

ABSTRACT

REBOOTING YOUR WALK WITH JESUS:

THE REDISCOVERY

OF A YOUNG INDIAN INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT

AS A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

by

Jacob Mathew

Young Indian international migrants from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata based in global urban centres either as students or professionals often miss out vital Christian fellowship and struggle in their walk with Jesus and effectiveness for His kingdom. Young India is positioned to make a global impact in the next decade, with strong possibilities that twenty-five percent of the global workforce will be of Indian origin. The opportunity for an Indian Christ-follower to impact the international community is significant. However, the absence of a good local church equipping system preparing young believers for a new international culture spiritually, emotionally, socially, and practically, often results in them failing to live out their calling in life. This study measures the effectiveness of a six-session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to ten international migrants from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in ten international cities. A structured and systematic study of providing spiritual formation on an online platform was formulated to rediscover the migrant's faith journey as a Christ-follower.

This is an intervention project, which involves a mixed approach using qualitative and quantitative instruments. Using a cohesive arrangement of pre-test surveys, post-test

surveys and four focus groups, the major findings of the project were collated. The key findings to equip young Indian international migrants to be effective Christ-followers were presented: recognition of the mission of God, engagement with the Bible, intentional relational habits, reconciling the 'migrant' encounters and emotions, planning a methodical discipleship program and a quality design of the online sessions.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

REBOOTING YOUR WALK WITH JESUS:

THE REDISCOVERY

OF A YOUNG INDIAN INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT

AS A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

presented by

Jacob Mathew

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

Dissertation Coach

Date

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

Date

Dean of the Beeson Center

Date

REBOOTING YOUR WALK WITH JESUS:
THE REDISCOVERY
OF A YOUNG INDIAN INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT
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A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

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May 2018

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
CHAPTER 1: THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT	1
Overview of the Chapter	1
Personal Journey	1
Global Migratory Trends	3
Local Church with a Global Mindset.....	7
Statement of the Problem.....	9
Purpose of the Project	9
Research Questions	10
Research Question 1	10
Research Question 2	10
Research Question 3	10
The Rationale for the Project	10
Definition of Key Terms	12
Delimitations	13
Review of Relevant literature	13
Research Methodology	15
Type of Research	15
Participants	15
Instrumentation	16
Data Collection	16

Data Analysis.....	17
Generalizability	17
Project Overview	17
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT.....	19
Overview of the Chapter	19
Theological Foundations.....	19
Embracing the Mission of God, the Father.....	21
Forming in the image of God the Son, Jesus Christ	23
Following the pathway of God, the Holy Spirit	25
Biblical Foundations	29
Discipleship in the Bible.....	29
Discipleship in the Gospel of John	35
Different Approaches	35
Becoming Like Christ	38
Seeking Christ	39
Believing in Christ	45
Following Christ	51
Church History	68
Practising Discipleship in a Cross-cultural Context	70
Migrant Realities in the 21 st century.....	70
Current Facts	70
Emerging Trends.....	75
Migration Experience	80
Migrant Challenges in Transition	80
Migrant Faith Experience and Expression in International City	82
Practising Discipleship	87

Understanding discipleship	87
Understanding discipleship in a cross-cultural context	90
Johannine Discipleship and a Christian migrant.....	98
Framework for online curriculum for migrants	101
Research Design Literature	110
Summary of Literature	111
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT	114
Overview of the Chapter	114
Nature and Purpose of the Project	114
Research Questions	115
Research Question #1.	115
Research Question #2.	115
Research Question #3.	116
Ministry Context(s)	116
Participants.....	118
Criteria for Selection	118
Description of Participants	119
Contact with Participants.....	119
Program Plan.....	119
Ethical Considerations	120
Instrumentation	121
Expert Review	123
Reliability & Validity of Project Design	125
<i>Reliability</i>	125
<i>Validity</i>	126
Data Collection	127

Data Analysis	129
CHAPTER 4: EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT	131
Overview of the Chapter	131
Participants.....	132
Research Question #1:	133
Research Question #2:	138
T-Test analysis.....	142
Research Question #3:	144
Elements.....	146
<i>Responses to the Components</i>	146
<i>Analysis of the Components</i>	153
Encounters.....	154
<i>God-encounters:</i>	155
<i>People-encounters:</i>	156
<i>Encounters regarding Online Program:</i>	157
Emotions	159
Expressions	159
Experiences	162
Final comments on observed changes.....	170
Summary of Major Findings	171
CHAPTER 5: LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT	172
Overview of the Chapter	172
Major Findings.....	173
First Finding: Equipping international migrants to recognize the global mission of God has the potential to prepare catalytic mission-minded Christ-followers.	173

Second Finding: Engagement with the Bible as an important foundation for healthy discipleship for international migrants	177
Third Finding: Structured and methodical pathway of discipleship is a valuable process to provide spiritual formation	182
Fourth Finding: Intentional relational habits prayerfully nurtured build relationships with the existing networks of relationships for creative influence for the Kingdom and life	186
Fifth Finding: Active involvement in the key elements of an online discipleship program prompts vital personal encounters and emotions that are crucial to shaping God-honoring experiences and expressions in an international context.	191
Sixth Finding: Advanced pre-planning of the program, excellent formulation of the online sessions, and more follow-up after the program leads to greater fruitfulness	196
Discovery vis-à-vis the nature of an ‘Online’ Program	201
Ministry Implications of the Findings.....	204
Limitations of the Study.....	207
Complications to the intended design.....	207
Suggested Changes for Future	210
Improvements in the Instrumentation.....	212
Generalization.....	214
Unexpected Observations	215
Recommendations for Tomorrow’s Church	218
Future Research	221
Postscript.....	222
How has it changed me?.....	222
How will my ministry change?.....	225
APPENDIXES	228

APPENDIX A: LETTER FOR EXPERT REVIEW	228
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (with Pre-test Survey)	231
APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION PROTOCOL.....	238
APPENDIX D: EVALUATION FORM FOR EXPERT REVIEW ON DISCIPLESHIP DISCOVERY SURVEY.....	239
APPENDIX E: EVALUATION FORM FOR EXPERT REVIEW ON FOCUS GROUPS PROTOCOL	241
APPENDIX F: ONLINE SESSIONS SCHEDULE	242
APPENDIX G: OUTLINE OF REBOOT ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM	243
APPENDIX H:.....	244
REBOOT ONLINE PROGRAM INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS	244
APPENDIX I: REBOOT BIBLE PLAN (on YouVersion Bible App)	246
WORKS CITED	247
WORKS CONSULTED	260

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 4.1 Standard Deviation greater than 1	135
Table 4.2 Standard Deviation lower than 0.5	135
Table 4.3 Table showing questions with the lowest mean.....	137
Table 4.4 Positive Changes in Mean.....	140
Table 4.5 Negative Changes in Mean	141
Table 4.6 No Changes in Mean.....	141
Table 4.7 T-Test Results: Knowledge	142
Table 4.8 T-Test Results: Attitudes	143
Table 4.9 T-Test Results: Practices	143

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1 Global trends in international migration from 1990-2015	5
Figure 1.2 Proportion of international migrants across the globe.....	5
Figure 1.3 Ratio of international migrants to global population.....	6
Figure 1.4 Gender and age demographics of international migrants	6
Figure 1.5 Resident Migrants and Migrants abroad.....	7
Figure 2.1 International migrant’s synthesis of life framework	83
Figure 4.1 Socio-demographics of participants	133
Figure 4.2 Standard Deviation Trends for Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices.....	136
Figure 4.3 Overall Mean Trend	137
Figure 4.4 Comparative graphs of pre-test and post-test surveys	138
Figure 4.5 Comparative Difference in Mean of pre-test and post-test surveys	139
Figure 4.6 Infographic of Focus Groups findings.....	145
Figure 4.7 Pictorial description of keywords for Focus Groups	162
Figure 4.8 Major themes of Focus Groups	163
Figure 5.1 The Diagrammatic depiction of ‘Pyramid’ of Discipleship	184
Figure 5.2 International migrant’s life framework	189
Figure 5.3 Breakdown of online sessions over six weeks	208

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey started with a conversation. This conversation with my wife, Neena, to whom I'm indebted, prompted me to consider pursuing doctoral studies. This conversation led me to another tête-à-tête in a moving car with my senior pastor and mentor, Rev. Dr. Ivan Satyavrata, who provoked me to go beyond my limits and pursue a doctoral program at an international city. This interchange led to a series of other conversations with close friends, pastors, mentors, and colleagues on what would be the best step forward. The foundation of each of these conversations was a deeper heart conversation with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, *on what would He want me to do?* That's when it spiraled out of my control and into His hands, with a deep passion to be all that He wants me to be and to do all that He wants me to do.

Well, this has been an exciting, exhilarating, exhausting journey for three years with countless conversations at different levels to experience everything God wants me to be. I am grateful for my wife and my two boys, Josiah and Joash, who have been the most patient with me as I unfortunately, was less available for all the 'fun' during these three years. My mother-in-law's prayerful presence and support for us a family during this season is undoubtedly a lifelong debt. My parents not only prayed me through this season and but were willing to help my family. My elder brother, Rajan Mathew, and his family were pillars of strength, whose prayer and financial support made it possible for me to complete this program.

My senior pastor and mentor, Pastor Ivan Satyavrata and his dear wife, Mrs. Sheila Satyavrata, have been the incredible support I needed to help me process this journey, especially during those moments I did not really understand what to do next.

With his vast years of academic and pastoral experience, Pastor Ivan provided vital practical input for my study program and coaching for my dissertation. I appreciate his willingness to closely read my dissertation and give his valued feedback, in spite of his busy schedule. My pastoral colleagues at the AG Church, Kolkata, have been kind and generous to shoulder many of my responsibilities during this study program. Their prayerful support and encouragement to us as a family has been remarkable!

My primary leadership responsibilities at my church involves leading the youth movement. I am grateful to my wife for being willing to lead faithfully for these three years our weekly planning meetings with our youth leadership team. My co-youth pastors, Pastor Agnel and Pastor Phillip, have dynamically grown in their leadership and it's been wonderful to watch them mature in their roles.

Four people specifically helped me towards this project. First, Mayur Doriel, who serves with me in the media department of our church, is appreciated for his valued input towards all the technical aspects of the online program. It has been wonderful to watch Mayur grow in his leadership capacity as he shouldered many of my responsibilities in the media department of the church during these three years. Second, Chetna Kumari, who graciously designed my entire ReBoot online program session notes to be emailed to the participants. Third, Jamshed Madan, a newly married young man, who was gracious to spend several hours late into the night helping me with the data analysis and inferential statistics for the project, just a few weeks after his wedding! Finally, Aunty Joyce Devadas, my teens' Sunday school teacher and an English teacher par excellence who meticulously went through my dissertation and scrutinized my grammar, sentence construction, and punctuation.

About three years ago, I requested twenty of my friends to be my prayer partners for my doctoral journey. All of them faithfully prayed for my family and me during this season. I could sense the power of their prayers, especially at moments I felt I was the weakest to comprehend what I needed to do next. Their faithful prayers to Jesus were evident as the power of Jesus enabled me to accomplish what would have been humanly impossible for me.

The Asbury doctoral program Faculty has been a wonderful team. Dr. Ellen Marmon, Dr. Milton Lowe, Mrs. Lacey Craig, and several other teachers have made this program a worthwhile journey with great affirmation and enjoyment. My coach, Dr. Art McPhee and faculty, Dr. Bryan Collier, have been inspirational models of pastoral and missional leadership. The greatest blessing of these three years has been the twenty cohort classmates with whom I had the privilege of learning together. I literally have been inspired and motivated by the depth of their character, the quality of their ministries, and their passion to impact the nations.

The participants of this program and their eagerness to participate in this program were a precious blessing as they confirmed the burden that God had laid on my heart. They epitomize for me the next generation of global Christ-followers living out His call in the nations.

The gracious affirmation of the Board of the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata was a huge support as they joyfully empowered me to participate in the rigorous schedule of the doctoral program while pursuing the demanding responsibilities of the church ministry. I am grateful to the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God North India (AGNI) movement, Rev. Robert Jeyaraj and the AGNI Executive Committee for

their prayerful support and freedom to pursue this doctoral journey while fulfilling my responsibilities in the AGNI Youth Movement.

I am indebted to life-changing conversations. The ultimate conversation in heaven which led God the Father to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to fulfill the global mission of God.

I am looking forward to being sensitive to the fresh whispers of the Holy Spirit and obedient to His divine conversations to inspire a movement of next-generation global Christ-followers to passionately follow Him.

CHAPTER 1: THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents the need to focus on preparing international migrant young believers from The Assembly of God Church, Kolkata to live out their Christian witness in their new international context. The problem is stated in the urban Kolkata context and the purpose of the project is clearly defined. The questions guiding the research towards the accomplishment of the purpose are specifically outlined as well as the logical reasons to conduct the project. Key terms which would be unique to the research are clearly emphasized besides stating the precise project delimitations.

A project of this nature requires substantial and current books and writings applicable to the context of migration in an international setting. Therefore, pertinent literature to the project is briefly mentioned. Finally, the methodology used for research is clearly stated.

Personal Journey

I have been serving as the youth pastor at The Assembly of God Church, Kolkata for the last sixteen years. These sixteen years have seen the youth of our church emerge as passionate leaders of a growing church. About seventy-five per cent of our church congregation is below the age of thirty-five, comprising of school students, college students, and young professionals. There have been seasons of development as well as seasons of dryness. Passionate prayers coupled with sustainable strategies have brought quantitative and qualitative growth in my youth ministry.

However, these sixteen years have also evolved the world outside. India has become the second most populous country in the world, with nearly 1.3 billion people

(“India Population (2018) - Worldometers”). The demographics of India have changed with over fifty percent of its population below the age of twenty-five and more than sixty-five percent below the age of thirty-five. It is expected that by the year 2020, the average age of an Indian will be twenty-nine years, compared to thirty-seven for China and forty-eight for Japan(Nilekani 53).

An emerging trend and the special focus of this project, especially in the context of Kolkata, are young people increasingly leaving the city and making a move to other cities in India and even outside India. Many of them who leave the city are either students or professionals. A huge majority of those who leave the city rarely come back and usually settle down in other affluent cities in India or abroad. The limited job options within Kolkata discourage these migrant young believers from coming back to the city.

When a young believer leaves from the Assembly of God Church, the local church, like any other church worldwide faces potential losses. First, the local church experiences loss of an actively involved youth leader, especially if he or she was at the frontline of leadership. Second, if a young believer leaving the city was a tithing member and generously involved in its projects, there is a drop in the church finances. Third, a regular departure of many migrant believers over a period of time results in a decline in church attendance. Fourth, on some occasions it seems like a waste of investment of time and resources, especially if the young believer was mentored and nurtured by the church leadership.

On the other hand, the local church leadership gives the following basic guidance when the young believer moves out of the city. First, the pastoral team is available to meet and counsel on a one on one with the young believer as he or she prepares to make

the move. Second, the pastoral team provides the necessary information to connect the migrant believer to a local church in the new city. Sometimes, the pastor may even call the pastoral contacts in the new city to request for special pastoral care for their believer. Third, sometimes a farewell party is arranged for the migrant in his church small group with blessing and prayer. Fourth, the Sunday before his departure, the pastoral team publicly prays for the migrant and asks for God's blessings upon his move. Finally, based on the relationship the migrant maintains with the local church, the pastoral team occasionally would call and provide encouragement to the migrant.

Global Migratory Trends

In the context of this project, it would be important to consider the global migratory trends and a preliminary description of the nature of international migration. The World Migration Report 2018 collates valuable data and information on the latest status of migration. According to this report:

International migration is a complex phenomenon that touches on a multiplicity of economic, social and security aspects affecting our daily lives in an increasingly interconnected world. Migration is a term that encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations involving people of all walks of life and backgrounds. More than ever before, migration touches all States and people in an era of deepening globalization. Migration is intertwined with geopolitics, trade and cultural exchange, and provides opportunities for States, businesses and communities to benefit enormously. Migration has helped improve people's lives in both origin and destination countries and has offered opportunities for millions of people worldwide to forge safe and meaningful lives abroad. Not all migration

occurs in positive circumstances, however. We have in recent years seen an increase in migration and displacement occurring due to conflict, persecution, environmental degradation and change, and a profound lack of human security and opportunity. While most international migration occurs legally, some of the greatest insecurities for migrants, and much of the public concern about immigration, is associated with irregular migration (McAuliffe and Ruhs 1).

