible, both Testaments are found models of discipleship. In the Old Testament, Patriarchs disciple others, and Prophets mentor others. It has been the case of Abraham and Lot (Gen 13:5-9), and Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1: 16, 17). In the New Testament, found the best models: Jesus and the apostles (Matt 5-7), Paul and Timothy (1 Tim 4:12). The purpose of the study was to develop a discipleship program for the Kigombe district church leaders for their spiritual transformation.

The fact that the spiritual transformation of a local church leader can affect positively/negatively the believers under his/her leadership was a presupposition at the beginning of the study, it has become a reality in its implementation. The researcher chose to train local church leaders in spiritual disciplines to improve their discipleship, and consequently impact the rest of the believers. The apostle Paul made it clear when speaking to the Corinthians, and the Philippians as he said therefore, I urge you, imitate me (1 Cor 4:16). He added, imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1). He went on inviting the Philippians to join him by imitating his example (Phil 3:17). [Holy Bible]

It was also concluded that once the nominated local church leaders are well trained, the outcome is a threefold tool to spiritual transformation: leaders are well equipped, discipleship becomes a transforming journey, and the flock is well taken care of. Here, equipment does not necessarily mean to add knowledge or to get more materials. It also encompasses the spiritual maturity of the leaders. Such maturity concerns their spiritual lives and their experience in discipling others. Lastly, it was observed that any form of disunity would always be a stumbling block to any spiritual progress. The local church whose leaders fell short of uniting and understanding each other had been suffering for a long time from conflictual conditions.

Implications

This paragraph outlines the implications of the results:

1. Lay people who have accepted their church nomination are eager to learn to serve better as they grow in their daily lives.
2. Thorough use of spiritual disciplines is of greater help to develop an effective discipleship process.
3. Effective small group activities create the feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood among church leaders and church believers at large; therefore, it increases the attitude of trust and accountability to one another.
4. The spiritual awakening of local church leadership produces spiritual revival and commitment of church members.
5. The educational level of church leaders might play a role in their responsibilities, but it does not necessarily have a role to play in their discipleship growth.

Challenges Encountered

In the process of the implementation, the researcher encountered some challenges that delayed the process either to start or to get to its achievements. The following are the major ones:

1. The lack of a discipleship program for local leaders in the previous years created resistance to contribute from the side of newly nominated leaders in the churches.
2. Widespread false teachings from dissident groups hindered some of the activities like small group activities operating outdoors.

3. Church attendance used to be considered the only standard of true discipleship. Teaching and exercising different spiritual disciplines were taken as introducing a new sect into the church.
4. Elderly church leaders adhered differently to the project. Women were quick to accept while men were hesitant. It created a disagreement in one or two church boards before they could all agree to contribute.
5. The financial needs of the local church had overshadowed every other church activity. Whenever any meeting was convened on Sabbath afternoon or Sunday, most local church leaders would find a reason to not attend because they pretended the agenda would relate to finances. To raise discipleship as a concern was considered a trap to have them, then to shift the agenda on finances.
6. Two respondents were not regular in the training because they felt sick. Some others did not keep the starting time, especially those in the civil servant domain. It sometimes delayed the exercise of the day to begin.
7. People in the administration of the North Rwanda Conference who did not understand the purpose of the project had tried to work against its implementation.
8. Because of the disunity in the local leadership of one church, though they did not disengage during the process of the project, the local leaders were not committed to working for their spiritual transformation.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have left the door open to further research. There is still much to do on this topic. The following recommendations give room to explore more on the topic.

1. Discipleship cannot be measured over a short time. Spiritual change does not take place overnight. Therefore, a study on discipleship for local church leaders should be conducted over a long time for more accurate results.
2. Spiritual disciplines are key factors in fostering discipleship. They should be taught to local church leaders as well as church members. Indeed, they should be practiced for individual and corporal benefits.
3. The study should be done on a greater number of respondents for more accurate results.
4. The discipleship program developed in this research should apply to all the pastors of the North Rwanda Conference and be implemented in all churches of the same conference for the benefit of church members.
5. Special attention should be given to the Cyuve local church, one of the five churches included in this study, as other issues outside the study's context have affected its results.
6. Discipleship is an ongoing journey throughout one's life and serves as a means for spiritual transformation. Engaging in spiritual practices contributes positively to spiritual growth. The researcher welcomes any author who wishes to delve deeper into the topic of discipleship, as it significantly influences all aspects of Christian living.
7. The evaluation revealed that, with the exception of mentorship for new converts who achieved high scores, the remaining aspects of the mentoring program received comparatively low ratings. Consequently, these two areas warrant focused attention to enhance the transformational process of discipleship among local church leaders.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

