

NO PLAN B

Bambang Budijanto, Ph.D.

NO PLAN B

**DISCIPLES OF CHRIST ARE THOSE
WHO MAKE DISCIPLES FOR CHRIST
- AJB -**

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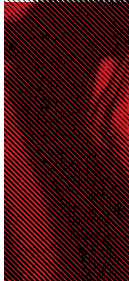
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THE ECCLESIA OF JESUS CHRIST





CHAPTER 1

THE ECCLESIA OF JESUS CHRIST

In the English Bible, the word that we read as “church” is generally a translation of the Greek word ***ecclesia***.

In pre-New Testament usage, *ecclesia* referred to a call or summons for the army to assemble.¹ Later in its development, the word was used to denote popular or general assembly for a civic purpose, or a socio-political gathering specifically in Athens. Overall, the word as it was used in the ancient secular world conveyed the meaning of a gathering of people, an assembly, or an event where people gathered together in one place for socio-political purposes.

The word *ecclesia* occurs 114 times in the New Testament, and there are three basic ways in which it is used. Its primary usage refers to an assembly of the people of God. This is similar to the way the word was used

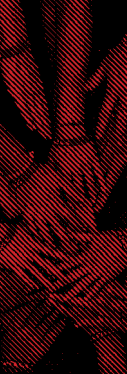
in the secular world at that time. The author of Acts uses it three times to refer to social or civic gatherings of people in general.²

The second major use of *ecclesia* in the New Testament refers to the actual community of the believers — a congregation, a community of God’s people. Paul writes “to the church [*ecclesia*] of God in Corinth,”³ and “to the church [*ecclesia*] of the Thessalonians.”⁴ Here the reference goes beyond simply a gathering to an ongoing community of God’s people. It is implied that this gathering of God’s people has an identity as a community, that they see themselves as a group.

The third use of the word *ecclesia* is allegorical and spiritual. An example of this usage can be seen in Colossians 1:18,⁵ where the human body is used as an illustration of the *ecclesia*.

Jesus’ own words are translated into the Greek *ecclesia* only three times, and every





occurrence is in Matthew's gospel.⁶ In these cases Jesus was referring to the future — when His church (the *ecclesia*) would be established. Apart from this futuristic usage by Jesus, the first other usage of *ecclesia* in the New Testament appears in Acts 5, referring specifically to the congregation in Jerusalem.

Luke uses the term 23 times in the book of Acts, each referring to a specific assembly or congregation with certain geographical locations. While Luke uses the word many times in the book of Acts, he does not use it at all in his gospel, which may suggest that he and the other evangelists (Matthew, Mark and John) perhaps consciously avoided using the word *ecclesia* for any group of disciples or believers during the period of Jesus' earthly activity.

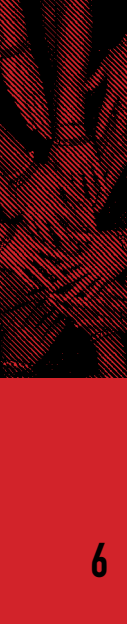
Considering the New Testament usage of the word *ecclesia* as described above, it seems that the turning point that transformed Jesus' followers (disciples) into the church,

the *ecclesia* of Jesus Christ, was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. That is why the day of Pentecost was considered to be the birth of the church. In predicting the time when the *ecclesia* would be born, Jesus foretold of a new community, fueled by divine power:

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

While *ecclesia* was a Greek word commonly used prior to and during Jesus’ time, Jesus did not confine His idea of *ecclesia* to the Roman-Greco socio-political usage of the term. Jesus gave a fresh connotation to the word — a usage that was developed further by Luke and Paul. Instead of an event or gathering, Jesus presented the *ecclesia* as a dynamic kingdom “community,” an unstoppable spiritual force on earth, and an eschatological agent of transformation.⁷





Today this understanding of a dynamic kingdom community is widely accepted. For example, leading New Testament scholar N.T. Wright states, “The church is first and foremost a community, a collection of people who belong to one another because they belong to God.”⁸

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What turned this new kingdom community from just a gathering into the dynamic, unstoppable community? The power of the Holy Spirit began operating in and through the lives of every member of the *ecclesia*. This same group of people who had been fearful and weak (see John 20:19) suddenly emerged into a courageous and powerful community — the church.⁹

Endnotes

- ¹ L. Coenen, "Church, Synagogue," in the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan (1986), 291.
- ² Acts 19:32, 39, 41
- ³ Corinthians 1:2
- ⁴ 1 Thessalonians 1:1
- ⁵ See also Ephesians 1:22 and Colossians 1:24
- ⁶ Matthew 16:18; 18:17
- ⁷ Matthew 16:18
- ⁸ N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco (2006), 210.
- ⁹ Acts 4:8-13



Jesus gave a fresh connotation to the word “Ecclesia.” Jesus presented Ecclesia as a dynamic Kingdom “Community,” an unstoppable spiritual force on earth, and the eschatological agent of transformation.