Interestingly, this report stated that the international migrant population worldwide has increased in size but remained relatively stable as a proportion of the world's population. (See Figure 1.1.) However, the proportion of international migrants varies significantly in the different continents of the world. (See Figure 1.2.) Based on this report, there were 244 million international migrants in 2015 out of a global population of 7.3 billion: 1 in every 30 people. (See Figure 1.3.) Fifty-two percent of international migrants are male, 48% are female with most of the migrants between the working age category of 20-64 (McAuliffe and Ruhs 16-19). (See Figure 1.4.) In the light of this project, it is vital to note the top destinations and origins of international migrants in 2015. (See Figure 1.5.)

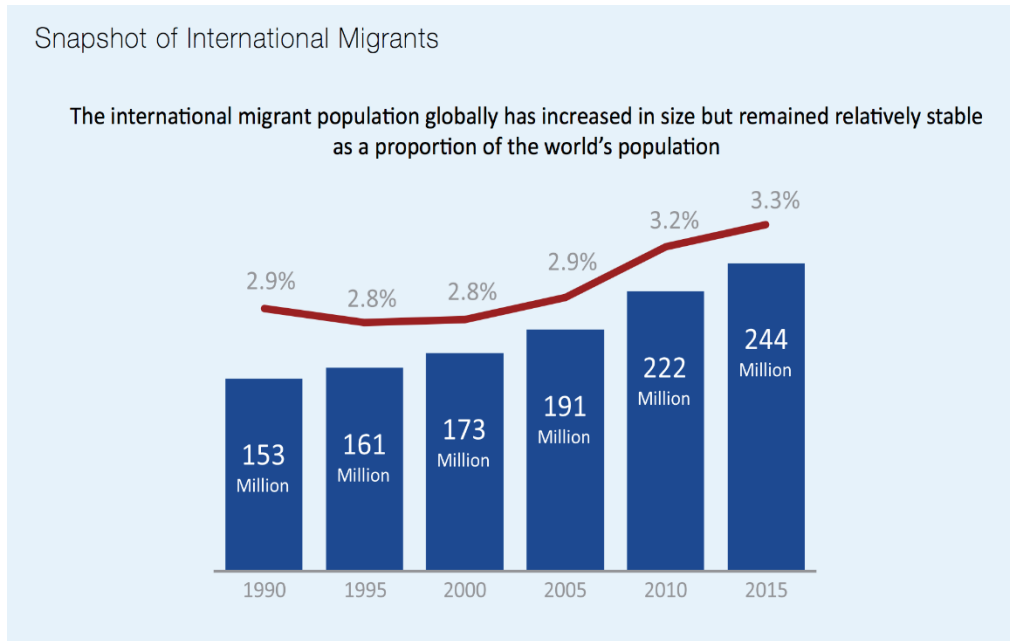


Figure 1.1 Global trends in international migration from 1990-2015. (McAuliffe and Ruhs 16)

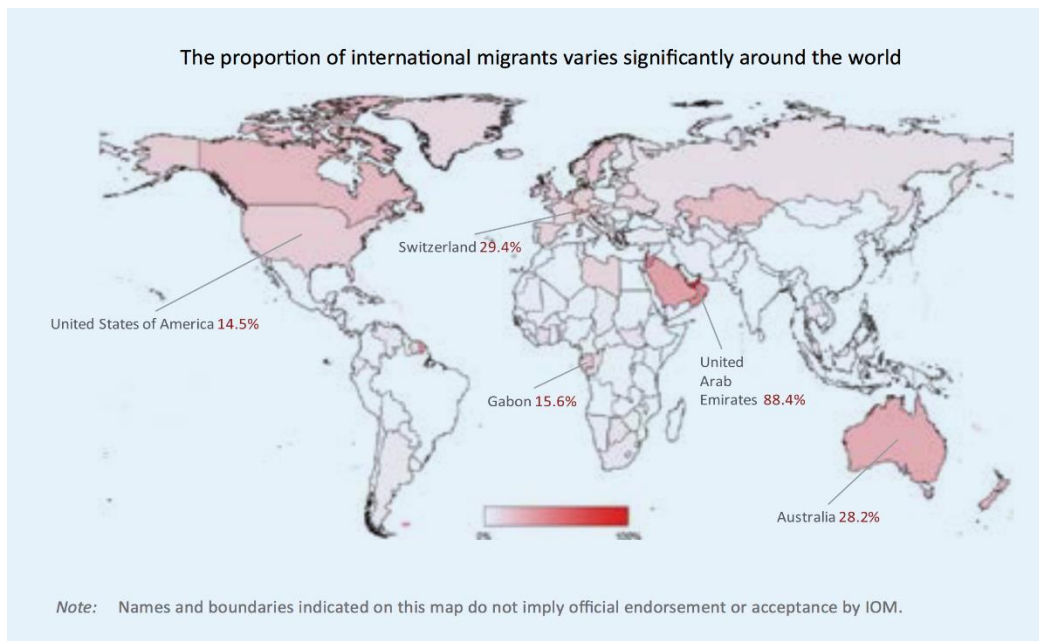


Figure 1.2 Proportion of international migrants across the globe. (McAuliffe and Ruhs 16)

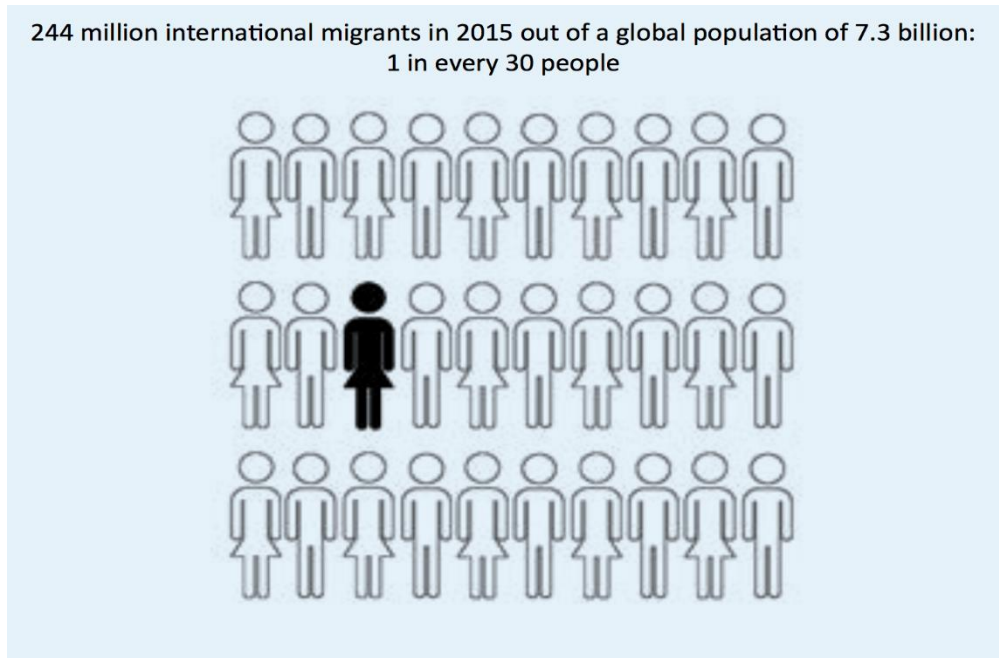


Figure 1.3 Ratio of international migrants to global population.(McAuliffe and Ruhs 17)

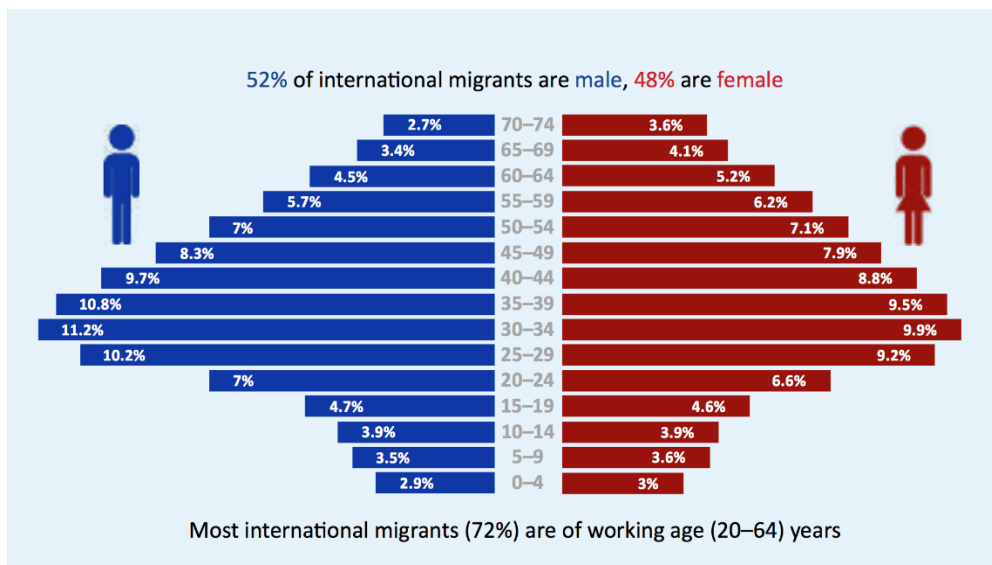
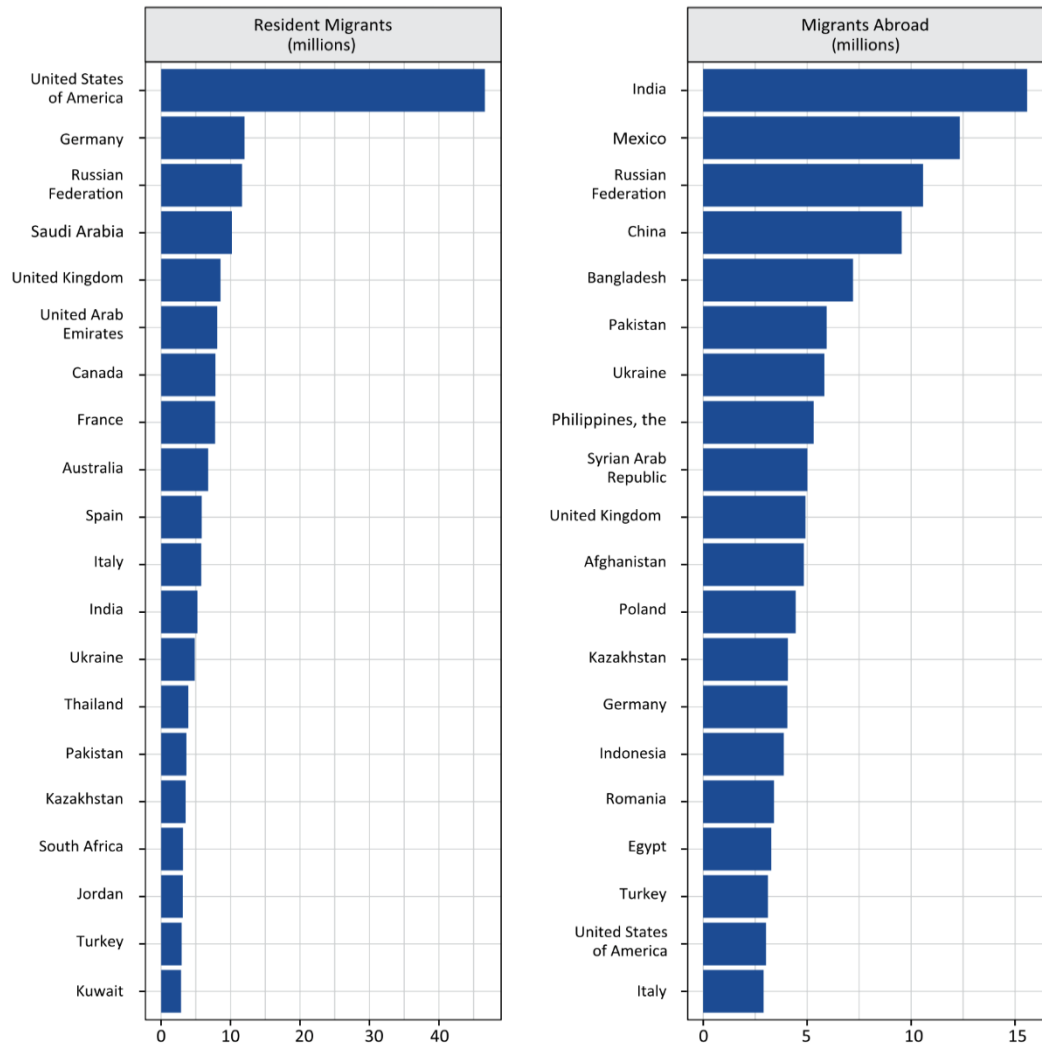


Figure 1.4 Gender and age demographics of international migrants. (McAuliffe and Ruhs 17)



Source: UN DESA, 2015a. Datasets for the 2015 Revision available at www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml.

Figure 1.5 Resident Migrants and Migrants abroad. (McAuliffe and Ruhs 19)

Local Church with a Global Mindset

Dr. Ivan Satyavrata, in his article, *Mission made to travel without borders*, states, “...God (is) extending His kingdom-rule to people of all nations as the Holy Spirit empowers the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world” (Satyavrata 10). It’s important that the local church in any context lives with this global mindset.

I have outlined my ministerial concerns and global migratory trends to deliberately present the need for the project. First, and sadly, the local church doesn't strategically invest much time nurturing and mentoring a migrant young believer as there are no positive long-term returns for the local church. I believe this is a fallacy, because the local church is called to nurture and prepare its believers to leave the church and bless the world. Preparing a believer before he leaves the city is a biblical mandate of every local church. Nurturing a believer even after he leaves the city is also a God-given responsibility, so that he can make kingdom impact wherever he goes. Second, when a disciplined migrant leaves the city for an international urban center, it's not a loss for the local church but a valuable investment into the global church-planting movement. Third, guiding and providing help to a believer in transition to a new city, ensures that when he faces a different cultural context, he is prepared adequately and not left alone to fend for himself.

This brings me to the bigger picture of how a young Indian believer has the potential to make a global impact. This is a critical issue not just for the possibilities for the Indian church but for the global church movement. The power of a committed young disciple properly engaged and empowered by the local church leadership could lead to global church growth explosion – qualitatively, quantitatively, and financially.

From the perspective of the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata, when these young believers leave Kolkata, the local church places them in the category of people who have “left” and a “loss” to the investment the church made over the years. This project gives an opportunity for every young migrant disciple to be true to who God created him to be, to make a kingdom impact wherever God sends him. This project is a pursuit towards

addressing this concern and ensuring these young Christians live out their calling to be fruitful wherever God places them. Fruitfulness in the context of discipleship will be examined closely within the contours of the project but suffice to state at this point that the quest would be for a young fruitful Christ-follower to effectively live out His faith in his environment and draw his friends and neighbours to follow Christ.

Statement of the Problem

Young believers who migrate from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata and move to other countries either as students or for better job opportunities often miss vital Christian fellowship and struggle in their walk with Jesus and effectiveness for His kingdom.

Young India is positioned to make a global impact in the next decade, with strong possibilities that twenty-five per cent of the global workforce will be of Indian origin (American Council 21). The opportunity for an Indian believer to impact the international community is significant. However, the absence of a good local church system preparing young believers for a new culture spiritually, emotionally, socially, and practically, often results in them failing to live out their calling in life.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an online six session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to increase the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of young international migrant believers from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in cross-cultural settings in international cities.

Research Questions

The key research questions considered to assess the effectiveness of this discipleship program were as follows:

Research Question 1

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices prior to the program on discipleship based on the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

Research Question 2

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices following the program on discipleship based on the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

Research Question 3

What specific components of the program contributed most to the observed changes in knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices towards effective discipleship in a cross-cultural setting?

The Rationale for the Project

The primary rationale for this project is obeying Jesus' calling to his disciples to be the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world". (Matthew 5:13-16 NIV). Every follower of Christ regardless of background, age, region, language, location, or profession is called to let their lives shine before this world to bring glory to the Father. William Diehl, in his book, *The Monday Connection*, points out, "What does it profit a person to worship God for one hour in a church on Sunday but be unable to experience God's presence in the Monday world?" (Diehl 2).