LETTERS

October 8, 2018

To: Kigombe District Pastor

RE: REQUEST TO BE GRANTED PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN
THE CHURCHES OF THE KIGOMBE DISTRICT OF THE SDA CHURCH

Dear District Pastor,

It is with pleasure and courtesy that I humbly come to you to request to be granted official permission to undertake research among church leaders of the churches in the District under your leadership.

I have been granted a scholarship and I joined the Adventist University of Africa, where I am doing the Doctorate of Ministry program. This is my second year.

The title of my dissertation is *Discipleship Program for Local Church Leaders of the Kigombe District in the North Rwanda Conference*.

The rationale behind this study is that the local church leaders are not actively involved in many of the church activities. Moreover, the mid-week prayer meetings are very dry in all the churches of the District. In contrast, the churches are full of people on Sabbath day.

I desire to know the reasons behind this problem and to come up with possible solutions that will help church leaders grow spiritually and consequently impact the rest of the church members. I want to get official permission from you since you are the District leader of the Kigombe District.

It is with hope that I am longing to get a supportive response from your office.

Yours in Christ,



Karasira Nsengiyumva Gerard

October 10, 2018

To: Pastor Karasira Gerard

RE: Response to Request for permission to conduct research in Churches of the Kigombe District of the SDA Church

Dear Pastor Gerard Karasira,

Grace and peace be unto you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to express my gratitude for receiving your letter dated October 8, 2018, wherein you kindly requested official permission to conduct research among the church leaders of the Kigombe District. I show gratitude to you for your commitment to advancing the Kingdom and addressing the spiritual needs of our community.

I have carefully considered the details of your dissertation, titled "*Discipleship Program for Church Leaders of the Kigombe District in the North Rwanda Conference*," and I appreciate the significance of your study in addressing the challenges faced by our local church leaders. Your desire to identify the underlying reasons behind the observed issues and to propose effective solutions aligns with our shared commitment to nurturing spiritual growth within our congregations.

In light of the importance of your research and its potential impact on our District, I am pleased to grant you official permission to undertake your study within the churches of the Kigombe District. Your dedication to understanding the dynamics of our churches and contributing to the spiritual development of our leaders is highly commendable.

May the Lord continue to guide and bless you in your academic pursuits and your service to the Church. I look forward to hearing about the progress of your research and the positive outcomes it may yield.

Yours in Christ

Rutebuka Joel
Kigombe District Pastor



November 12, 2018

To: Executive Secretary North Rwanda Conference

RE: REQUEST TO BE GRANTED PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN
THE CHURCHES OF THE KIGOMBE DISTRICT OF SDA CHURCH.

Dear Executive Secretary,

I am humbled to come to your office per the request mentioned above. I was privileged to join the Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi Campus. I am now in my second year of the Doctor of Ministry program. Since I am now working as the president of the North Rwanda Conference, I cannot chair the ADCOM to take action on this matter. That is why I am coming to your office so that when I am granted permission to do the research, all the ADCOM members know officially what is going on.

The title of my dissertation is *Discipleship Program for Local Church Leaders of the Kigombe District in the North Rwanda Conference*. The rationale behind this project is that local church leaders in the Kigombe District are not actively involved in church activities. The mid-week prayers are dry in all the churches of the District.

In contrast, the churches are full of people on Sabbath day. Therefore, I desire to know the reasons behind this problem and to come up with possible solutions that will help church leaders and other church members grow spiritually.

Since the Kigombe District is within your territory, I would like to request that you grant me official permission to undertake such research.

Your permission will help me to fulfill one of the most important academic requirements for the completion of my doctorate program, but in the end, it will serve to equip other church leaders throughout the North Rwanda Conference.

I would like to thank you while I am longing to get a supportive response from your office.