(Matthew 16:18)

**THE GREAT
COMMISSION-
GIVEN TO
THE CHURCH**





CHAPTER 2

THE GREAT COMMISSION: GIVEN TO THE CHURCH

In the book of Acts, Luke summarizes how Jesus spent the last 40 days of His earthly ministry:

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. – Acts 1:3


Quite consistently with the other evangelists, Luke outlines three main tasks that Jesus engaged in and accomplished during those 40 days, namely:

- proving to His disciples that He had indeed risen from the dead — the foundation of the new faith (1 Cor. 15: 13-14).

- helping His disciples understand the “big picture” — the kingdom of God; and
- entrusting to His disciples the Great Commission — the “mission of the church.”

Within those 40 days, probably toward the end, Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples.¹ But He asked them to “wait in Jerusalem” (meaning, “Do not embark on the Great Commission yet”) until the Holy Spirit came upon them, which would mark the birth of the church.

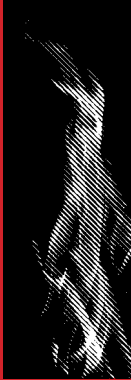
The same people who had been called the Twelve, the disciples, and the followers of Jesus were now — by the baptism of the Holy Spirit — called the church.² They were no longer 12 or 120 individual followers of Jesus, but a *dynamic kingdom community entrusted with the Great Commission* — the *ecclesia*.



The overarching goal for everything the church does, is the Kingdom of God. The most significant competitive advantage the church possesses is the resurrection of Christ – Jesus is alive today. The core strategy for the church to achieve her overarching goal is holistic disciple making.

Endnotes

- ¹ The noun “disciple” (mathetes) is common in the Gospels and Acts, but does not appear in the rest of the New Testament. It appears 73 times in Matthew, 46 times in Mark, and 37 times in Luke. Mark and Luke used the noun to describe the Twelve, while Matthew used the word more widely; his usage included the Twelve, but not exclusively.
- ² Acts 1:5



Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 2, the 120 followers of Christ, praying on the upper room were transformed into the ECCLESIA. They were no longer 120 individual believers, but a dynamic Kingdom Community entrusted with the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth.



**THE CORE
BUSINESS
OF THE
CHURCH:
MAKING
DISCIPLES**





CHAPTER 3

THE CORE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH: MAKING DISCIPLES

The Great Commission embodies the mission of the church: to make disciples. The verb “make disciple” (*matheteuo*) occurs four times in the New Testament.¹ Out of these four occurrences, only in Matthew 28:19 does the verb appear in the imperative or command form.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
– Matthew 28:18-20

The imperative verb - “make disciples” in Matthew 28:19 defines the main action, the core command of the Great Commission. Matthew uses three participles alongside the imperative verb: *poreuthentes* (“going”), *baptizontes* (“baptizing”), and *didaskontes* (“teaching”). The participles “baptizing” and “teaching” outline how the mission of making disciples is to be carried out.

Thus the command could read, “As you are baptizing people, make them disciples. As you are teaching people to obey all of My commands, make them My disciples.”

The first participle that accompanies the imperative “make disciples” (*matheteusate*) is “going” (*poreuthentes*). It sets the tone of the Great Commission. The verb *poreuomai* (“going”) occurs 154 times in the New Testament and conveys the meaning of traveling or journeying — both literally and figuratively (to die, to take a journey into the other world).² Just as the notion of the church of Jesus Christ is that of a





dynamic community and not an event, **so the disciple-making process is a journey and not a single event or intervention.** This journey of disciple-making is the path that will lead people to grow into Christlikeness.³

The second participle in the Great Commission text is: “baptizing” them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Baptism marked the identification of a believer with Jesus’ death and resurrection. In the context of the journey of discipleship, such identification with Jesus brought with it a profound identification with the community of like-minded Christians. **When one declared oneself to be a Jesus follower through baptism, one committed to being a disciple – and to making disciples –** so each member of the community would become more like Christ.