Secondly, the Great Commission of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20) makes the preparation of young believers for the global context an important mandate of the church. As John Stott stated, “Mission arises from the heart of God himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God”(Stott 335) It’s vital to prepare a church that is willing to equip “global people” for a “global outreach”.

Thirdly, young international believers who are trained to be effective as the salt and light in a global community naturally establish a relational network of seekers ready to respond to the kingdom and its values.

Fourthly, young believers who are adequately prepared for the program will be effective for the kingdom in whichever church they attend in any part of the world.

Fifthly, the specialized program will also be useful to prepare global church planters, especially if the young disciples are placed in cities where there are no churches.

Sixthly, this study hopes to encourage the local church not to look at the “leaving” of young Christ-followers as a loss to the membership in the local church, but to look at it as a greater impact for the global church.

Finally, the local church committed to assisting young disciples through a major transition in their lives earns the goodwill of the community in a city.

Definition of Key Terms

Young: A “young” believer in the context of this project is a college student or a working professional or even a young married. The age category for this dissertation is ages eighteen to thirty-five.

Disciple: “Disciple” is specifically mentioned here to distinguish between being a “Christian” because of lineage and being a genuine Christ-follower by personal choice. In the Indian context, the term “Christian” in popular media, based on culture and history, has the negative connotations of a person who is known for his loose morals and drunken lifestyle. A disciple also describes a person who absolutely committed to the vision of the local church and eager to live out their faith commitment.

Migrant: The term migrant is defined as young believers who move from India to another country as a college student or a working professional.

Discipleship Program: In this study discipleship program refers to a systematic planned program provides guided mentoring and discipleship to migrant believers.

Online: “Online” refers to the platform of instruction for the discipleship program using the internet and social media as the main medium of communicating the program.

The Assembly of God Church: This is the name of the local church in Kolkata, India where the researcher serves on the pastoral team and his primary responsibility is to lead the youth movement in his local church.

Kolkata: Kolkata is the capital city of the state of West Bengal in the eastern region of India.

Cross-cultural setting: Refers to the mix of cultures the student or professional experiences while living in an international city. The migrant disciple leaving the shores

of India interacts with people from other cultures and very rarely with his original Indian culture.

International cities: International cities refer specifically to key global urban centres in different continents of the world.

Delimitations

For this study, the researcher decided to focus on young believers from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata exclusively within the age category of eighteen to thirty-five. The type of migration considered was solely for individuals leaving India and moving to other international cities outside national borders. The researcher had decided to focus only on students and professional migrants. Migration as temporary workers, refugees, asylum seekers and unauthorized workers are outside the preview of this project. For this project, the focus was on young believers who have already moved to a new city and already engaged as a student or a professional.

Review of Relevant literature

This project consulted theological and Biblical literature to gain perspectives on the two major themes of this dissertation: discipleship and migration. Discipleship was considered within the overarching purpose of God's mission which called every Christian to embrace the mission of God the Father, be formed in the image of Jesus and follow the pathway of the Holy Spirit. The writings of Stephen Seamands, Chris Wright, Leslie Newbigin, Stuart Murray, and Michael Moynagh guided thought and process towards the theological foundations. Understanding of discipleship in the believer's life in the Biblical context provided vital features which shaped the study of the research. James Samra, Richard Forster, John Stott, and Alan Hirsch all comprehensively considered

biblical discipleship as the process of becoming like Christ. Craig Keener, Paul Hertig, and Aaron Wheeler highlight the discipleship in the gospels especially in the context of mission.

The discipleship was studied in the context of Johannine literature to understand the journey of a disciple from being a seeker, who was not committed to Jesus to becoming a follower, who was willing to go all the way with Jesus. The Johannine scholarship was a key emphasis to understand this discipleship vis-a-vis discipleship in the context of the synoptic gospels. There was an extensive use of relevant literature in the context of Johannine discipleship to examine and understand discipleship in the framework of this project. Alan Culpepper, A.M. Okorie, Jacob Cherian, are among a few of the authors considered in the light of this project.

However, this discipleship was considered specifically in the context of migration of young students and young working adults. Therefore, migratory trends in church history and in the twenty-first century were further studied in the setting of sociological literature especially considering the Indian diaspora. The writings of Jehu Hanciles, Arthur Walls, Samuel Escobar, Teroso Casino, and Sadira Joy Tira are globally recognized practitioners in the context of migration and mission and their writings were vital in the context of this project.

However, this discipleship was considered specifically in the context of migration of young students and young working adults. Therefore, migratory trends in church history and in the twenty-first century were further studied in the setting of sociological literature especially considering the Indian diaspora. Adult learning theories, intergenerational education, and assimilation strategies within a local church in the

context of discipleship was studied to comprehend the specific platform which would be most effective to a migrant disciple. The structured study and formulation of discipleship in the writings of Chris Shirley, Christopher Beard, David Watson, and Richard Forster were vital towards the content and context of the online discipleship program.

A specific area in the context of this project was works on online education. Providing spiritual formation to migrant disciples in the different international cities needed to be formulated using an online platform which engaged these migrant students and professionals. Literature for online discipleship programs especially for migrants was rare though there was relevant literature on online theological education for Bible colleges and seminaries. The works of P.R. Meadows, Melinda Thompson, Edwin Driel, James Thomas, Mark Lamport, and Robert Danielson shaped the important perspectives towards the formulation of the online program.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

As the researcher was involved in an intervention study, he considered a mixed approach using qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher used under the quantitative method, pre-test, and post-test surveys to gauge the discipleship level of the participants. Using qualitative methods, the researcher used the focus groups discussion protocol.

Participants

The participants in the research were ten international migrant young believers originally from The Assembly of God Church, currently living in different cities of the

world. These ten participants were invited to consider joining in a project of this nature, and all of them agreed to join the program.

Instrumentation

The specific instruments used for the project are the following:

First, the researcher-designed, pre-test discipleship survey collected data on the participants' knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices about discipleship preceding the program.

Second, the researcher-designed, post-test discipleship survey collected data on the participants' knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices about discipleship following the program.

Third, researcher-designed focus groups discussion protocol with informal focus groups allowed the researcher to draw key patterns and principles of the key elements of the discipleship program which were most effective for the migrant disciple.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted pre-test and post-test using the researcher-designed, discipleship surveys to collect quantitative data. The pre-test was emailed to the participants as an online link and completed and received back by email before the first session of the program. At the end of the last session of the program, the post-test surveys were emailed and collected back shortly to research and discover changes. After completion of the program, the researcher conducted four online focus groups with different sets of the participants based on their time zones and received from them feedback on the key areas of the program which impacted them the most.

Data Analysis

Data analysis used both descriptive statistics and content analysis. Qualitative data collected through the focus groups was processed using content analysis to identify patterns, themes, and categories. Quantitative data collected through pre-test and post-test surveys were analyzed using descriptive analysis and T-test analysis.

Generalizability

A study of this nature would be useful for every local church in any part of this world, as young people regularly leave a city moving to other urban centres in search of better job opportunities and living conditions. Churches worldwide are always concerned about young believers who leave the church and city for other cities and countries. They look at this “leaving” as a “loss” to the investment they have made in their lives. This study considered the possibility that young believers leaving a city, though numerically looks like a loss to the local church, it could be an advantage to the global church. This project would be useful also within the Indian context, as migrants who leave one city and move to other cities within India, could use the findings of this project for engagement with the migrant congregation members. The overall emphasis on discipleship with a special focus on the gospel of John makes it a vital tool for discipleship programs in any church.

Project Overview

This project attempted to assess the effectiveness of an online six session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to increase the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of young international migrant disciples from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in cross-cultural settings in international

cities. Chapter Two discusses the key writers and experienced practitioners regarding discipleship in a cross-cultural setting especially in the context of migration. Chapter Three describes the variety of ways the researcher had investigated his research questions. Chapter Four examines methodically the findings that emerged from the mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative methods using surveys and focus groups. Chapter Five places before the reader the project's important findings with implications for each discovery in the specific context today and in the future.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Young believers who migrate from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata and move to other countries either as students or for better job opportunities often miss vital Christian fellowship, struggle in their walk with Jesus and lose their effectiveness for His kingdom.

Young India is positioned to make a global impact in the next decade, with strong possibilities that twenty-five percent of the global workforce will be of Indian origin. The opportunity for an Indian believer to impact the international community is huge. However, the absence of a good local church system preparing young believers for a new culture spiritually, emotionally, socially, and practically, often results in them failing to live out their calling in life.

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an online six-session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to increase the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of young international migrant believers from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in cross-cultural settings in international cities.

Theological Foundations

At the heart of all theology is the Triune God. The Trinity of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and God the Holy Spirit highlights a unique relationship which displays the heart of Christian doctrine and experience. Every branch of theological studies, ultimately and inherently, draws itself from this unique community of the Trinity.

David Goodhew, Andrew Roberts, and Michael Volland, the authors of, *Fresh! An Introduction to Fresh Expressions of Church and Pioneer Ministry*, presents the description of Tom Smail's *Forgotten Father* to outline this relationship of the persons within the Trinity (Goodhew et. al. Loc 565). The heart of the Holy Trinity is the pioneering God (Goodhew et al. Loc 565). God the Father is a pioneering Father and can be understood as an initiator, integrator, and goal. Jesus is described as the pioneering Son who is the innovator: innovating by who he is (incarnation), by what he does (ministry) and by how he dies (cross) and rises again (resurrection) (Goodhew et al. Loc 607). Holy Spirit is the pioneering Spirit whose hallmark is to bring freshness. The authors conclude that "The Father, Son and Holy Spirit bring into being that which is fresh, not stale. Freshness is the hallmark of what they do. The interplay of the three persons of the Trinity is for the purpose of mission" (Goodhew et al. Loc 632).

This relationship within the Trinity presents a dynamic missional emphasis in its relationship to the world (Wright Loc 3929). Chris Wright describes this Trinity as the "sending" God where God the Father sent the Son and the Spirit; the Son sent the Spirit and the Apostles; and the Spirit sent Jesus and the Apostles (Wright Loc 3929-3940). Wright makes this comment which summarises the church's response to the Trinity:

The mission of God's people, then, is not some external structure built by the church itself – a program or a strategy devised by an institution. Sending in mission is a participation in the life of God. The mission of God's people, in this dimension of sending and being sent, is to be caught up within the dynamic sending and being sent that God the Holy Trinity has done and continues to do for the salvation of the world and the revelation of his truth. (Wright Loc 3953-56)

Why is it important to understand Trinity other than learning a theoretical framework for the sake of education? Often this study confuses the laity in a local church and has no pragmatic purpose to their daily faith. However, a greater emphasis in the last few decades to the study of the Trinity not only in higher scholarship but also in the “church-world” has resulted in an increased and in-depth perspective towards faithful Christian ministry and stewardship. The Trinitarian circle of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is an open invitation to the ardent Christ-follower to enter into the life of the Trinity and be graciously included as a partner (Seamands Loc 68). Every believer needs to remember this description offered by Seamands: A Christ-follower is invited to the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world (Seamands Loc 101).

A Christ-follower who is committed to this Trinitarian ministry is hereby submitting to this three-fold purpose: embracing the mission of God the Father; forming into the image of God the Son, Jesus Christ; and following the pathway of God the Holy Spirit. This three-fold purpose seems to overlap at different points but has specific emphasis which is crucial for the sake of this study.

Embracing the Mission of God, the Father

John Stott presents the immensity of the human task to understand the mission of God, “Mission arises from the heart of God himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God” (Stott 335). When one thinks of mission it is often delegated as an activity or ‘department’ of a local church or denomination. It is often considered a passionate adventurous endeavour of a human enterprise and honors more the eager response of a missionary church rather than

anything God seems to be engaged in. Mission is relegated to a human venture when one presents mission from that perspective. However, it is important to pursue a God of mission with a single-minded mission that all of creation should give glory to Him (Moynagh and Harrold Loc 3473).

Stuart Murray in his book, *Church Planting*, states, “God is the Missionary, who sent his Son and sends His Spirit into the world, and whose missionary purposes are cosmic in scope, concerned with the ‘restoration of all things,’ the establishment of shalom, the renewal of creation, and the coming of the kingdom of God, as well as the redemption of fallen humanity and the building of the church.” (Murray Loc 398). This is the *Missio Dei* which is coherently presented in the Biblical narrative, with God’s creation story; His calling of Abraham; His special relationship with the people of Israel; His choice of David; His proclamations through the prophets; sending of His son, Jesus; death and resurrection of Jesus; the birth of the church; expansion of the church; and much more. The natural outflow of embracing and appropriating the mission of God the Father impacts an individual at two levels: personal habits and his public world.

The personal dimension to the mission of God flowing in an individual has three aspects. First, it has a *devotional* element which captures one’s love relationship with the Lord. Second, it has an *interpersonal* ingredient which addresses the relational connections with people in the individual’s life. Finally, it has a *personal* component which covers every area of growth required in his or her life.

The public dimension to the mission of God encapsulates the community at three critical spheres. First, the *community of Jesus-lovers* or specifically the local church which brings together individuals who have embraced the mission of God the Father.

Second, *serving the society* where many authentic Christ-centred communities with the same passion for the mission of God, incarnationally ‘subverting’ the gospel into every tapestry of society. Finally *influencing global structures* where faithful believers committed to the mission of God “flesh out” their private faith commitment towards public significance.

Leslie Newbigin in his book, *The Open Secret*, talks about the “open” fact that the kingdom of God has been active right through history. God the Father Himself is vigorously pursuing His mission, but His action is seemingly “secret” or hidden when his people suffer. This paradox is at times difficult to grasp. But Newbigin makes this comment which captures the heart of embracing the mission of God the Father:

Mission, seen from this angle, is faith in action. It is the acting out by proclamation and by endurance, through all the events of history, of the faith that the kingdom of God has drawn near. It is the acting out of the central prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to use: ‘Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven’. (Newbigin Loc 544-546)

Forming in the image of God the Son, Jesus Christ

In what is popularly known as the Great Commission, Jesus gives the “discipleship” mandate to his disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). However, scholars contend that the great commission started in the book of Genesis with the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:1-3. Chris Wright make an invitation to understand the ramifications of the Great Commission from God to all of mankind starting with the call of Abraham(Wright Loc 1052-1074). God invited Abraham, “Go...and...be a blessing...and all nations...will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1-3) The command of Jesus and the leading of the

Holy Spirit combined to send the church out in mission to the ends of the earth is fulfilling the mission of God the Father given to Abraham in Genesis 12.

Jesus is consciously aware of fulfilling the mission of God the Father as He invites His disciples to make disciples. However, what does making disciples look like from the Biblical perspective? What was in Jesus' mind when he invited his disciples to make disciples? Under the Biblical foundations of this project, a further study would be made with Jesus' interactions with people in the Gospel of John to understand discipleship from His perspective. Robert Webber succinctly states, "Disciple means to 'follow after' which implies the Hebraic concept of journey and walk. New disciples are to be modeled on the first disciples of Jesus, who were modeled after Jesus." (R. Webber 22). In Paul's epistle to the church in Ephesus he invites the believers to understand the big picture of discipleship with these following words, "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).

At an elementary level, discipleship could be simply stated as "the pursuit towards being formed in the image of Jesus Christ." It is God's pursuit within the grander mission of God the Father where He desires everyone everywhere to embrace His mission by embodying His son. By embodying the person of His son, an eager seeker shares in the blessings of the reign of God to whom the 'secret' of the Kingdom is entrusted to (Newbigin Loc 585). It is also the commitment of responsible and faithful church leaders to keenly strive towards all believers being formed in the image of Jesus

Christ. The effort does not aim towards teaching Christ-followers the story of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed, recorded and studied for knowledge's sake to be mentally believed and assented upon. (Newbigin Loc 627). It is more intentionally desiring the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as something to be lived out in the twenty-first century world.

Discipleship must also become the personal quest of every Christ-follower, willing to be and do all that is necessary to be formed in the image of Jesus Christ. This forming process is a lifelong development towards experiencing the entirety of the mission of God. Experiencing Jesus is to experience the mission of God (Goodhew et al. Loc 636-638). Therefore, the Great Commission naturally comes at the end of Matthew's Gospel, as the culmination of Jesus' work: when "who Jesus is" (God's incarnate son) and "what he has done" (by the cross and resurrection) are plain, and he charges his followers to spread the pioneering mission he has inaugurated (Goodhew et al. Loc 636-638).