Yours in Christ,



Karasira Nsengiyumva Gerard

Seventh-day Adventist Church
North Rwanda Field
P.O Box 33 Musanze



November 15th, 2018

Pr. KARASIRA NSENGIYUMVA Gerard

RE: Response to your request to conduct a research in Churches of KIGOMBE District.

Dear Pastor KARASIRA NSENGIYUMVA Gerard,

Thank you so much for having chosen churches of KIGOMBE District as your area of research for the completion of your doctorate program.

I am so glad to inform you that North Rwanda Field Administrative Committee in its action **018-048**, approved your request as far as conducting a research in all local churches of KIGOMBE District is concerned.

May the Lord shower you with His blessings and guide you as you pursue your research in this specific District of the North Rwanda Field.

Pastor Edison NSENGIYUMVA
North Rwanda Conference
Executive Secretary



Cc. NRC Officers

TELEPHONE: 546903/ 546907/ 546908

TELEGRAM: North Rwanda Field
NRF - MUSANZE

January 25, 2019

To: Pastor RUTEBUKA Joel, Kigombe District Leader

RE: Meeting with Local Church Leaders of the Kigombe District

Dear Pastor,

Christian greetings!

I am preparing to write on a project in which participants will be local church leaders from the five churches of your District, especially church elders and local church department leaders. I need you to invite them on my behalf to meet on February 10, 2019, in Kigombe Central Church, from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

They are needed for research I want to do after they would have consented.

Furthermore, I will need 10 elders and 20 department leaders from each church.

I will be glad to have you with them for that particular day.

Thank you for being so cooperative.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gerard Karasira", is placed on a light-colored rectangular background.

Pastor Gerard Karasira

NRC President

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study entitled:

DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS IN THE
KIGOMBE DISTRICT – NORTH RWANDA FIELD

The purpose of this study is to develop a discipleship program to foster spiritual transformation in the lives of local church leaders in the Kigombe District.

To participate in the study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that has 21 items. Finishing the questionnaire should take approximately 25 to 30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you sign the bottom of this Form, it means that you are giving your consent to be in the study. You will NOT write your name on the questionnaire and this Form is separate from the questionnaire—this ensures that your identity will not be revealed. No one other than the researcher will have access to the data and all data will be kept on a password-protected computer.

If you do not want to participate in the study, do not begin filling out the questionnaire or participating in other research activities. If you start to fill out the questionnaire and decide you do not want to participate, stop filling it and give it to the researcher. There is no penalty for not participating and your questionnaire will not be used.

If you participate, you will contribute to knowledge about effective discipleship, which may help to equip local church leaders for effective disciple-making of all believers. There are no identifiable risks in participation. The researcher will answer any questions that you have about the study and you should ask them now.

If you have complaints or concerns about this research, please contact the supervisor of the research: Dr Juma Mahlon, email: jumamn@aua.ac.ke

Thank you.

Gerard Karasira, Doctorate of Ministry Programme.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRES

Dear fellow church leaders, I endeavor to work with you on a project. The project aims to identify to what extent the spirituality of church leaders of the Kigombe District is influencing the rest of the church members. Therefore, I would like to present to you a set of twenty-one statements that form the questionnaire for this project. Read them carefully, then answer all of them. It should take less than 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me on 0788 760 0673.

I. Demographics

NB: Please do not fill in your name or any other address except the following:

1. Position in the church:
 - a. Elder (___)
 - b. Departmental director (___)
2. Occupation:
 - a. Church employee (___)
 - b. Civil servant (___)
 - c. Self-employed (___)
 - d. Other (___)
3. Highest educational attainment:
 - a. PhD (___);
 - b. MA (___);
 - c. BA (___);
 - d. High school (___);
 - e. Primary (___);
 - f. None (___)
4. Sex at birth:
 - a. Male (___);
 - b. Female (___)
5. Age brackets:
 - a. > 50 (___);
 - b. 49 – 35 (___);
 - c. 34 – 18 (___)

II. Instructions

1. Circle the answer that fits the best to the corresponding question.
2. Try to be objective and honest as much as possible in answering questions.
3. More than one answer to one question makes it void.
4. Do not add your name or other identification to the answering sheet.