The third participle is *didaskontes*: “teaching” them to obey or observe everything Jesus has taught them. The church was commissioned to make disciples by means

of teaching (*didasko*).⁴ The word implies a broad approach to learning with a focus beyond intellectual gains. ***The objective of the disciple-making process is not to accumulate knowledge*** of all the teachings of Jesus. Rather, the intended outcome of discipleship is the demonstration, in thought and behavior, of the lordship of Christ. This is verified in the expected outcome of the disciple-making process, which is to enable disciples ***to obey*** and submit to the reign and lordship of Jesus Christ. ***Thus the goal of the Great Commission, and therefore of the disciple-making process, is the reign of Christ in individual life and its reflection in community.***

A kingdom is that domain where the king's sovereignty is honored and his will is done. It has been said that the universe holds about 7 billion and one kingdoms — God's kingdom and the 7 billion tiny little kingdoms where God has granted a small (and temporary) exemption from His sovereignty. These are "ruled" by us individually in the form of our





will. The kingdom of God advances every time one of us chooses to align our will with the will of the King — when His will is done in and through us. The visible evidence of His will — relationships characterized by love of God and of one another — can be considered a manifestation or “sign” of the reign of Christ.

Disciple-making is aimed at creating a lifelong holistic learner committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ, powered by ongoing intentional holistic transformation into Christlikeness. Discipleship is a dynamic process and journey of holistic personal growth in, with and through the kingdom community (the church), which takes place within the context of, and for the purpose of, the advancement of God’s reign (the lordship of Christ) in individual lives as well as in the broader community.

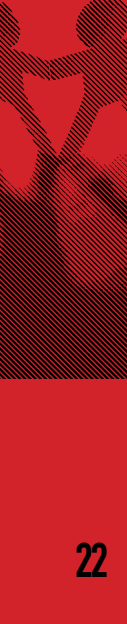
The local church is the sign of the kingdom in that the reign of God is most vividly demonstrated in the lives of its members.

As the character and mind of Christ are increasingly manifested in the life of each disciple, kingdom ethics govern the way each disciple relates to others and to the rest of the world in an increasing measure.⁵

The church's core business and only "mandated" strategy is to make disciples. In the Great Commission Jesus did not command the church to "engage in making disciples **and** to care for the poor," or to "make disciples **and** to care for creation," or to "make disciples and to engage in the public square." This is because making disciples **includes** all of those aspects. The ultimate goal of making disciples is the kingdom of God, which is the **reign of God in individual lives and its reflection in families, communities and nations.**

The disciple-making process is holistic in nature. Jesus did not commission the church to eradicate poverty; He did tell the church to make disciples. But through the disciple-making process, poverty should





be eradicated as the kingdom of God is advanced.⁶

Consider the words of Christopher Sugden in ***Radical Discipleship***:

Christian maturity covers the whole of our humanity. We often reduce Christian maturity to the “spiritual” activities of regular prayer and Bible reading, personal evangelism, Christian service and active concerns for missionary society. We neglect goals and motives in career and job, attitude to community and social issues, involvement with others in fellowship and sharing, the practice of hospitality and the care of the underprivileged.⁷

The good news of Jesus Christ is both proclaimed ***and*** demonstrated or it is nothing. It must encompass the whole person and the whole of humanity. The split

of the gospel into spiritual concerns and social concerns is a false dichotomy.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian, wrote from his cell in the Flossenbürg concentration camp during World War II: **“The church is only the church when it exists for others.”**⁸ We go even further by asserting that **the church is only the church when it is a local, dynamic community of disciple-making believers.** This definition captures a biblical sense of what the church is and what the church **does.**

An old African proverb says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Similarly, it takes a church to make a true disciple of Christ.

The Great Commission to make disciples was not given to individual Christians; it is the work of the Holy Spirit through the church. An individual Christian may be used by the Holy Spirit to lead a person to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, but it will take the church — the community of Christ, the





family of God — to make a mature disciple. One Christian may be able to help another Christian grow in his or her spiritual journey, but an effective and holistic disciple-making process best occurs in the context of a community of disciples — a local church.