Following the pathway of God, the Holy Spirit

Jesus makes these final comments to his disciples before his ascension: "He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:48-49). These comments are important for four reasons. First, the primacy of the mission of God is evident in the prophecy of the scriptures being fulfilled. Second, the Jesus' life, death and resurrection are crucial as it is personified in

the Father's mission. Third, the disciples as 'witnesses' were going to follow God in the mission of spreading it to the nations. Finally, the Father would orchestrate the mission through the power of the Holy Spirit working through willing and waiting disciples.

These final comments of Jesus make it clear that the mission is not the property of the local church, but is orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, who acts as the witness, changing both the world and the church, always leading the church in its missionary journey. (Newbigin Loc 774-775) This is critical to understand, otherwise the church and its leadership follow fixed paradigms which have always been followed, without giving any thought to *what* and *where* the Holy Spirit is moving in the world. Following the pathway of God, the Holy Spirit, keeps the movement of the kingdom fresh and renewed (Goodhew et al. Loc 627).

David Goodhew, Andrew Roberts and Michael Volland describes the creativity of the Holy Spirit in the following manner:

In a helpful image, Tom Smail likens the Holy Spirit to an artist whose subject is the Son but who is endlessly creative in the ways he depicts that subject. The Holy Spirit operates in the same way as artists like Monet or Van Gogh, whose many pictures of haystacks or sunflowers are each subtly different. The Church is not endlessly pluriform for it is rooted in Christ. But it is endlessly inventive, because it is filled with God's breath – the Holy Spirit – who will not stay within the tramlines we set him. This makes sense of the huge variety of Christian churches both across the world now and across the past 20 centuries. They are related to each other but different. (Goodhew et al. Loc 661-666)

This means that the Spirit of God is not constrained by geographical or political boundaries in the fulfilment of the Father's mission to form seekers into the image of Christ. It also means that denominational or religious gulfs don't stop the Holy Spirit in pursuing the mission. As Newbigin comments, "Mission is not essentially an action by which the church puts forth its own power and wisdom to conquer the world around it; it is, rather, an action of God, putting forth the power of His Spirit to bring the universal work of Christ for the salvation of the world nearer to its completion." (Newbigin Loc 821-823).

The Book of Acts, often called the Acts of the Apostles, but essentially the acts of the Holy Spirit, shows the pathways of the Spirit as the disciples are "led" by forced migration (persecution) and voluntary migration towards planting churches and multiplying disciples in new geographical regions. In the context of this project, migration, often unknowingly to an immigrant, is a key element of the pathway of the Holy Spirit to originate the Father's mission in new centers of the world. When the local church eagerly participates with the Holy Spirit and the immigrant towards this relocation, instead of holding him or her back in the local church, the Father's kingdom has great potential to be expanded. The church is a faithful witness to the extent it follows obediently wherever the Spirit leads (Newbigin Loc 839-840).

Therefore, when Christian immigrants travel, they bring their religion with them, or more personally, their God literally migrates with them (Nguyen 206). Therefore, when Christians move outside their place of origin in search of jobs or for study, it is not just a random non-consequential transition, but a considerable step towards discovering God's mission in their lives. The specialized branch of theological studies, diaspora

missiology is a missiological framework to understand and be involved in God's redemptive mission among people living outside their place of origin. (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization) In a sense, this dedicated focus on the diaspora in theological studies is a fresh impetus towards following the pathway of the Holy Spirit in mission.

Tereso C. Casino in her article, "Why People Move: A Prolegomenon to Diaspora Missiology," considers global diaspora as an important theological context to understand God's redemptive acts in the world based on the triune God's revelatory nature (Casino 19-44). Casino makes this key comment:

A theology of global diaspora unfolds the universal dispersal of God's grace and the availability of God's love in all corners of the world. Divine grace permeates the mobility of peoples around the world. God's grace goes wherever people go and operates wherever people are situated so that the divine missionary intent and redemptive purpose will be fulfilled. By his grace, God allows the scattering of peoples around the world; God also gathers peoples through his grace and for his grace. (Casino 34-35)

In the context of the theological framework for this project, a few factors conclusively stand out. First, the mission of God provides the big backdrop within which a believer (and every human being) is currently located. To claim that the God of the Bible is a God of mission to accept that He makes Himself known to human beings through ordinary culturally conditioned experiences (Gordy 2). Second, within the mission of God, God has a specific purpose for believers to be like His Son, Jesus Christ, and make an impact for His kingdom. Third, following the Spirit of God in mission

would require major changes in the methods and strategies in the way the global church currently does missions. By unquestioningly following where the Spirit leads, often in ways that are neither premeditated, branded, nor understood, “the church acts out the hope that it is given by the presence of the Spirit who is the living foretaste of the kingdom.” (Newbigin Loc 897-899)

Michael Moynagh and Philip Harrold in their book, *Church for Every Context*, outlines the key theological framework of being missional, contextual, formational and ecclesial which fleshes out the Fresh Expressions Movement in the United Kingdom (Moynagh & Harrold Loc 199-204). Though these four factors are considered in the background of the fresh expressions, it would be useful to consider how these basic watchwords could provide the personal paradigm for an immigrant to consider discipleship in a cross-cultural setting. First, by being missional and following the pathways of the Holy Spirit, migrants can engage with individuals and people groups who are not Christ-followers. Second, migrants can be contextual by seeking to fit into the culture of the people they live and work or study with. Third, they can be on a formational journey with believers and unbelievers by aiming to be like Christ and serve like Christ. Finally, they can be ecclesial by creating communities or living in communities that establish the mission of God where there is no reign of God.

Biblical Foundations

Discipleship in the Bible

In the first century, when Jesus calls out to a group of young men to be disciples, he started a movement of discipleship which was quite different from the Jewish form of discipleship (Bosch 36). David Bosch makes a brief analysis of the salient features of

Jesus person and ministry and how the pattern of his discipleship was vastly dissimilar from the popular rabbinic discipleship. First, Jewish discipleship was merely a means to an end. The goal of students of the Jewish law was to be a rabbi. But the disciples of Jesus never graduate into rabbis. The process of discipleship itself was a fulfilment of their destiny. They are always his servants and students (Bosch 37-38).

Second, the goal of Jesus' disciples is to be with Jesus (Mark 3:14). Schweizer states "...disciples walk with him, eat and drink with him, listen to what He says and sees what he does...invited as companions to share in what takes place around Jesus" (Schweizer qtd. in Bosch 38). Third, the followers of rabbi just pass on the teachings of the rabbi. But the disciples of Jesus are witnesses. They see the miracles of Jesus and do the same. The disciples of Jesus proclaim and practice what Jesus proclaims and practices (Bosch 39). Finally, the rabbinic disciples had a unique role and position in the community. Disciples of Jesus did not regard themselves as an "exclusive group of super-followers of Jesus" but they were "members of the Jesus community just like everybody else" (Bosch 39).

James Samra, Richard Forster, John Stott, and Alan Hirsch all comprehensively consider biblical discipleship as the process of becoming like Christ. Samra makes a basic distinction between the pattern of discipleship in the gospels and epistles. In the gospels, discipleship was all about physically *following Christ* and learning to be like Him and doing what He does. In the epistles, discipleship was *imitating Christ* by copying the lifestyle patterned by the disciples. Samra further describes the two-fold pattern of Jesus' discipleship with his disciples. First, he has seasons of organized learning, where he teaches systematically to the disciples in forms of discourses,

sermons, and parables. Second, he has occasional learning that are spontaneous moments of mentoring to guide, encourage, and correct the disciples based on a specific situation.(Samra 219-234)

A deeper study of Jesus with his disciples in the gospels and specifically his teachings on discipleship unveils the heart of Jesus towards the mission of God. The best place to start is the great commission of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. Keener and Hertig both underline that the one command of *discipleship* of the nations has three sub-clauses – *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching*. Keener calls these three words in the modern mission’s terminology as cross-cultural ministry, evangelism, and Christian education. The great commission is not a new command, but something which is at the heart of Matthew’s gospel towards a “message of ethnic reconciliation in Christ as well as summons to global mission” (Keener, "Matthew's Missiology" 10).

Hertig outlines the missional implications of the great commission that he identifies as the declaration of the universal reign of God. First, referring to the phrase “all nations,” he calls it the “unrestricted nature of mission” to impact the globe. Second, the step of baptism makes the disciple a “servant of God under the authority of God, a child in God’s own family” (Hertig 347). Third, the great commission is a holistic mandate which covers not just the interest of the church in the spiritual soul but in the complete well-being of human life. John Stott states that the Great Commission “neither explains, not exhausts, nor supersedes the Great Commandment.” The Great Commandment of “love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 19:19, 22:39) must lead one on a quest for ‘better social structures in which peace, dignity, freedom and justice’ for all people(J. R. W. Stott 29). Hertig emphasizes that “the phrases, all authority, all

nations, teaching them to obey all, and always, to the very end of the age indicate the completeness, totality, and finality of the great commission” (Hertig 349).

However, as per Hanciles, the western missionary movement loved to look at this verse as the mission statement with its activist impetus, grand strategies, and supreme adventure (Hanciles, "Migration and Mission" 149). Hanciles points out that in a non-western missionary movement without losing the emphasis of Matthew 28:18-20, the Johannine model (John 17:18 and John 20:21) presented a better missiological orientation.(Hanciles, "Migration and Mission" 149). John Stott makes two comments on this Johannine model. Firstly, Christian mission must be out of service and not based on structure or attitudes of dominance. Secondly, it must be incarnational by being with others and vulnerable. (Stott, "The Model" 2)

Markan discipleship, according to Leif E. Vaage, is a form of ‘domestic asceticism’. He explains four distinct but unified characteristics specific to discipleship in Mark: First, following Jesus is a demanding commitment requiring deliberate determination; second, discipleship separates you from your natural family and places one with a new family of God; third, the main group of twelve disciples ultimately mess up as disciples; and finally, quite a few of the ‘minor’ disciples leave a mark with their simple faithful discipleship.(Vaage 741-61).

Keener’s study of discipleship in Matthew’s gospel as well as Isak du Plessis and Ralph Martin’s perspective on Luke’s gospel complement Vaage’s idea, it had been a ‘strenuous effort’ to the extent of it been a ‘costly commitment’ with ‘no easy road to glory’(Martin 380). However, in the light of the whole teaching of discipleship in the gospels and the epistles, considering discipleship to be primarily a ‘domestic asceticism’

is a misnomer. Jesus' discourse to the disciples in the gospel of John (John 15) overrides the 'strenuous' effort with a sense of 'abiding' in a loving commitment. Also, cutting off from the existing domestic social ties for new domestic relationships seems inaccurate, as it would be against the fabric of Jesus' teaching inviting followers of Christ to be "salt" and "light" (Matthew 5:16-19) wherever they are placed. However, a key observation of Vaage which would be crucial for this project is the value of "minor" disciples to make a "major" difference through their response to the teachings of Jesus. Followers of Jesus regardless of where they are situated in the world and what professional portfolio they hold or don't hold inside the church or outside the church can make a huge difference for His kingdom.

A better response to Vaage than calling it "painful asceticism" is to classify it as 'loving obsession' to Jesus and His cause. When a genuine Christ-follower is passionately in love with Jesus and longs to be like Him and do whatever, He does, the commitment is less an "asceticism" and more a joyful "obsession." This joyful obsession then makes the values of a true disciple as stated by Keener a relationship based on love instead of legalism. Keener exclusively using Matthew's gospel talks about the cost of discipleship where the true disciple values Jesus above job security (4:19-20), residential security (8:18-19), financial security (19:21), social obligations (8:21-22), and even above their own lives (16:24) (Keener, "Matthew's Missiology" 16-18). Becoming like Christ is a costly commitment, but it is birthed in a deep loving desire God places inside the disciple to be like His Son.

In the context of discipleship, it is important to consider the words of Jesus just before His ascension in Acts 1:8. The mission of God the Father to make his followers be

like His Son through the pathway of the Holy Spirit who is neither localized nor foreign, but it is a truly global mission. This mission took a variety of turns over the last 2000 years in different cultures and contexts. But the original mission of God is committed to the “commissioning of all believers where each member of the body of Christ realizes their responsibility to complete the task of global discipleship” (Wheeler 161). Aaron Wheeler talking about this commissioning of all believers in a holistic model of global discipleship prescribes:

The end goal is to have holistic servants leading forth a holistic church. We need men and women who understand that the responsibility of global discipleship rests in the lap of everyone who follows Christ. We need churches that see their mission field in every person, place, and people group. We need strategies that look beyond just conversion but seek growing, healthy disciples. We need the humility to recognize that every community has needs and can benefit from the voice of global partnerships. If we can bring together the best of ministry and missions, under the leadership of Christ, the church can begin a new season in becoming the church it is meant to be. (Wheeler 161)

Therefore, the biblical discipleship which the New Testament presented in the first century through the life of Jesus and His disciples has four key components. First, discipleship revolves around becoming like Christ in life, word, and action. Second, becoming like Christ is a seriously costly commitment which is undergirded by an intensely devoted obsession to love Christ and follow Him. Third, discipleship is a holistic mandate to bring total transformation to individuals and communities. Finally,

the process of committed discipleship is the key strategy of Jesus to fulfil the global mission of the Father.

Discipleship in the Gospel of John

Different Approaches

There are different approaches to understand discipleship in the gospel of John. These approaches are credible and present a different facet to understand what it means to be a follower of Christ. Certain scholars talk about the seven miraculous signs Jesus performed in John including turning water into wine, healing the royal official's son, healing the paralytic, feeding the 5000, Jesus walking on water, healing the blind man and raising of Lazarus. Each of these signs were meant to fulfil the purpose statement of John found in 20:31, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Discipleship in this context attempts to highlight that believing in Jesus Christ is the key to followership, and this belief brings new life which impacts every detail of his or her life.

Other scholars focus on the "I am" sayings of Jesus where He presents Himself ("I am") as the Bread of Life (6:35), Light of the World (8:12), Gate (10:9), Good Shepherd (10:11), Resurrection and Life (11:25), Way, and the Truth, and the Life (14:6) and True Vine (15:1). These "I am" sayings of Jesus represents the ultimate self-disclosure of God made incarnate in human form (Okorie 490). Discipleship based on these I am sayings attempts to focus on the identity of Jesus' divinity as central to one's belief and practice.

Another approach considered by Howard Baker, stressing the six “just as” sayings of Jesus that potentially form the conditions and content of Johannine discipleship (Baker 39) He explains the format of discipleship in the following manner:

The first five describe the intimate relationship (spirituality) that exists between the Father and Jesus and between Jesus and the disciples: life (6:57); knowledge (10:14-15); love (15:9); abiding (15:10); indwelling (17:21). The last ‘just as’ discipleship saying, ‘. . . just as the Father has sent me, so I send you,’ is presented as the ‘culmination of [Jesus’] communion with God.’⁵ Even more so for the disciples does their mission flow from the life, knowledge, love, abiding, and indwelling that is their relationship to Jesus. (Baker 39)

Baker focuses on the place of mission in the presentation of discipleship in John’s gospel. The idea is to understand that just as the Father has sent Jesus with a specific mission, so are the disciples sent by Jesus on a specific mission. Baker concludes this description with certain important insights. First, just as Jesus was sent by the Father as the “Beloved Son,” the disciples are sent as the close companions of Jesus. Second, just as Jesus was sent out from the Father but was always in close intimacy with the Father, the disciples are sent out with the indwelling presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, just as Jesus’ communion with the Father never ceased during His mission, so the disciples’ communion with Jesus is vital for their fruitful mission. Fourth, just as Jesus was sent as a “vulnerable servant” so are the disciples sent out to love one another in all vulnerability and humility. Fifth, just as Jesus did nothing on his own ingenuity, but only what the Father wanted Him to do, the disciples are to do nothing on their own enterprise, but all that Jesus wanted them to do. Finally, just as the Father sent Jesus in

mission, the disciples are also sent by Jesus in mission. Baker notes that the “it is out of their relationship of communion with Jesus that the mission of the disciples emerges, just as the mission of Jesus emerged out of his relationship with the Father” (Baker 45).

Another approach to understanding discipleship in John is to consider the faith journey of the minor characters in John’s gospel. These minor characters play a major part in the “presentation and development of Jesus’ miracles” (Howard 77). Studying these minor characters and their response to Jesus presents an important framework to understand discipleship in the gospel of John. James Howard makes a special note of the response of these minor players. First, each minor character is a “model of faith or unbelief.”. Second, each of them presented the Messiah from a different perspective, thereby placing before the reader a progressive understanding of Jesus. Finally, there are different gradations of transformation experienced by these minor disciples based on their encounter with Jesus (Howard 77).