#	Questions	A n	s w	e r	S
Spiritual Disciplines					
1	What time do you allocate to personal prayer?	>1hr	1 – ½ hr	½ - ¼ hr	< ¼ hr
2	How much time do you spend in family worship?	>1hr	1 – ½ hr	< ½ hr – ¼	< ¼ hr
3	How often do you fast?	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Sometimes
4	How often do you do Bible journaling?	Daily	Once/week	Once/month	Sometimes
5	What is your frequency of doing home visitation?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly
6	What time do you spend in Bible study?	>3hrs	2hrs	1hr	<1hr
7	Spiritual leaders should mentor believers.	SA	A	D	SD
8	A spiritual leader needs a spiritual partner.	SA	A	D	SD
9	Church leaders must mentor new converts.	SA	A	D	SD
10	Church leaders have the duty of faith-sharing.	SA	A	D	SD
Characteristics of True Spiritual Growth		SA	A	D	SD
11	Spiritual leaders need to be humble				
12	Caring for one another is a key trait for church leaders				
13	Integrity is required of spiritual leaders to play an effective role for believers				
14	Fellow believers have trust in your leadership				
15	Church leadership requires obedience to God and toward church hierarchy				
16	Your discernment is of great importance in the church board				
17	It is always easy for you to work with other church leaders				
18	Do you always overcome discouragement and disappointment?				
19	Do you find yourself ready to serve others freely?				
20	Faithfulness even in small things is for every true disciple				
21	Fruit-bearing is a mark of true discipleship				

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Look at 11 local church elders and 15 local department leaders.
2. Select them randomly, some individuals have held their positions for an extended period, and others have just held the position for one or two years.
3. Ask them questions privately to maximize the accuracy of the responses.
4. Ask them the following questions:
 - a. What position do you or did you hold in the local church leadership? Elder or department leader?
 - b. For how long have you been in the same position?
 - c. What kind of training have you attended?
 - d. If any, what was your area of need that was not covered there?
 - e. What would you recommend to the higher organization to do to equip local church leaders?

APPENDIX E
SCHEDULE OF TRAINING

#	DATE	TOPICS
1	February 24, 2019	Spiritual Journaling – PRPR method
2	March 3, 2019	Bible Study – One Story One verse
3	March 10, 2019	Spiritual Mentoring
4	March 17, 2019	Small Group Activities
5	March 24, 2019	Home Visitation
6	March 31, 2019	Homiletics

APPENDIX F
TRAINING MATERIALS

I. BIBLE JOURNALING

There are six steps in doing Bible journaling:

- a) Select a Bible text that fits your needs. It is easy for beginners to start always with the gospels or the epistles.
- b) Pray over the selected Bible text so that you may get an understanding of the text under the work of the Holy Spirit.
- c) Read the selected Bible text cautiously.
- d) Write down thoughts and feelings that you get from the reading.
- e) Reflect on the thoughts you get from the reading and try to situate yourself in the passage.
- f) Pray over new insights you get from the exercise so that you may apply them to your life.

After the presentation, trainees are given time to do an exercise, and at the end, some of them will read what they have written down.

Major benefits of the Bible journaling:

- To draw closer to God and to deepen your relationship with Him,
- To gain a better understanding of yourself and how true is your relationship with God,
- To express yourself creatively,
- To connect to other believers by sharing with them what was found helpful in your Christian life.

II. BIBLE STUDY

The easiest method to study the Bible for beginners, in this research, is called the *One Story One Verse* strategy. It consists of reading a Bible story and concentrating on one key verse.

The individual Bible study consists of three important sections, and each one of them is built on a series of questions. As you try to answer them, you get the central message.

The sections are observation, principles, and application. Below are the steps of a Bible study One Story One Verse:

- a) Question of observation:
 - Select a Bible text from the Gospels or Epistles
 - Pray over it
 - Read the passage.
 - Answer to the following questions:
 - What is new in the story that you have not heard before?

- What interests you the most?
- What do you not understand?
- b) Question of principles:
 - What will you apply to your daily life from today?
 - What does the text tell you to do or not do?
 - What lesson do you find out for children, youth, and for the family?
- c) Questions of application:
 - Try to tell the story in your own words without reading, but without distorting the content at the same time.
 - What will you share with others next time when you get time to speak?