The leadership and structure of local churches should be designed to facilitate the continuous transformation of each member into a mature believer in the likeness of Christ.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. – Ephesians 4:11-13

Our churches should be equipping centers to prepare God's people for service. It is our service to others that will strengthen the Body of Christ and create transformation and growth in each person's life. Without service, there is limited spiritual growth in both the individual believer and the community of believers. As Paul said in Ephesians, it is when the whole body is in service, each part doing its part, that the body is strengthened and built up.⁹

The dynamic community of the local church operates powerfully in advancing the kingdom of God every single day — seven days a week.¹⁰ Tragically, this non-stop transformation has, in many parts of the world, been reconfigured into a single event on Sundays, and looking on “church” primarily as a weekly event on Sundays returns the meaning of the word back to its ancient, secular usage as merely an event or gathering. Jesus had other ideas. Jesus called His church to be a dynamic, kingdom-building, disciple-making community.



Endnotes

- ¹ Matthew 13:52; 27:57; 28:19; Acts 14:21
- ² Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek, 4198, www.strongnumbers.com/greek/4198.htm.
- ³ Ephesians 4:12-13
- ⁴ It is a prolonged (causative) form of a primary verb *dao* (to learn), to teach (in the same broad application). Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek, 1321, www.strongnumbers.com/greek/1321.htm.
- ⁵ Philippians 2:1-9
- ⁶ Acts 4:34
- ⁷ Christopher Sugden, *Radical Discipleship*, Basingstoke, England: Marshall, Morgan and Scott (1981), 128.
- ⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, New York: Macmillan Publishing (1971).
- ⁹ Ephesians 4:16
- ¹⁰ Acts 2:46-47



As you are going (wherever you go), do make disciple of all people – don't just go. As you are baptizing (no matter how many people you baptize), make them my disciple – don't just baptizing them. As you are teaching (no matter how long you teach), make all of them my disciple – don't just teach (Matthew 28:19-20).





**THE CHURCH
AN UNSTOPPABLE
FORCE**



CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH: AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

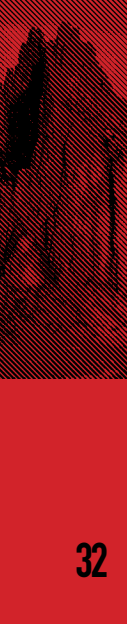
The church is an unstoppable force — the mightiest force on earth, prevailing against hell itself. The church is God’s Plan A for advancing His kingdom. And there is no Plan B. The church is a dynamic, progressive, transforming community for the advancement of the kingdom of God. The church is the agent God chooses, establishes and nurtures to accomplish His purpose in restoring His kingdom. It is the only entity established by Jesus Christ.

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church [ecclesia], and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and

whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” – Matthew 16:18-19

Jesus was the founder, the architect, and the one who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, constructed and established the church. Through His Holy Spirit, Jesus is also the one who continues to build, edify and embolden His church everywhere and throughout history. The advancement of life¹ and of the kingdom of God implies the weakening and shrinkage of the kingdom of death and darkness. Thus the church, by its very nature, poses a serious threat to death (hades) and the kingdom of hell (sheol). Jesus promised that even the gates of hell would not be able to stop, let alone overcome, this dynamic spiritual community.

Jesus also indicated that the church would possess the keys of His kingdom, which would grant unlimited access to the throne of God. With this privilege, the church would operate in the authority and power of God.



With the magnitude of the mission and the threat posed to the kingdom of hell, the church could not afford to operate solely within the human realm, relying only on human strength.

The church in Acts 2 set the standard for what it means to operate in the power of God.² Inaugurated in Jerusalem, it spread rapidly and in less than 300 years transformed lives throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Now as then, the church is empowered by God to face extreme challenges and to prevail against intense opposition. Now as then, the church is meant to influence all aspects of life and all sectors of society.

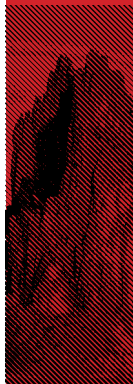
The church was founded upon the “rock,” the confession of Peter that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. This is our firm and unmovable foundation. This dynamic kingdom community is now, as it was at its formation, endowed with power, authority

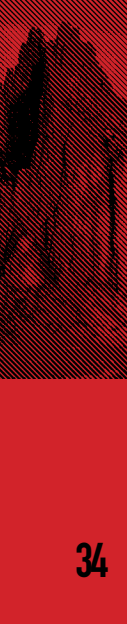
and guidance from God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The transformational function of the church is not limited to its internal transformation. The Body of Christ does not exist for itself but as an agency of God's work in the world. Leaders are to equip God's people for works of service. The activities of the church fellowship must impact how the kingdom community lives out its call, reflecting the image of Christ in the midst of society.