A slight variant of the above approach is to consider as does Mark Whitters that the first part of John deals with those who are potential disciples (John 1-12) and the second part with those who are actual disciples (John 13-21) (Whitters 422). He uses John 12:44-45 as a critical pointer for potential disciples to become actual disciples, by stating, “The one who believes in me believes not in me but the one who sent me. The one who sees me sees him who sent me.” In the category of potential disciples, he puts names like Nicodemus, Samaritan woman, the paralytic, and the blind man, while the actual disciples are those who faithfully followed him to the end. Though this description and differentiation is a useful study on discipleship in John’s gospel, it is too simplistic, basic, and rigid to understand discipleship from this perspective.

Becoming Like Christ

Well-known author and speaker, John Stott makes this comment which forms the framework to understand discipleship in the gospel of John: “So I want to share with you where my mind has come to rest as I approach the end of my pilgrimage on earth, and it is – God wants His people to become like Christ” (Stott, "The Model" 1). Discipleship often becomes a structured and patterned study within the curriculum of a church. In the latter sections of this chapter, different patterns of discipleship in churches are discussed and applied to the overall theme of this project. However, in studying the gospel of John, one discovers the focus of the Johannine approach to draw the reader to understand the central feature of discipleship: “becoming like Christ.”

Discipleship is a combination of many factors and should not be narrowed down to definite and organized steps. John’s writing brings to the forefront two critical factors of Johannine discipleship. Firstly, there is spontaneity which is evident from the way Jesus interacted with his twelve disciples as well as the potential disciples. Secondly, there is intentionality which is apparent from the manner of Jesus’ discourses and his thematic teachings. Both these words: spontaneity and intentionality, seem like a strange combination, but John’s rhetoric and style in his gospel thrives on this unique paradox. This unique paradox of discipleship fosters the power of the Johannine discipleship which makes it attractive for Christ-followers in any culture. Especially when you consider true discipleship is not necessarily “western” or “Asian” or any other “taglines” but would need to be global considering the merging together of nationalities and cultures in almost every continent of the world. Discipleship or “becoming like Christ” goes beyond a pathway and tends to take one towards a unique journey to be like Christ.

Seeking Christ

A critical component of Johannine presentation of the gospel is the miracles of Jesus. Unlike how it is presented in the synoptic gospels, John has a specific plot in mind directed towards discovering the identity of Jesus (Culpepper "Cognition" 252) Alan Culpepper makes this comment:

Plot development in John ... is a matter of how Jesus' identity comes to be recognized and how it fails to be recognized. Not only is Jesus' identity progressively revealed by the repetitive signs and discourses and the progressive enhancement of metaphorical and symbolic images, but each episode has essentially the same plot as the story as a whole. Will Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, or the lame man recognize Jesus and thereby receive eternal life? The story is repeated over and over. (R Alan Culpepper 251)

John presents the characters in the story into an experience of Jesus' works where they *see* and choose for themselves whether they would like to believe in Jesus or not. The reader from chapter 1 onwards is welcomed to experience the miracles of Jesus and choose for himself, how he would like to respond to Jesus. John captures this overarching theme with these words, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John: 20:30-31).

This statement of John found at the end of the book emphasizes the starting point of Johannine discipleship. The reader is invited to explore the signs or miracles of Jesus and given the choice to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and experience life in his

name. Interestingly, in the first few chapters of the book, the author presents the opportunity to “come” and “see” (1:39; 1:45-46; 4:29-30). “Seeing” the glory of Jesus was an important initial step to believing in His claims (1:14, 33-34; 2:11,23-24). Signs consistently play a positive role for faith in the gospel of John (Johns and Miller 521). Every person is presented as a *seeker*, who is on a journey to explore the claims of Jesus and experience life in the name of Jesus.

Scholars call the gospel of John a book of signs focusing on the following seven miracles of the wedding at Cana (2:1-11); healing of the official’s son (4:46-54); healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-18); feeding of the 5000 (6:1-15); walking on water (6:16-21); healing of the blind man (9:1-12) and raising of Lazarus (11:28-44). Kasper Bro Larsen adds the eighth sign of the catching of the fishes in John 21:1-14 (Larsen 108). Other scholars include the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the ultimate sign (20:1-10). John himself states that “many other signs” that Jesus performed are not recorded in John’s gospel (20:30). For the sake of this project the researcher focused on the seven signs and its implications for discipleship.

According to Alan Culpepper, each of these signs are ‘recognition scenes’ giving an opportunity to the characters in the story or the reader, the choice to recognize the true distinctiveness of Jesus as the Son of God. These signs are “exposures of that mark of Jesus’ true identity which the we-voice of the prologue claimed to have seen (1:14)”(Larsen 108). Each of these signs, have a “token”, which is a tangible opportunity to test a sign which leads to resistance or recognition (Culpepper "Cognition" 257). For example, the token in the wedding at Cana was the moment of testing the water turning into wine. The token in the miracle of healing of the royal official’s son was the

declaration by Jesus that his son would live the very same hour. Jesus giving sight to the blind man was a token that demonstrated Jesus' "sovereignty over the creation" (Culpepper "Cognition" 257) . Culpepper makes this key statement, "The issue is, therefore, is whether one will believe the claims, Jesus' words, and the significance of the sign as token is diminished to a secondary role"(Culpepper "Cognition" 258).

Culpepper concludes with certain key comments crucial to understand what it means to become like Christ in the Johannine context. First, signs are appropriate tokens for the creative Logos incarnate in Jesus. Second, Jesus can be recognized not because he does unprecedented signs but because he does mighty acts like those recorded in the Hebrew scriptures. Finally, the significance of the signs as tokens of recognition is undermined in relation to the significance of the claims, the I am sayings and the words of Jesus (Culpepper "Cognition" 259).

Alternatively, certain scholars consider signs as an unreliable source for the formation of genuine followership in John. Loren Johns and Douglas Miller argue that signs play a unified role in John and responds to the problem passages regarding the signs passages. First is the argument that Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus (2:23-3:21) is an example of exclusive dependence on signs for his faith and a lack of quality in the depth of his spiritual journey. But the authors responded that Nicodemus was faulted not because signs led him to faith but because of his failure to confess Jesus openly. Second, Jesus' words, "Unless you people see signs and wonders...you will never believe" (4:48) seems to be a gentle rebuke against seeking signs to the rich official. However, the authors provide a beneficial paraphrase of the same verse signifying Jesus heart which is moved by the cry of a genuine seeker, "You must understand that unless you see signs

and wonders you will certainly not believe, so I will give you signs and wonders so that you may believe.” The rich official believed the words of Jesus and went back home. But, when he discovered that the healing of the son coincided with the exact time Jesus had pronounced the healing, he believed more adequately by following Jesus along with his “whole household” (4:53) (Johns and Miller 519-35).

Third, some argue that following the episode of feeding the five thousand, Jesus downplays the sign of the miracle challenging the disciples to seek spiritual food (6:26-27). However, an accurate reading of the passage reveals that Jesus was challenging the disciples not to place emphasis on the “physical food” instead seek “spiritual food” but to understand the message of the sign which pointed to his true identity. With each request for a sign, John finds a way for Jesus to respond positively since signs are positive in his theology. Finally, the authors use the story of Thomas’ encounter with Jesus (20:24-29) to counter the argument that Thomas was rebuked for seeking evidence. The authors respond that Thomas was rebuked not because he insisted on evidence, but because he insisted on a certain type of evidence (Johns and Miller 533).

How does this study of signs in John’s gospel apply to becoming like Christ? First, a “recognition scene” gives an opportunity to a *potential believer* to come and experience Christ. The potential disciple has never encountered Christ before, but this experience of Christ and His love opens the doors to consider the claims of Christ. Second, every sign met a *perceived felt need* of an individual or a group of people. Jesus’ care for every individual regardless of his or her background or belief, prepares the ground for the individual to experiment with the claims of Christ. Discipleship is marked by the recognition of life as the gift of unmerited love, a recognition that involves living

out of that love, which is the foundation of Christian identity according to the Fourth Gospel (Painter 256).

Third, every sign gives an occasion to *test the validity* of the truth of the identity of Jesus. This opportunity either opens the doors to deepen an individual's understanding of Christ, or to give an excuse to deter from any commitment to the claims of Christ. However, at this stage of discipleship, neither Jesus nor his disciples have any creed or ideology they must adhere to, but they are welcomed to come and see. More than it being a "test" or a "trial" it is more an invitation to come and "taste" Jesus and His love. A common description within the Christendom, is to understand the right order of believing, behaving, and belonging (Murray. "Planting Churches Loc 200). But, increasingly there is greater awareness about the importance of belonging even before believing or behaving. Johannine discipleship accurately paints this picture by inviting potential believers to come and belong regardless of their belief systems and lifestyle. Fourth, honestly appropriating the signs leads to genuinely *believing* Christ's identity and His words. In the case with each sign, the potential believer goes beyond the experience of a miracle and commits to understand and know Christ and His identity. It is necessary that people be introduced to the signs or other witnesses to believe, yet it is possible for them to see the signs without believing (Johns and Miller 534). Finally, the greatest sign to authenticate the validity of the identity of Christ is a genuinely *transformed life*. The Samaritan woman in John 4 prepared the ground through her witness for the Samaritans in her town to seek and believe (4:39-42).

As a caveat to this first stage of discipleship to be a seeker, Jesus' words to Thomas are important: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those

who have not seen and yet have believed” (20:29). Jesus here is not downplaying the value of the signs, but points out that the purpose of the signs, is to lead them to the place of believing in Christ.

In the context of this project, how does this first stage of discipleship of being a *seeker* apply to a disciple living out his faith in the world? Also, how does this apply to unbelievers who are within the circle of influence of a disciple? To both the above questions, John prescribes three invitations within the context of being a *seeker*. These three invitations are lived out by a disciple in his neighbourhood, office environment, or college campus. These three invitations are the daily possibilities of an unbeliever on the verge of being a seeker every time he interacts with a disciple.

First, the invitation is to *come and see* the signs of Jesus and taste first-hand what Jesus is doing on a day-to-day basis. These signs could be healing miracles, supernatural provisions, tangible presence of Jesus and much more. These signs are visible demonstrations of Jesus in the world, every time a seeker engages with a disciple.

Second, the invitation is to *come and recognize* the meaning behind the signs of Jesus and have a deeper conversation about the identity of Jesus. The signs of Jesus and its connection to his divine identity are crucial to lead a seeker to the next stage of discipleship. The more time a disciple chooses to engage with his seeker-friend on the meaning behind the signs, greater the opportunity for the friend to discover Jesus. Finally, the invitation is to *come and respond* to the person of Jesus based on who He is, with an open-ended choice to either respond to Him in surrender or reject His Lordship. Each of these invitations are progressive steps towards the next step in the discipleship of being a believer.

Believing in Christ

Unlike any of the other gospels, there is an important focus on the identity of Jesus in the Gospel of John. John presents this focus on the identity of Jesus with the emphasis on the “I am” sayings of Jesus. Different scholars talk about the seven distinct “I am” sayings of Jesus in the book. However, Billy Simmons takes it a step further, by doing a study on the “ego eimi” (I am) sayings in John where he reports that the “I am” expression appears twenty-four times on the lips of Jesus. On nine occasions, it is used in an “absolute” sense, while it appears about fifteen times with a “predicate.” Every time it is used as an absolute (verses) it is a proclamation of the name of God as well as the divine mode of being expressed in the Old Testament (Simmons 99). Every time it is used with a predicate (verses), as Guthrie states, it illustrates key “functions of Jesus” to “sustain, to illuminate, to admit, to care for, to give life, to guide and to make productive” (Guthrie 331).

What is significant about the “I am” sayings of Jesus in the context of Johannine writings? Going back to the purpose statement of John in 20:31, John is keenly interested in leading the readers to experience life in His name by believing that Jesus is the Son of God. John’s attribution to Jesus with the “I am” sayings points to the divine nature of Jesus – “his preexistence, changelessness, and uniqueness of being” (Okorie 486). A.M. Okorie quoting Eric Rust states that, “But God stoops down in human form and through the historical life and deeds of Jesus, works his own mighty unique acts, consummating in his saving self-revelation” (qtd. in Okorie 487).

For the sake of this project, the emphasis in this section will be specifically on the seven “I am” sayings of Jesus: I am the Bread of Life (6:35); I am the Light of the World

(8:12); I am the Door (10:7); I am the good Shepherd (10:11); I am the Resurrection and Life (11:25); I am the Way, the Truth and Life (14:6); and I am the true Vine (15:1). Each of these sayings, often in the context of specific signs Jesus does or conversations that Jesus has with his disciples or the crowds, gives an opportunity to rediscover the next level of discipleship.

The different individuals who witness the miracles of Jesus recognize that Jesus is the Son of God and respond to His claims. The signs as well as the works of Jesus are witnesses in the strategy of persuading the characters, and ultimately the reader, of Jesus' identity (Johns and Miller 533). The next stage of discipleship leads the disciple to a journey towards believing in Jesus by acknowledging His claims and imbibing those claims in their personal lives. The moments that Jesus takes after doing the signs, revealing elements of His divine identity, are an opportunity for the seeker to take the step towards becoming a believer. Therefore, the significance of the sign is reduced to a subordinate role, while the issue primarily becomes whether one will believe the claims of Jesus and follow Him (Culpepper, "Cognition" 258). The claims of Jesus, especially those which point to His divine nature, hold special prominence to help the believer to discover the truth about Jesus.

James Parker makes this statement, "The signs have as their overriding motivation and object the revelation of Jesus' glory. Jesus demonstrates signs to demonstrate His divine nature and miraculous power, with the consequence of arousing faith in those who witness His 'signs and wonders'" (Parker 42-43). A fixation on miracles often attracts seekers to Jesus, yet if they are to grow to be fruitful disciples it would be important to "grasp the significance of the person and work of Jesus and experience the life of Christ"

(Gine and Cherian 1395). At the heart of this growth from being a seeker to becoming a believer who believes in the name of Jesus, is an understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ and experiencing the power of His transforming life and work.

This understanding is best expressed in the “I am” sayings of Jesus Christ, which is usually a responsive discourse at the end of a sign or miracle. P.N. Anderson commenting on this connection between the signs and “I am” sayings state the following:

I am sayings function rhetorically in at least two ways. First, they either expand upon or introduce several of the signs of Jesus. In that sense, they clearly connect the ‘significance’ of the signs with Christological meanings serving the purposes of the evangelist. Second, the images connect with audiences, both Jewish and Gentile. For Jewish audiences, each of the I am metaphors echoes a typology of Israel in Hebrew scripture. As Israel is a light to the nations (Isa. 42.6; 49.6), Israel’s leaders are described as shepherds (2 Sam. 5.2; Ps. 78.70-72), Israel is a luxuriant vine (Hos. 10.1), the Torah is associated with bread (Deut. 8.3), etc. Further, each of the nine I-am metaphors and themes in John possesses cross-cultural qualities that address existential needs of humanity, so they would communicate well to Gentile audiences as well. Therefore, the absolute and metaphorical/thematic I-am sayings of Jesus in John further directly the purpose of the narrative, which is to lead audiences—Jewish and Gentile alike—to believe in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ (John 20.31). (Anderson 166)

The seven “I am” sayings which guide the discussion in leading the seeker to become a believer, are key elements to understand the growth process of a disciple to become like Christ. These key elements revolve around knowing the identity of Christ,

which would be crucial to growing as a believer. First, believing in Jesus, who compares himself to the divine wisdom, leads to a disciple never becoming hungry or thirsty (6:35 – I am the Bread of Life) (Keener, *IVP Bible* 267) for anything else as Jesus is the divine bread that supplies or communicates life, resulting in perfect satisfaction and spiritual fullness (Okorie 487). Unfortunately, the crowd of seekers who saw Jesus feeding the 5000 and experienced the physical bread, chose not to believe in the Bread of Life (6:36) (Gine and Cherian 1406).