III. SPIRITUAL MENTORING

Below are the steps to mentor new converts:

1. Integrate him into a small group
2. Pray and read the Word together (ask him to pray)
3. Give him a small assignment in the group
4. Know general things about his background: family, education, profession
5. Invite him to your home
6. Visit his home
7. Call him on the phone regularly when he is not accessible
8. Ask him questions about his new faith
9. Help him to feel free to ask questions about the new faith
10. Listen when he speaks
11. Know his weakness and strength
12. Appreciate his achievement
13. Teach him to accept his failure and repent
14. Rebuke diligently
15. Encourage him to restart anew when he stumbles
16. Initiate him to support a fellow believer and grow together.

IV. HOMILETICS

The homiletics are guidelines that serve to prepare and deliver properly a sermon. Three major steps are highlighted: preparation, section, and delivery of a sermon.

- 1) Sermon preparation: it comprises three aspects of preparation: spiritual, intellectual, and physical.
 - a. Spiritual preparation:
 - Pray for inspiration
 - Have a good relationship with God (confess your sins and shortcomings)
 - Have good relations with your family and the society
 - b. Intellectual preparation:
 - Read, study, and understand the Scripture
 - Know your congregation
 - Write down the message to convey.
 - c. Physical preparation:
 - Be fit, healthy
 - Be watchful in dress and style.

- 2) Sermon sections:
 - a. Introduction:
 - Present the problem and invite the congregation to follow
 - It should be concise
 - b. Body:
 - Organize ideas in equal units
 - Explain every detail
 - It is the largest part of the sermon.
 - c. Conclusion:
 - Summarize ideas
 - Invite the congregation to make a decision
 - Recommend applying principles.

- 3) Sermon delivery:
 - Use appropriate words and audible voice
 - Fix not the eyes in one corner
 - Avoid noisy gestures on the pulpit
 - Have the Bible and other necessary notes only.

V. HOME VISITATION

Below are basic guidelines that help to make a home visitation a success:

- Pray over those you plan to visit before leaving home,
- Organize visits geographically,
- Pray and read the Word together,
- Do not spend a long time in one home,
- Listen more and talk less, when necessary,
- Do not necessarily answer all questions unless you know you are right,
- Do not introduce political issues and trends of the day,
- Keep records up to date (who was visited and when),
- Visit church members over the phone if they are inaccessible at their homes.

The benefits of visitation are the following:

- To bring fellowship and friendship between leaders and church members,
- To be aware of situations (spiritual conditions of members) you did know,
- To understand the needs or concerns of church members,
- To prepare workshops and sermons that fit the needs of the members.

VI. SMALL GROUPS ACTIVITIES

The small groups are effective units to foster discipleship among group members through various activities. Below are some of these activities:

- To pray and to read the Scripture together
- To fellowship together
- To serve the community in a Christian environment
- To visit and provide for the needy
- To comfort those in difficulties
- To promote church plans and objectives.

There are a good number of benefits that are found in small groups:

- Effective integration of new converts
- Sense of belonging

- To grow spiritually together
- To create a safe space of faith expression
- To be more responsible

These are the guidelines for a small to work efficiently:

- Members should be honest and trustful to one another
- Learn to be accountable
- Care for others
- Avoid suspicious ways of living.

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I was born and raised in a non-Adventist family in 1961. My mother was a Pentecostal believer. I joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was baptized on August 21st, 1982.

Educational background

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1976 – 1981: Bustani Secondary School/DRC

1982 – Aug. 21st: Baptized Seventh-day Adventist, DRC

1983 – 1991: Teacher, Katoyi Secondary School/DRC

1992 – 1994: Headteacher, Rubugu Adventist Elementary School/NECUM - DRC

1996 – 2000: District Pastor, Bugamba, Gishwati/North Rwanda Field – RUM

1999 – July 3rd: Ordained to the Gospel Ministry, RUM

2001 – 2003: Adventist University of Central Africa – Rwanda, BTh – Theology

2004 – 2005: Director, Ruhengeri Station, North Rwanda Field, RUM

2006 – 2010: Education and Youth Director, North Rwanda Field, RUM

2010 – 2017: Student at Adventist University of Africa – Nairobi, MTh – Pastoral
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2011 – 2012: President, South Rwanda Field, RUM

2013 – 2021: President, North Rwanda Conference, RUM

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