Where does the church stand in the global fight against poverty, corruption, injustice, racial conflicts, diseases and other unresolved issues? Does the church have a role to play in resolving these worldwide problems? Did Jesus design the church to deal with these massive and apparently chronic global issues?

The church has a long and noble history of engaging in the social ills of society and being a force for redemptive good. The Acts





2 church was characterized by how they cared for the widow and the orphan. They were known as the people who had “no needy persons among them.”³

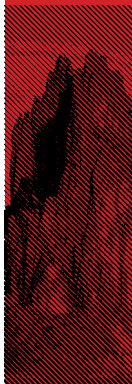
The apostles appointed “a man full of God’s grace and power” who “did great wonders and miraculous signs” to lead the social outreach of the church. This was no second-rate mandate; it was central to the mission of the early church. In fact, so effective was the holistic ministry of the second-century church that the last pagan emperor of Rome, Julian, saw this as a huge threat to the religious system and power of Rome. Julian wrote,

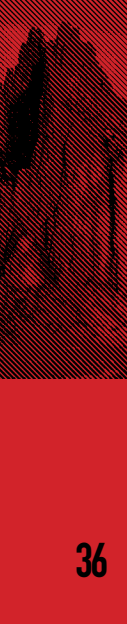
These impious Galileans (Christians) not only feed their own poor, but ours also; welcoming them into the agape, they attract them, as children are attracted, with cakes.... Whilst the pagan priests neglect the poor, the hated Galileans devote themselves to works of charity, and

by a display of false compassion have established and given effect to their pernicious errors. See their love feasts, and their tables spread for the indigent. Such practice is common among them, and causes contempt for our gods.⁴

The church is commissioned to engage with the world and participate in the reconciliation of all things. To do this, the church has a single strategy: the comprehensive (holistic) disciple-making process.

Through holistic disciple-making, people are linked to the ultimate source of power — the Creator himself, through Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through holistic disciple-making, the church is empowered to demonstrate the ultimate form of love: the agape — the sacrificial and unconditional love that heals and restores relationships. Through holistic disciple-making, the poor and the oppressed are empowered to reach their potential in





God and become salt and light for their communities and nations. When kingdom ethics govern the behavior of those engaged in holistic disciple-making, people's dignity is restored. This process impacts the broader community with healing and forgiveness.

Endnotes

¹ 1John 10:10

² Acts 2:43; 3:12; 4:7, 30, 33; 5:12

³ Acts 4:34

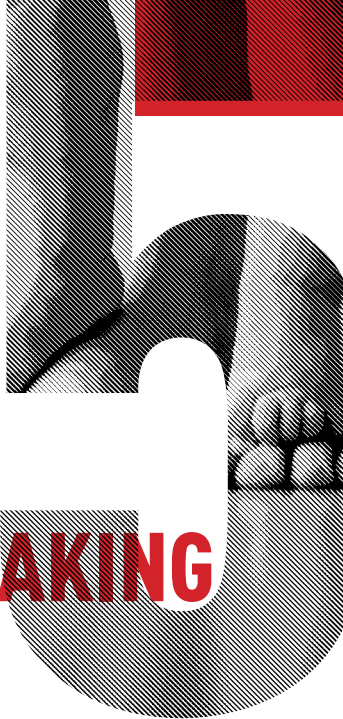
⁴ Emperor Julian, Epistle to Pagan High Priests, www.christianpost.com/news/changing-culture- a-study-in-cultural-engagement-part-4-47644.



The church is the hope of the world. Nothing can stop the church in fulfilling its divine mission, whether in her fight against injustice or poverty. The only strategy God entrusted to the church to fulfill its mission is the holistic disciple making.



THE DISCIPLE-MAKING JOURNEY





CHAPTER 5

THE DISCIPLE-MAKING JOURNEY

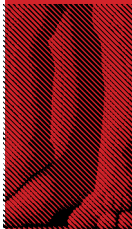
The audience of the Great Commission, or disciple-making process, is **ta ethne** (all peoples), which include people of any nations, religious orientations and people of any age. ***Jesus did not limit the scope for disciple-making to candidates within the church building or church membership.*** In fact, the Great Commission assumes that disciple-making begins outside the church walls.