Second, believing in Jesus, will lead the seeker from walking in darkness to the fullness of light (8:12 – I am the Light of the Lord). An early Indian prayer in Sanskrit communicates the longing of the seeker desiring truth and the reality of God: *Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya* (Lead me from darkness to light) (Gine and Cherian 1412). Knowing Jesus leads to this realization that the longing of every human heart is not the sun, moon, stars, or any other luminary, but experiencing Jesus as the everlasting light (Isaiah 60:1,19) (Okorie 488).

Third, an important truth to grasp and believe is that Jesus is the only door of salvation (10:7,9 – I am the door of the sheep), God's entry-point into the divine sheepfold (Gine and Cherian 1418). The usage of terminology of 'sheep' and 'shepherd' (10:8) refers to Israel's leaders like the Pharisees or synagogue leaders during Jesus time, who were 'thieves' and 'robbers' (Keener, *IVP Bible* 279) but Jesus came so that God's sheep will be secure and have abundant life (10:10) (Gine and Cherian 1418). Fourth, when one believes in Jesus, the Good Shepherd (10:11; 10:14), like sheep, he is completely dependent on Jesus for total shelter, care and guidance (Keener, *IVP Bible* 280). This dependence on Jesus, comes from the deep confidence in the ownership of the

Good Shepherd (Bruce 1249), that He will watch over the believer, protect him, and even die for the sake of the “sheep”. Jesus relationship to the believer is reflected in his own relationship to His Heavenly Father (10:14-15) and the believer is invited to consider listening to the voice of Jesus alone.

Fifth, when a genuine seeker believes in Jesus, the person participates in the divine life that is victorious over death (11:25-26 – I am the Resurrection and the Life) (Okorie 489). This belief in eternal life removes the fear of death (6:39,40; 8:51) since Jesus as the resurrection will enable them to live beyond the grave (Okorie 489). The longing of the ancient Sanskrit prayer, *Mrityor ma amritam gamaya* (Lead me from death to immortality) is fulfilled in Jesus (Gine and Cherian 1421). Sixth, believing in Jesus, prepares one to have total access to God, the Father (14:6 – I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life). Craig Keener gives a short response to this self-disclosure of Jesus with these words, “The Father is where I am going, and I am how you will get there” (Keener, *IVP Bible* 291). Okorie gives a well-defined description of this I am saying, “Jesus is the way to the place prepared in the Father’s house. He is the truth, the ultimate and everlasting reality, for in him there is the actual knowing of the Father. He is the life, the spiritual life-giving person. He is the Infinite, the way through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand (Romans 5:2)” (Okorie 489).

Finally, believing in Jesus, who is God’s New Israel (15:1,5 – I am the True Vine), and by being connected to Him, one bears fruit for God in his or her personal life and becomes effective in the Kingdom. The nation of Israel, the original God’s vine, had failed to produce good fruit, but a disciple of Jesus living a life connected to Jesus would now fulfil God’s purposes (Gine and Cherian 1431). The key word that Jesus uses in this

passage is “abide”, which is crucial to understand discipleship. Abiding as an expression was used to portray the relationship of the disciples to Jesus who abides in God (Winbery 111).

In the context of this project, how does this second stage of discipleship of being a *believer* apply to a disciple living out his faith in the world? Also, how does this apply to seekers who are within the circle of influence of a disciple? To both the above questions, John prescribes three invitations within the context of being a *believer*. These three invitations are lived out by a disciple in his neighbourhood, office environment, or college campus. These three invitations are the daily possibilities of a seeker on the verge of being a believer every time he interacts with a disciple.

First is an invitation to *come and believe* in the person of Jesus Christ and desire to seek Him with all His heart. Martha’s response to Jesus’s claim of “I am the Resurrection and the Life” where she simply states, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world” (11:27) is a good example of coming and believing even when she doesn’t understand it all. Second is an invitation to *come and know* the person of Jesus Christ and seek to understand the fullness of the identity of Jesus. The blind man’s lack of knowledge of Jesus, even though he has experienced first-hand Jesus’ healing is a reflection to understand the need to respond to the invitation to come and know the person of Jesus Christ (9:25). Third, an invitation to *come and commit* totally to the Lordship of Jesus is an important step to prepare one for the final stage of discipleship. Commitment, or the lack of it, set apart Judas from the rest of the disciples. Judas had responded to the first two invitations of being a believer, by believing and knowing, but sadly was not willing to commit totally to His lordship.

Following Christ

The Gospel of John presents the disciples at different levels of commitment. Each of these disciples are key characters who express their relationship with Jesus differently. Johannine scholars present the characters differently to express their discipleship journey. David Beck's study refers to the fact that the model disciples are anonymous. He cites numerous characters who share this status and suggests that their anonymity makes it easier for the addressee of the text to identify with them (Beck 145) Du Rand describes the different perspectives on Johannine discipleship based on the seven major characters, namely, John the Baptist, who serves as the witness par excellence to Jesus, Nicodemus, Samaritan Woman, the Invalid, Man born blind, Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple. (Du Rand). Mark Whitters describes discipleship in John by stating that the first part of John (Chapters 1-12) deals with those who are potential disciples and the second part (Chapters 13-21) with those who are actual disciples (Whitters 422).

Conway, however, highlights the minor characters in John and describes their followership as one of ambiguity and vagueness. Conway argues that nearly all the minor characters appear unstable and shifting, particularly in relation to Jesus. The journey of discipleship is presented not as a systematic and methodical pathway towards Jesus, but a spontaneous, often impulsive personal journey which is unique to each person. However, Conway contends that there is no ambiguity in the message. The central character of the narrative, Jesus Christ, calls for a choice between belief and unbelief, and the effects of either choice are clear. Conway makes this valid conclusion:

It presents us with a dualistic world in which the lines are sharply drawn, especially by the main character, Jesus. But it is also a world populated with

characters that are rarely so distinctly drawn. Their presence comments on the dualism of the Gospel, undercut it, subverts it. In the process, the notion of faith is also transformed. It becomes less stable, but no less productive. The characters that show signs of faith in the midst of their uncertainties and ambiguity still contribute in significant ways to the ministry and mission of Jesus. Indeed, perhaps they are more effective in and through their expression of a more rounded, more complex life of faith, than they might be from a place of flat and rigid certainty. Perhaps this is how the Gospel speaks through ambiguity and paradox. The stubborn resistance of the Johannine characters to be flattened into a particular type warns against the temptation to flatten our own lives into an oversimplified, unambiguous posture. (Conway 340-41)

Conway's perspective is a valid approach to understand discipleship in John. John articulates Jesus as the central character of the book and all the characters are presented in perspective to their response to His identity. True discipleship often requires the disciple to take the first step to be a seeker and experience the signs of Jesus. True discipleship leads to the next step to be a believer and commit to the claims of Jesus. Finally, genuine discipleship leads one to be a follower all the way. How does this followership look like? Once again, John, the author, gives no clarity or precise steps on how this followership looks like as a fixed prototype. Rather, he presents characters who experimented with Jesus and experienced Him in His words and works.

These characters started as a seeker and decided to be a believer and finally committing to be a follower. The lessons to be learnt in their individual journeys,

provides a wider horizon of how Johannine discipleship looks like. Stephen Moore makes this valid point:

Johannine characterization...is entirely Christocentric. Jesus is a static character in the Fourth Gospel...The functions of the other characters are to draw out various aspects of Jesus' character by supplying personalities and situations with which he can interact, and to illustrate a spectrum of alternative responses to him...Such characterizations are strategically oriented towards the reader, pushing him or her also towards a decisive response to Jesus. (Moore 49)

C. Bennama makes a remark on the characters in John's gospel which brings clarity in the context of this project, "We have argued that the Fourth Evangelist uses an array of characters and responses to resemble people and their choices in real life.

Readers must evaluate these responses in the light of the purpose stated in John 20:31" (Bennema, "A Theory" 420). Different characters in the gospel of John could make a useful study on understanding followership of Jesus. David Beck makes this valid point, "A literary analysis of the reader's experience helps clarify how the characterizations of these unnamed persons whose encounter with Jesus produced life-changing responses enables readers from any era, including our own, to make what Kurz describes as 'their spontaneous identification with what happens in the narrative'" (Beck 154).

Quite a few scholars consider the beloved disciple's witness as an example for being an ideal disciple. Pratap C. Gine and Jacob Cherian in *South Asia Bible Commentary* talk about the "dependable witness" of the beloved disciple and the fact that he is the "faithful and true witness – and a beautiful example for all believers" (Gine and Cherian 1448). Raymond Collins echoes similarly that the "Beloved is the epitome of

discipleship; he is the disciple par excellence” (Collins 367). Beck quotes Brown to indicate that the beloved disciple is not only “the disciple par excellence, but he is also the interpreter par excellence” who guides the reader in his faith response to the words and deeds of Jesus in the gospel narrative (qtd. in Beck 155). Beck describes the beloved disciple’s obscurity as a key element for being a model disciple in the Johannine narrative:

The beloved disciple's anonymity enables reader identification with him and entry into his narrative world. His identity has greater indeterminacy than the preceding anonymous characters. Nothing is revealed of his familial relationships, social standing, occupation, physical condition, or his past. The only aspect of his story that is initially revealed is that he was the recipient of Jesus' love. This greater indeterminacy facilitates the reader's filling the identity gaps in the beloved disciple's narrative with her/his own identity, entering and accepting the paradigm of discipleship that the beloved disciple presents. (Beck 154)

On the other hand, certain scholars also consider Simon Peter as an exemplary disciple in the Johannine narrative. Though a number of commentators have observed that the Fourth Gospel displays a noticeable propensity to exalt the Beloved Disciple at the expense of Peter (Droge 307). Quite a few passages seem to indicate that Peter and John are rivals, especially in passages they appear together. The beloved disciple outruns Peter to the tomb (John 20:3-10). In John 21, Peter and John have common encounters with Jesus where John appears to be saying and doing all the right things while Peter doesn’t always get it right! In fact, at the cross, the beloved disciple is faithfully standing at the foot of the cross, while Peter doesn’t. In short, the Beloved Disciple is unlike any

other character in the Fourth Gospel and in comparison, to Peter, he is presented as an ultimate disciple (Droge 307).

But Alan Culpepper using the scene of John 21 and Bradford B. Blaine's book, *Peter in the Gospel of John: The Making of an Authentic Disciple*, presents Peter and the Beloved disciple in a different light. Culpepper using John 21 shows that though John gives pride of place to the Beloved Disciple in the passage, the author 'nevertheless portrays Peter as an exemplary disciple.' Culpepper, however states that, 'On the other hand, nothing in this scene establishes Peter's primacy over the disciples. Peter is a representative character who dramatically confirms God's forgiving love and defines the connection between love for Jesus and care for the community.' (Culpepper, "Peter" 165). Culpepper uses the final scene with Jesus, Peter, and the beloved disciple in John 21 in the context of John 1-20, where the interpretation of Peter's conversation with the risen Lord, is highly dependent on rightly understanding the entire Johannine narrative (Culpepper, "Peter" 166).

Simon Peter is called "Simon son of John" earlier in John's gospel only at his call to discipleship in John 1:42, and in John 21 it is repeated each time that Jesus addresses Peter (21:15, 16, 17). Culpepper deliberates that this scene is a restoration of Peter to discipleship and is a clear illustration of the disciple who denied Jesus three times has become the exemplary disciple. Bradford Blaine in his presentation of Peter as an authentic disciple, takes it a step further, by arguing that Peter is in fact depicted very positively, appearing together with the beloved disciple as a paradigm of ideal discipleship and a co-founder of the Johannine community (Wiarda 847). Timothy Wiarda's review of the book makes a valid statement:

The beloved disciple, from his position close to Jesus, also plays a necessary role, however; only as a team do they achieve a positive result. Blaine sees a similar pattern of complementary qualities running through the remaining episodes in which Peter and the beloved disciple appear together. As a team Peter and the beloved disciple represent the ideal Johannine disciple. (Wiarda 848)

The researcher would tend to concur with Blaine's understanding, from two perspectives in the light of this project. The beloved disciple distinctly stands forth as a model disciple but an anonymous one representing the countless unidentified migrant Christ-followers across the world. Second, Peter's lifestyle represents the life of a common believer often struggling with his faith choices which is transparent and honest with no façade or disguise. Therefore, Peter and John together in the gospel of John paint a framework to understand the key qualities of followership of Jesus and what it means to fulfill the John 20:31 "purpose statement".

First, following Jesus is a willingness to commit to Jesus' loving priority on one's life. No passage is it as evident as in John 1:42 when Jesus encounters Peter for the first time. Even before Peter could say a word, Jesus makes two statements: first, "You are Simon son of John" and second, "you will be called Cephas." Jesus gives Simon a new name called Cephas, which in Aramaic, and in Greek (Peter) means "rock". In ancient cultures, giving a name to someone displays power over the one named. Also, in the Old Testament when a new name is given to someone it implies the specific role that person will play in connection with that name. It was a clear signal from Jesus' perspective that Jesus desired priority in the relationship he had with Peter (Thatcher 441). Following

Jesus is a willingness to be shaped in the identity that Jesus defines for a follower and not vice versa.

Peter's difficulty to understand this primary quality of following Jesus, led him into problems on quite a few occasions, which served as important reminders to draw him closer to God's calling on his life. Especially Jesus' priority on one's life requires the follower to understand Jesus' mission takes precedence over any other personal mission. In John 13:5-11, when Jesus is alone with his disciples, he is preparing them for his departure and as a prelude to what is popularly called the *Farewell discourses*, he pours water into a basin and begins to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him (13:5). In that context, Peter fails to understand the specific act of Jesus as a precursor to his death on the cross (13:7), the fullness of the mission he came to earth for. Since he did not understand the original intent of Jesus' mission, he had no clue on why Jesus wanted to wash his feet. Peter's bold declaration of willingness to lay down his life (13:31-38), his subsequent betrayal (18:5-27), and his attempt to abort Jesus' mission by cutting off Malchus' ear (18:10-11) were all instances of Peter trying to follow Jesus on his own terms.

Peter's supposed loyalty and devotion often threatened to foil Jesus' plan, but despite his ignorance he remained 'clean' through sincere dedication, which overcame even his rejection of the Master (Thatcher 448). This failure to understand Jesus' priority on his life on quite a few occasions changed after Jesus' death. After Jesus' death, Peter's repentance led to a new commission and calling (Thatcher 448). In comparison, the beloved disciple, at the foot of cross, was the only disciple who remained faithful even when the other disciples betrayed him and was available to follow through on Jesus' final

instruction to take care of his mother (19:25-27). In a sense, the beloved disciple committed himself to follow Jesus' loving priority over his life and had a clear understanding of his mission for his life.

Second, following Jesus requires the follower to live out an absolute and exclusive faith commitment. The passage in John 6:60-71 illustrates this quality with deep clarity especially in the backdrop of Jesus feeding the 5000. Following feeding the 5000, Jesus makes it clear that those who were to remain in him (6:56) had to believe in him, receiving him as the Son sent by the Father, who would be giving his life for them (Gine and Cherian 1407). Jesus was fully aware that some of his listeners would choose not to believe in him (6:64), yet those who believed in him was the result of the Father's enabling (6:65). This detailed description of the cost of discipleship was revolting to many who were following after him and chose to desert him (6:66) (Gine and Cherian 1408).

In the context of this desertion, Jesus turns to his disciples and wanted to test the quality of their commitment. Would they also desert him or remain faithful to him? Peter makes a sincere assertion, on behalf of the twelve disciples (6:68-69), that they would not abandon him as they have no other option, as they were convinced that he was the one sent from God as the "Holy One of God" and His Words were indeed the source of life (6:69). Blaine notes this crucial timing of Peter's confession as an important pledge of allegiance especially at a moment when many of Jesus' followers abandoned him (Blaine Jr. 49). But Tom Thatcher's response on the passage is more holistic in the light of the narrative of the entire chapter, that Jesus rejects Peter's confession (6:70) on two counts: first, the Twelve did not choose to follow him, but Jesus had chosen them, and

second, Peter was unaware that a “devil” lurked in their midst (Thatcher 441). Thatcher states, “Having control over the rejection and acceptance of His message, Jesus did not patronize Peter’s encouraging perspective...Peter’s confession, though genuine, was imperceptive. He was unable to please His Master because he did not understand the control structure of the relationship” (Thatcher 441).