Disciple-making is a transformation process bringing those far from Christ to closeness and, finally, Christ-likeness. It is a process of helping people to move toward maturity, wholeness and becoming increasingly like Jesus.

Primarily, disciple-making is a growth process—not a program—consisting of one’s

relationship with God, with others and with her/himself (not simply head knowledge). It is more of a community endeavor than an individual endeavor, and a journey together through modeling and coaching rather than classroom interactions. ***Jesus' model of disciple-making takes place in our daily lives on any day of the week (not just on Sunday morning or Wednesday evening), and happens the majority of the time outside church walls.***

Most importantly, one can only grow toward Christlikeness when she or he helps others to become more like Christ. In short, ***a disciple is one who makes disciples***. One who take her/his Master's commission/mandate seriously and follow her/his Master's path in helping others to grow holistically in Christ as her/his daily priority.



**DISCIPLE-MAKING
IS PRIMARILY...****DISCIPLE-MAKING
IS MORE THAN
JUST...**

A process

A program

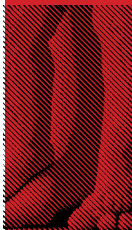
About enriched
relationshipAbout enriched
cognitive/head
knowledgeThrough modeling:
“Imitate me” “Follow
me...” (Not of
perfection, but of
engagement with God
and others.)Through instructional/
lectureIn the context of
communityIn an individual context
(1 on 1)

A journey (nonlinear)

A sense of arrival
(linear)Based on the concept
that you grow as you
help others to grow;
simultaneouslyBased on linear
concept of “you pass
on what you have
completed /passed”;
sequential

**DISCIPLE-MAKING
IS PRIMARILY...****DISCIPLE-MAKING
IS MORE THAN
JUST...**

Focus on others: live to serve others	Focus on self: help others after I help myself; live for others later.
Occurs in day to day life	Occurs as an event; i.e., weekly Bible study
What we do for and with others	What we do to others
Focus on obedience	Focus (solely) on multiplication assumption or business strategy
Start very early in life. Certainly 11 years old is not too early	For adults only
About helping others release their potential to become the best they can be in God's unique design	About completing the curriculum, workbook and assignments.
Holistic in nature	Only spiritual content



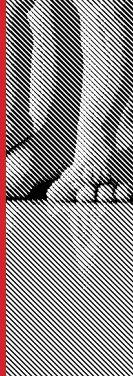


**DISCIPLE-MAKING
IS PRIMARILY...**

Holistic Approach: Day to day life, experiential (being used by God); spiritual (encountering God), relational (with others/community), and instructional

**DISCIPLE-MAKING
IS MORE THAN
JUST...**

Instructional Approach, Self Study, Complete Workbook, Group Discussions



“Make disciple of all people” (He did not say, “all believers”), meaning, all people, no matter of their religious background, race or age. Disciple making is a process, leading people who are ‘far from Christ,’ bring them closer to God and finally help them to grow to become like Christ.



**CHILDREN
AND YOUTH
AS A DYNAMIC
DISCIPLE-MAKING
COMMUNITY**





CHAPTER 6

CHILDREN AND YOUTH AS A DYNAMIC DISCIPLE-MAKING COMMUNITY

Erikson's Theory of Psychological Development postulates a significant shift in development when one reaches adolescence (11-18 years old). Preceding adolescence, development depends on what is done to a person; at adolescence, development depends primarily upon what a person does. At this stage, adolescents begin to develop strong affiliation and devotion to ideals, causes and friends.¹

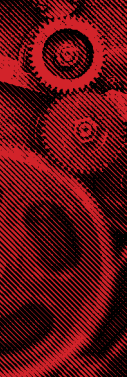
Recent Barna Group research on reasons why young Christians leave church focused on those who were regular churchgoers during their early teens and explored their reasons for disconnection from church life after age 15. The research revealed that the

number one reason our youth leave church is because “churches seem overprotective.”²

At the 4/14 Global Summit in New York in 2010, Reverend C.B. Samuel of India indicated that our Christian teens are in need of ideals—a cause worth living for and dying for—but the church is giving them more and more entertainment instead. Churches thought that teens left the church because of the Xbox and the varied entertainment available to them, so, to compete, more resources were invested on entertainment only to discover that the exodus continued. What children and youth need is a personal connection with high ideals, causes and worthy challenges; to be a force they believe can change the world.