In the light of this passage, the author makes it clear that it is one thing to “make” a public claim of absolute followership, but another thing to “live” out that claim in one’s daily life. Peter makes a public claim without truly understanding the full ramifications of the claim, while Jesus clearly states that despite Peter’s claim, not everybody would “live” out that claim in the days ahead. Remaining in Jesus alone to the very end was a vital sign of true followership (Gine and Cherian 1408). It requires the follower to go beyond receiving the physical food and living the life that Jesus requires one to follow. The witness of John the author presents the readers with a dualistic world in which Jesus, the main character of the Johannine narrative sharply draws the lines of commitment (Conway 340). An absolute and exclusive commitment to believing Jesus and His claims and living out his claim in one’s daily life is essential to successful followership.

Third, following Jesus requires the follower to walk in love with fellow disciples. In the context of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples (John 13), and an occasion where Peter and the beloved disciple both converse with each other and with Jesus, Jesus makes this important command about loving one another (13:34-35). Jesus’ command was new because of two important facts. First, the disciples’ love for each other was to be demonstrated based on his love for them (13:34). Second, their mutual love and life of humble service (13:15) would serve as a witness to those who are not yet believers

(13:35) (Gine and Cherian 1429). It is this fraternal love which establishes the community of believers and “defines the integrity of discipleship” (Du Rand 323).

Jesus emphasizes this love further in his farewell discourses about laying down their lives in service to others (15:13). This statement is crucial for Peter in the light of his boast that he would lay down his life for Jesus (13:37), his subsequent betrayal (18:15-27), and Jesus’ prediction about his eventual martyrdom (21:18-19). Jesus seems to make a pivotal declaration (15:13) here by linking together laying down one’s life and love for community, which would be a hallmark of true followership (Culpepper, “Peter” 170). Even in Jesus’ high priestly prayer (John 17), he takes time to pray for his disciples and all future believers (17:21-23). The heart of his specific prayer is that their love for each other would draw them into the “perfect relational oneness” that exists in the persons of the Holy Trinity (Gine and Cherian 1436). Pratap Gine and Jacob Cherian state the missional impact of this unity:

...the unity among the disciples on earth must reflect this divine unity in heaven (10:30). The disciples abiding in Christ and bearing fruit in love (15:16-17) and unity will act as a convincing factor for the world to believe in Jesus...When disciples serve each other in love (13:34-35; 15:8-17) and seek a divinely enabled unity, they highlight Jesus’ divine identity and God’s love for the world (17:22-23). (Gine and Cherian 1436)

Peter and the beloved disciple’s encounters with each other and with Jesus in the final few chapters of the gospel of John illustrate the tough nature of practising this quality. For example, in John 21, in Jesus’ final conversation with Peter and the beloved disciple, Peter gets a little anxious concerning the future role of the beloved disciple

(21:21). Jesus did not want Peter to be sidetracked with God's will in another disciple's life, but rather be committed to following Him wholeheartedly. Loving one another will lead to desiring God's best in another disciple's life too. Though most scholars present Peter and the beloved disciples as 'rivals' in the Johannine narrative, Blaine sees a similar pattern of complementary qualities through the episodes in which Peter and the beloved disciple appear together. As a team, Peter and the beloved disciple represent the ideal Johannine discipleship, which highlights how faithful followers must conduct themselves in society to draw a seeking community to Jesus (Blaine Jr. 23).

Fourth, following Jesus requires the disciple to walk in loving obedience to Jesus. A recurring theme in the farewell discourses (14:21, 15:9-16) is succinctly communicated in 14:15: "If you love me, keep my commands." Jesus communicates to the Twelve that because of their intimate relationship with him as their master, they would willingly keep his commandments as evidence of their love for him (Gine and Cherian 1430). Obedience was the standard for defining the "reality of a disciple's knowledge of and love for Jesus" (Du Rand 318).

A key phrase Jesus uses to express this loving obedience is "remain in me" (15: 4, 5, 7, 9) or as other translations use "abide in me". Jesus uses his own example of keeping his Father's commands and remaining in His love (15:10). Carlton L. Winbery articulates the concept of discipleship in the gospel of John as simply *abiding in Christ* (Winbery 104). He refers to John 14-16 as the "great discipleship chapters" where the word "abide" is used 14 times in this section. Winbery emphasizes, "Abiding in Christ and God is done in one's life in the world where the disciple is charged with being obedient to the call of God to do the works of the one who sent Jesus into the world" (Winbery 118).

The beloved disciple and Peter are both involved in this final conversation Jesus has with them, where he paints for them the core elements of discipleship. In fact, Jesus' call to obedience was not a call to be "slaves who must submit to the whims of a master" (Gine and Cherian 1432), but an invitation to be special friends with whom he had been openly sharing the Father's will (15:14-15). Pratap Gine and Jacob Cherian stresses the power of this friendship, where the disciples are "offered divine intimacy and membership in God's family (1:12-13;8:35) and they are entrusted with knowing and doing the Father's will" (Gine and Cherian 1432).

It is clear from the words of Jesus and the writings of John that there can be no love for Christ without obedience to Christ. A follower's love for God is defined by his or her faithful obedience (Watson and Watson 39). Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21:15-19 where he wraps up Peter's love for Jesus with costly obedience with a final invitation: "Follow me" (21:19). Jesus was preparing Peter for leadership and for the definitive price he would have to pay by ultimately surrendering his self-will to "self-denial and to God's will" (Gine and Cherian 1448). Followership was a calling to love, to die and to lead a movement of followers. Peter and the beloved disciple's role in ancient church history is proof of this quality of living out their lives in loving obedience.

Fifth, followership is following the path of the Holy Spirit. In the farewell discourses with the twelve disciples, Jesus introduces specific roles of the Holy Spirit in the life of a follower. Peter and the beloved disciple would understand key elements of what it is to follow Jesus by following the trajectory of the Holy Spirit. Bill Domeris recommends it is important to understand the role of the Holy Spirit outside the farewell

discourses, especially in the entire Johannine narrative, to grasp a fuller understanding of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life (Domeris 20).

In John 1:33, the same Jesus on whom the Spirit comes down, has the authority to baptize with the Holy Spirit. In John 3:3-8, the Spirit is displayed as the giver of spiritual life and necessary for salvation (Bennema, "The Giving" 195). In John 3:34, God is referred as the giver of the Spirit without limit and this same Spirit gives life through Jesus' teachings (6:63). In John 4: 23-24, worship in Spirit and in Truth is "contrasted with the worship of orthodox Judaism and Samaritan worship" (Domeris 20). Jesus makes a bold declaration in John 7:37-38, that anyone who believes in him, will experience the Spirit as "rivers of living water" flowing from within him. The Spirit, for the writer of John, is seen principally as the sign of spiritual life, and this causes Jesus' action of breathing on the disciples (20:22) (Domeris 20).

Eugene Boring presents a key perspective by presenting the overarching Johannine themes in relation to the Holy Spirit (Boring 450). According to him, a church guided by the Holy Spirit, will experience unity among the followers, a Christology that combines the theology of the Spirit, the regenerative creative power of God at work through the church, and the post-resurrection guidance to the Christian community. This final element of guidance to the community of believers, finds a special focus in Jesus' farewell discourse (14:15-17; 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7; 16:12-15). The twelve, including Peter and the beloved disciple, introduced the Spirit as the Paraclete, who is "one called alongside" to be a helper, encourager, assistant, and comforter. This specific role of the Holy Spirit would be important for the followers as they prepare for life without the physical Jesus with them.

Boring elaborates the specific role of the Holy Spirit as the disciples commit to following the path of the Holy Spirit. First, the Spirit would take the place of Jesus as the disciples' leader and teacher. This Spirit would be the Spirit of Truth guarding the disciples against error (14:15-17). Second, the Spirit would teach the disciples "all things" which includes those perceptions which could not be shared with them during the days when the earthly Jesus was with them (14:25-26). Third, the Spirit would guide them in their witness to unbelievers in new situations, and these words would not just be their own opinions but would be specifically guided by the Holy Spirit as they speak in Jesus name (15:26-27). Fourth, as Boring comments on 16:7, "In Johannine theology, the Holy Spirit is not a consolation prize for the absence of Jesus, but the presence of the risen Christ himself who brings to fulfillment the meaning of the revelation of God in the pre-Easter Jesus" (Boring 453). Finally, through the Spirit the resurrected Christ would continue to guide his community of followers through history distinctly displaying the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit (16:12-15) (Boring 453).

Pratap Gine and Jacob Cherian in their comment on John 20:22 provide an essential conclusion to understand the followers following the path of the Holy Spirit:

The presentation of Jesus as the giver of the God's Spirit is an important theme in John's Gospel...So is the idea that the Spirit is given as prophetic anointing to help the disciples proclaim the message of life...Disciples, then and now, are commanded to receive the Spirit of life and Truth (14:17) so that they can fulfill the mission of Jesus. This mission includes mediating the salvation and forgiveness of God. Through the word they bring, believers offer the world the opportunity to receive life in Christ...The sorrowful and fearful disciples were

being prepared for the mission of continuing Jesus' mission on earth. (Gine and Cherian 1446)

Finally, following Jesus commits to believing the resurrection of Christ and walking in the fullness of life. It's important to reiterate again the purpose statement of the Johannine narrative found in John 20:31, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Just before the author makes clear the purpose of the book, he presents a series of encounters that different disciples had with the resurrected Jesus. In a sense, the author wanted to convey that the ultimate feature of true followership is a willingness to believe in the resurrection of Christ and that belief is crucial to experience the fullness of life found in Jesus name. Peter and the beloved disciple rush to the empty tomb and based on what they see, the beloved disciple believes that Jesus is resurrected (20:8). Subsequently, Peter along with the other disciples believes when Jesus appears before them in a closed room (20:19-23) as evident from the confession they make to Thomas in 20:25.

The death and resurrection of Jesus function as a fundamental motif in the Gospel according to John, and he considers it as a revelatory sign (2:18ff). The Gospel presents two clear unique perspectives, those who do not believe in Jesus and those who believe in Him and the change in their personal this faith can make (Van der Watt 125). An example of the former is Nicodemus while Thomas' personal confession is a case for the latter. As Watt emphasizes:

The revelation of the divine identity of Jesus through the cross/resurrection-events, and the consequent confession of Thomas, have a definite impact on the

truth claim of the message of Jesus within this Gospel. Whichever way one looks at it, it cannot be ignored that the claims Jesus made in this Gospel, were existentially dramatic claims. If the message of this Gospel is indeed true, and Jesus is whom he claims to be, then the Man from Nazareth is indeed the inaugurator of the final eschatological salvation (making eternal life available) in this world.

Within this narrative, the cross/resurrection-events legitimize the mission of Jesus as well as his message - it is the mission and message of the One who could be confessed as 'Lord and God' (20:28), the One who is one with the Father (10:30). The cross/resurrection-events were indeed functional in communicating this message.(Van der Watt 137-138)

For the Johannine narrative, this confession highlights the truth claim of the message of Jesus, that is if He is indeed divine and the Father is with him as He said, his message should be assessed and gauged in the fulfilment of that claim (Van der Watt 138). This belief in the resurrection of Jesus was not just a historical factual knowledge for the follower, but it a faith confession that Jesus is the Son of God who has divine power over life and death by laying down his life and taking it up again. The author intentionally designed the gospel of John to lead readers to believe Jesus is not only God's promised Messiah, but the Son of God who lives in closest intimacy with the Father God (1:1,18; 5:19-27; 10:30) (Gine and Cherian 1446). The follower who seeks to truly follow Christ, must desire to know, and walk in the fullness of life found only in Jesus.

The theme of life is a recurring emphasis throughout the Johannine narrative. In fact, it appears over 40 times in the gospel of John (1:4; 3:15-16; 4:14; 6:33; 10:10; 11:25; 15:13; 17:3). Paul Minear uses 11:25-26, in Jesus' promise to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die" as a twin promise to believers. Though it sounds paradoxical, it first is a promise of eternal life to believers who die; and second, believers who live in him will never actually die. As Minear elucidates:

In the design of the Gospel as this narrator planned it, the story could end only when readers understood that they, too, could count on the fulfilment of Jesus' double promise to Martha. Some disciples, like Peter, would be martyred; some like the beloved disciple would not. But to all faithful followers Jesus would fulfil his assigned mission as "the resurrection and the life." (Minear 499)

In the context of this project, how does this third stage of discipleship of being a *follower* apply to a disciple living out his faith in the world? Also, how does this apply to seekers who are within the circle of influence of a disciple? To both the above questions, John prescribes three invitations within the context of being a *follower*. These three invitations are lived out by a disciple in his neighbourhood, office environment, or college campus. These three invitations are the daily possibilities of a believer at the verge of being a follower every time he interacts with a disciple.

First is an invitation to *come and love* the person of Jesus with no distractions or strings attached. The beloved disciple is an ideal example of someone who decided to follow Jesus all the way without any compromise. Peter sincerely desired to love Jesus but was severely tested before he responds to Jesus' call to loving obedience in John 21.

Second is an invitation to *come and die* to your personal will and ambition and surrender to God's plan for one's life. Peter throughout the Johannine narrative was tested in this aspect and Jesus' prophetic destiny for him (21:18-19) is a call to every disciple to consider followership as a call to die. Third is an invitation to *come and lead* a community of disciples to be like Christ and be faithful followers in humble servanthood. Jesus' call to Peter to leadership is evident throughout the gospel, and in his final words to him (21:15-17) was a public command to humbly lead the disciples in faithful followership.

Church History

Church history is filled with examples and stories of migrant Christ-followers who lived out their faith in faithful discipleship, resulting in impacting the communities they lived in. In the early church, Roman state persecution of Christ followers produced small migrations that brought the Christian faith to people who had not known it before. There is the example of Dionysius who was the Bishop in the third century, who was exiled from his city and sent to a distant area. His initial discouragement over the banishment was forgotten as it turned out to be a missional and pastoral opportunity (Im and Yong 23).

Nestorian merchant missionaries stand out in history for their passionate fervor to spread the gospel. They spread the gospel eastward and by the end of the second century they had reached Northern Afghanistan. By the seventh century, these Persian missionaries had reached China. These merchant missionaries combined their business acumen with their desire to spread the Christian message along the trade routes of Asia. This is a key point in painting the Nestorian model (Gordy 5).

Samuel Escobar makes interesting reflections about migration being an important factor during the Reformation period in the sixteenth century. John Calvin one of the leading theologians in that period, fled France and became a refugee in Geneva, Switzerland, where five thousand migrants joined a population of 10,300 between 1542 and 1560. Calvin himself launched initiatives for the professional training of young people and helping adults adjust to new jobs. He also stood for their rights by campaigning against those who wanted to benefit from cheap labor (Escobar 30).

Moravians based in Moravia and united under the leadership of Count N. Zinzendorf (26 May 1700 – 09 May 1760). The basic model of the Moravians was for people to be converted to Christ, have an evidential experience of Christ and then after elementary training they were sent into the world (Gordy 5). The period between 1815 and 1914, is considered the great century of Western missionary enterprise. Up to sixty million Europeans left for the Americas, Oceania, and East and South Africa. The greatest Christian missionary expansion of all time overlapped with possibly the most noteworthy of all migrations in human history, “culminating in an epochal transformation of global Christianity” (Hanciles, "Migration and Mission" 149).

In the twentieth century, there were a variety of illustrations of migrants making an impact for the kingdom in the countries they migrated to. Workers of a British railway company planted many churches in Argentina in the early twentieth century. Churches in Brazil, Peru and Spain were founded or developed by Korean businessmen. In the 1960s, Spanish migrants planted Spanish-speaking churches in Germany, now attended by Latin American migrants. Filipino young people planted churches in the United States. Ghanaian migrants set up churches in the Netherlands (Escobar 30).

A study of church history and trends through the centuries shows that Christianity is a migratory religion and migration movements have been a key element in its expansion. Walls explains the six historical phases in which transformation by cultural flow gave the Christian faith greater influence and impact. First, the Jewish age was marked by Jewish practices and ideas. Second, the Hellenistic-Roman age was marked by the idea of orthodoxy. Third, the Barbarian age was marked by the idea of a Christian nation. Fourth, the western European age was marked by the primacy of the individual. Fifth, the age of expanding Europe and Christian recession was marked by cross-cultural transplantation but also accompanied by a massive decline in faith among European peoples. Finally and one which is still in process is the Southern age, featuring extensive penetration of new cultures in Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, and parts of Asia (Hanciles "Migration and Mission" 148)

There are two crucial lessons to be learnt from the trends of church history in connection to migration. First, churches and groups that prepared migrants to be faithful disciples even beyond the comfort of their own settings reaped the results of witnessing effective outreaches in unreached cities and countries. Second, regular follow-up with already migrated professionals or students resulted in greater impact in these new communities.