Just recently, Catholic Marawi Bishop Edwin de la Peña of San Juan, Philippines, urged children and youth to actively participate in the missionary endeavors of the church:





You young people and children have the energy, enthusiasm, courage and the ability to take the risk to step forward and say, 'we want to be in that boat also; we want to be with Jesus and respond to the challenge of mission,' said de la Peña, who is also chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Mission of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. The prelate also told the youth that as the future of the nation, this is the right time for them to take the opportunity to engage actively in the mission of the Church. (CBCP News, Monday, February 11, 2013)³

Endnotes

- ¹ Erikson, E.H. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton. 1968.
- ² David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2011.
- ³ Forces outside the church often recognized the needs and potentials of teenagers and youth more than the church. Nazi established Hitler Youth in 1922 with 1,000 memberships in year one. It grew to 5,000 in year 3, and reached 2.3 million in 1933. Scott C. Todd, *Fast Living: How the Church will End Extreme Poverty*. Colorado Springs:



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**KINGDOM
STEWARDSHIP**

CHAPTER 7

KINGDOM STEWARDSHIP

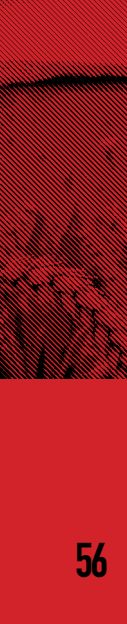
Dr. Bryant Myers' statement that nearly 85 percent of people who make a decision for Christ in the U.S. do so between the ages of 4 and 14¹ has largely been validated by George Barna's book *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*.² While global research concerning this trend is not available, Dan Brewster has been able to confirm similar trends in other parts of the world.³

In the 1990's, a survey was conducted with hundreds of varying groups of Christians who came from non-Christian backgrounds. At least 70 percent of those surveyed indicated that Christian friends or peers were the most 'significant others' who introduced them to Christianity.⁴ As Myers, the Barna Group, and Brewster all affirm, if both the level of receptivity to the Christian

faith of children, as well as the significant role of peers or friends in introducing Christ to the non-Christians are globally true, then children and adolescents (the 4/14ers) are the most significant source for missions in the past many decades.

Singlehurst claims that the first few months and years of our Christian journey are the most productive years for mission. When we first convert, we have non-Christian friends and significant opportunities to share the “Truth” with them. However, after a few short years, we are drawn into the Christian subculture and have fewer and fewer non-Christian friends.

Conversions occur at the rate of 70 percent between the ages of 4 and 14. If newly converted children and teenagers are not encouraged to share their faith with their friends until they reach adulthood (18 years or older)—a time when they have fewer non-Christian friends⁵—then the church has



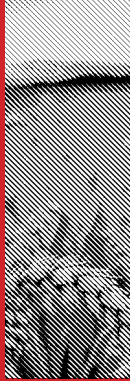
unintentionally wasted years of disciple-making productivity.

The Church lost many young people as they entered college life simply because they were not given the opportunity to grow in a disciple-making journey during their teen years; and they were not encouraged or given the chance to disciple others and help others grow into Christlikeness.

The only way to save this generation is to engage them in the disciple-making process, and partner with them in ministering within their communities. Today, youth and teenagers are waiting to be inspired, challenged and enabled to be used by God in helping their peers (brothers and sisters) to grow into Christlikeness, and, through this disciple-making journey, transform families and communities.

Endnotes

- ¹ Bryant Myers, “The State of the World’s Children: A Cultural Challenge to the Christian Mission in the 1990’s.” A paper presented at the Executive EFMA retreat in 1992.
- ² George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, California: Regal, 2003.
- ³ Dan Brewster, “The 4/14 Window: Child Ministries and Mission Strategy” (2010).
- ⁴ The remaining 30 percent came to know the Lord through reading literature, listening to radio broadcast, evangelistic sermons, dreams or visions of Jesus and others. See Laurence Singlehurst, *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping*. 2nd Ed. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.



The most productive years to fulfill the great commission – to make disciple of all people, especially those still outside the church wall, are the first three years of one's spiritual journey. The first three years after she or he believed in and surrendered his life to Christ.

If local churches around the world begin to

INSPIRE, CHALLENGE, AND ENABLE

every 11 year old and older to become their brother's / sister's keeper by holistically helping their peers to become better people who are becoming more like Christ, and would commit to praying for them and caring for them, then it will help contain the spread of sin, and the glory of God will shine in the community through our children and youth.



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