Practising Discipleship in a Cross-cultural Context

Migrant Realities in the 21st century

Current Facts

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, there are global facts regarding migration that is impacting individual lives, communities, and entire nations. According

to the World Migration Report 2018, an estimated 244 million people (3.3% percent of the world population) are considered international migrants having migrated across international borders (McAuliffe and Ruhs 13). According to the Pew Research Center:

...migrants come from every inhabited part of the globe, and no one continent or region is the source of a majority...In terms of individual countries, the leading sources of international migrants have been Mexico, India and Russia. More than 10 million people have left each of those countries and now live elsewhere. While migrants come from a very diverse and widespread array of countries, the vast majority end up immigrating to a relatively few areas – North America, Europe, Australia and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. Among destination countries, the United States is in a class by itself. About one-in-five international migrants alive today (nearly 43 million, including unauthorized immigrants and people born in U.S. territories, such as Puerto Rico and Guam) reside in the United States. This is more than three times the number that reside in any other country. Among the world's other Top 10 destinations for migrants have been Saudi Arabia (7.3 million foreign-born residents), Canada (7.2 million), France (6.7 million), the United Kingdom (6.5 million), Spain (6.4 million), India (5.4 million) and Ukraine (5.3 million). (Pew Research Center)

The trends of migration have changed in the last few decades. More than four decades ago, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia sent millions of people to the western world, originally as cheap labor migrants, later as asylum seekers but progressively as economic migrants. However, in the last two decades, the scene changed

with about seventy percent of immigrants being from a non-western world moving into most wealthy developed nations of Europe and North America. The drift is shifting towards professionals moving in search of jobs (Hanciles, “Migration, Diaspora Communities”)

This migratory shift in the twenty-first century is already altering the religious demographics of different countries. Based on the study, by 2100, it might be difficult to find a country in which ninety percent or more of the population belong to any single world religion (Johnson and Bellofatto 15) Jehu Hanciles makes this point that non-western cultures are largely religious and the south to north exodus is primarily a religious movement. He states, “In addition to the economic and cultural benefits which the new immigrants bring, they are also impacting western societies in fundamental ways related to religious life.” In fact the global migratory drive implicates the west as a site of new religious exchanges. (Hanciles, “Migration, Diaspora Communities”)

Arthur Walls while describing this new migrant movement differentiates it from the earlier European migration. This distinction is important as it displays a new world order where migrants are influencing their new cultural system while they continue to keep their connections active with their place of origin, sustaining networks across the globe (Walls 23). In a sense these migrants live in two worlds, wanting to retain the values and ethos of their home country while willing to equally imbibe the culture of their adopted country. Especially in the twenty-first century, with the use of technology and social media, these migrants are closely networked with their families in the home country. Peggy Levitt states, “The assumption that people will live their lives in one place, according to one set of national and cultural norms, in countries with impermeable

national borders, no longer holds. Rather, in the twenty first century, more and more people will belong to two or more societies at the same time”(Levitt).

However, a critical need that is gaining momentum among those engaged in the study of migration is the future necessity of migration for the sustainability of the world. Arthur Walls quotes a report of United Nations in 2001 predicting a rise in the world’s population by 2050 of 1.2 percent per year – that is of seventy-seven million people. Based on the report, the following interesting scenario develops:

Half that increase will, according to the report, come from six countries: India, China, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia. The increase in population growth will be concentrated in the areas least able to sustain it, leading to irresistible pressures for migration. By 2050, the population of Africa will be three times that of Europe, even allowing for the anticipated deaths of 300 million Africans from AIDS. But the population of most developed countries is set to fall in highly industrialized Germany and Japan by 14 percent, in Italy, by 25 percent, in Russia and the Ukraine, by anything up to 40 percent. In other words, the developed countries will need immigration if they are to sustain anything like their present level of economic activity. That will above all be true of the United States, which will be the prime target of the new migration as it was of the old one. It will need a million new migrants a year to sustain itself and it will be one of the few developed countries in the world to increase its population perhaps to 400 million by 2050. But the increase will be entirely due to immigration. (Walls 21)

However, anti-immigration trends developing globally seems to go against this migration movement. The British Government's stand following Brexit and the United States new immigration policies following the election of Donald Trump to power are creating an anti-immigration wave which seems to upset the migration inclinations (Cressey). The Australian government recently abolished the skilled expat workers' visas popular with Indians to migrate to Australia (Lubna Kably). Specifically, in context of United States, six percent of immigrants are Indians which is the second largest group after Mexican immigrants (Zong and Batalova). There is a hot debate whether this anti-immigration drive would have any success. In the field of education, India is the second largest contributor to the United States educational institutions with about fifteen percent of global students being from India. In the field of technology, twenty billion dollars is approximately what Indian firms pay in taxes with over 400 hundred thousand jobs supported by Indian technology companies (Iftikhar Gilani).

Frances Cairncross, the economist, in his article, "The Longest Journey," talks about the key migration realities in the twenty-first century, which gives a broad framework to present a viable response for individuals and churches. First, the governments will be under huge international pressure to sustain the movement of migration, regardless of how much individual governments try to clamp it down. Cairncross states:

Powerful economic forces are at work. It is impossible to separate the globalization of trade and capital from the global movement of people. Borders will leak; companies will want to be able to move staff; and liberal democracies will balk at introducing the draconian measures required to make controls truly

watertight. If the European Union admits ten new members, it will eventually need to accept not just their goods but their workers too. (Frances Cairncross)

Second, technology will aid migration because of the fall in transport costs and cheap telephone costs, even via social media. Third, the huge financial gains which impact the step of migration to a new country, change the economic and social bearings of an individual for a lifetime. Fourth, immigrants will tend to cluster at the upper and lower ends of the skill spectrum. Developed countries have migrants who have higher levels of education as well as illegal immigrants with little education. Finally, debatably in the current context, hostility to migration would be milder in four countries – US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, that is built on migration (Frances Cairncross).

Emerging Trends

Bob Roberts in his book, *Real-Time Connections*, talks about three emerging realities of the twenty-first century. First, he calls it the decentralized connectedness which is a global nexus of connections of people. No country or organization controls this connectedness. Second, nodal networks which are a combination of individuals and cities grow by learning from each other. Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams in their book, *Wikinomics*, states, “Twenty years from now we will look back at this period of the early twenty-first century as a critical turning point in economic and social history. We will understand that we entered a new age, one based on new principles, world views, and business models where the nature of the game was changed”(Tapscott and Williams 19-26). *Wikinomics* presents the new world system where learning and growth is based on four powerful new ideas: Openness (candour, transparency, freedom, flexibility, expansiveness, engagement, and access), peering (new models of organizing based on

more horizontal leader leadership than hierarchical), sharing (collaboration and customer driven innovation) and acting globally (it's not enough to think globally, in today's world we must act globally as well) (Tapscott and Williams 19-26).

Finally, Bob Roberts talks about the emerging trend of post-Americanism where the reference point is no longer American but equal global partners. Bob Roberts' analysis seems fair and accurate to a point, until one realizes that global migration is happening from South to North. Though America may not be the center of politics, it is still considered financially viable for an Indian to make his future in the USA rather than in India. The difference in currency and the dream for greener pastures makes Indians travel to Europe, Middle East, and the USA (Roberts).

However, one of the key factors to be considered in this scenario: Is the religious distinctiveness which is beginning to be confronted in a melting pot of many cultures coming together especially in countries which welcomes immigrants? Eric Kaufmann remarks in the context of this setting, religious diversity is challenged, often undermined, by secularization as it, "leads people to question their faith's claim to exclusive possession of the truth, fostering religious doubt and, eventually, decline" (qtd in Johnson and Bellofatto 18). In a sense, globalization not only facilitates the presence of multiple religions in a geographic area, but it also hastens such a plurality as the movement of peoples, ideas, and cultures across new boundaries becomes which becomes the new normal (Johnson and Bellofatto 18).

But on the other hand, Hanciles believes this globalization doesn't weaken the force of the religious movements, but conversely, will trigger a "global revival of religion" on every continent. (Hanciles, "Beyond Christendom" 93). Hanciles strongly

remarks, “It is my strong conviction that migrant movement (in this case from the ‘global South’ to the industrial North) will play an increasingly decisive role in reshaping the Western religious landscape” (“Beyond Christendom” 96). Philip Jenkins, in *The Next Christendom*, goes as far as to predict that by 2050 only about one-fifth of the world’s Christians will be white Caucasian (Jenkins 3).

These emerging global trends have specific implications in the context of India. First, India has the largest number of international migrants in the world, followed by Mexico and Russia. As of 2015, sixteen million people from India were living outside their country, compared to twelve million from Mexico (United Nation). Second, a large majority of these Indian migrants are trained professionals and performing students who add value to the country they migrate to. A report by the Greater Pacific Capital in 2013 presents the power of the Indian diaspora,

India’s diaspora, though small relative to the country’s domestic population, is disproportionately skilled, educated and wealthy. Further, the proportion of highly-skilled Indian migrants has increased considerably over the past decade as the globalisation of trade, capital, and labour has taken hold. While it is only 2% of India’s population, the total wealth of this community has been estimated at c. US\$1 trillion (of which half is financial assets, with the rest being land and physical assets) in a recent report by Datamonitor or c. 50% of India’s 2012 nominal GDP of US\$2.0 trillion. The income of this community has been estimated approximately US\$400 billion or over 20% of India’s GDP. This high-achieving group includes US senators, Nobel laureates, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, entrepreneurs galore and prize-winning authors. Notwithstanding

these individual success stories, the overseas Indian community is comprised of a disproportionately large share of doctors, scientists, engineers, as well as technology and finance professionals in their respective host countries— and in the US, now forms one of the most well-educated, accomplished, and affluent communities (Greater Pacific)

Third, based on well-researched projections, by the year 2025, an estimated twenty-five percent of the global workforce will be of Indian origin. This statistic means, almost in every country and in every office of any nationality, one is bound to engage with an Indian casually or work very closely. Fourth, and closely connected to the third implication, is the importance of skill development for these migrants if they are to have a quality impact in international urban and rural settings. Most of the immigration taking place from India is unskilled labor. There are about five million overseas Indian workers in this class all over the world out of which more than ninety percent of these workers are in the Gulf countries and South-east Asia (Bhandari and Malik 6). If one is to compare figures in the International skills training scene, just about two percent of India's existing workforce have skills training compared to ninety-six percent in Korea, seventy-five percent in Germany, eighty percent in Japan, and sixty-eight percent in the United Kingdom (Bhandari and Malik 11).

What do these emerging trends mean to the churches in India, who annually have countless students and professionals leave their churches and migrate to urban centres around the world? First, it gives an opportunity for the Indian church to make a global impact. Jehu Hanciles' statement is both precise and opportune, "Every Christian migrant is a potential missionary" (Hanciles, "Beyond Christendom" 99). Every Indian

believer migrating from India as a professional to work in an urban international centre, engages with people from different communities and religions, and can live out his or her faith in a secular setting. Second, is the important role of every local church in India to prayerfully disciple the young migrant before he leaves the borders of India. This training in discipleship should have a missional edge, which desires to live out the faith amidst the multi-religious and multi-cultural community. This discipleship would also need to be relational, which focuses on building friendships instead of forcing religion in an international setting. Third, leveraging the power of technology, a local church in India can provide encouragement and discipleship to international migrants already based in international centres. Finally, the Indian church has this key role of encouraging international migrants to either serve passionately in a local church (where there is a local church community) or consider the possibility of starting a church plant in a setting where there is no existing believers' community. The Indian church of the future can potentially be a "borderless" church which is not divided by geographical boundaries or language or people groups. A local Indian church can harness the exciting possibilities of providing nurture remotely and virtually use technology that leads to greater impact for the global church.

Van Thanh Nguyen makes this excellent remark, which captures the calling of every Indian Christ-follower as he leaves the borders of India, "When Christian immigrants travel, they bring their religion with them, or more personally, their God literally migrates with them" (Nguyen 206). This intensity of mission in the context of the migration movement, Jehu Hanciles comments as a critical dimension to transform the globe, with the "potential to significantly affect the geographic and demographic

contours of the world's major religions and provide a vital outlet for proselytism and missionary expansion" (Hanciles, "Migration and Mission" 146).

Migration Experience

Migrant Challenges in Transition

The journey from one's own country to a host country as a migrant is a transition that requires specific focus in the light of the challenges involved in the shift. This move to a new city has two definite tension points which the migrant must negotiate to successfully integrate into a new city. First a *proper understanding* of the necessary documentation for travel, financial considerations, and logistical arrangements is required to successfully navigate the move to a new city. Improper and incomplete understanding through improper channels could result in a painful and dangerous transition leading to hazardous consequences. Second, a *cultural adaptability* to the demands of the new city is crucial to effectively assimilate into the local culture and life ethic in a new environment. Failure to culturally adapt to a new setting leads to discouragement, anxiety, and stress which could lead to a bad experience for the migrant.

Robin Cohen in his seminal book, *Global Diasporas, An Introduction*, states this sense of tension that is faced by a migrant in transition:

...they are often traumatically dispersal from an original homeland; they leave their homeland in search of work, pursuit of trade, or to further colonial ambitions; they share a collective memory and myth about the homeland; and they possess an idealization of the supposed ancestral home. There is also a return movement or at least a continuing connection observed among them. They tend to have a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and a

troubled relationship with host societies. They share a sense of co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries and possess the possibility of a distinctive, creative, and enriching life in a tolerant host countries(Cohen 161-162).

Brian Seim in his article, *Diaspora and the Megacities: A Narrative Mode*, talks about the pressures of changes that a migrant faces in a new city (qtd. in Tira 76-78). A few of the factors which would be relevant to the context of this project are outlined below. First, pluralistic tolerance is a key element of an international urban city. Any attempt to divide based on culture or religion would not be tolerated in an office setting. If a migrant is to adapt to his new culture, he or she would have to be willing to let go of any extremist religious bias which would cause him or her to be alienated from people in the new culture. Second, materialism compels the migrant to make the choice to gradually be like the society around him. This choice can cause the migrant to live beyond his or her means which can adversely impact his or her financial budgeting. Third, the impact of globalization necessitates the migrant to embrace change for his or her own sake. Failure to take steps to change life and work habits can cause one to be left behind in the international rat race. Fourth, climatic changes in the environment are a vital area that a migrant would have to adapt to survive in a new city. An international migrant in most cases is faced with a different weather condition that is bound to test his or her physical resilience and his or her emotional stability.

Fifth, an issue which Seim does not address deeply, but is a key concern of other authors like Jehu Hanciles in his article, *Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders: Reflections on African Christian Presence in Western Societies* and Roger

Waldinger in his article, *Strangers at the Gates* is the varying degrees of segregation and prejudice non-western migrants face especially in western societies. Indians moving to international urban cities face this exclusion based on their skin color, physical features, or accent.

A keyword that Brian Seim uses and is often used in the context of migration is ‘acculturation’. Acculturation is the cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture (*Merriam-Webster*). In the context of the book, *Human Tidal Wave*, Sadira Joy Tira, defines it in the framework of twenty-first century urban diversity, as the set of conscious or unconscious cultural adaptations which one makes in their personal lives to become proficient in the workplace and community of their new home (Tira 78). Seim stresses the importance of acculturation if a migrant is to succeed in his transition, “To succeed in a diverse, complex, impersonal, task-oriented city of 30-300 people groups, they must acculturate to ‘make it.’ Everyone acculturates and all ethnic group change... Acculturation enables them to adopt behaviors of their surrounding culture” (qtd in Tira 78).

A crucial question to consider especially for a Christian migrant is, does he also “acculturate” his faith experience and expression in his new city? The response to this query is important to help him decipher the level to which he impacts the new city with his faith or alternatively, allows himself to be impacted.

Migrant Faith Experience and Expression in International City

A Christian migrant in an international city, carries with him the synthesis of three frameworks which is crucial for him to fulfil his identity and calling as a Christ-follower. (See Figure 2.1) First is the framework of his personal faith journey which he carries with

him into the city. This faith journey is the path of discipleship which impacts all other areas of his life in the new city. This path of discipleship would include a few personal habits such as prayer, Bible reading, the study of Christian books, and even engaging with content to help him grow in his faith.

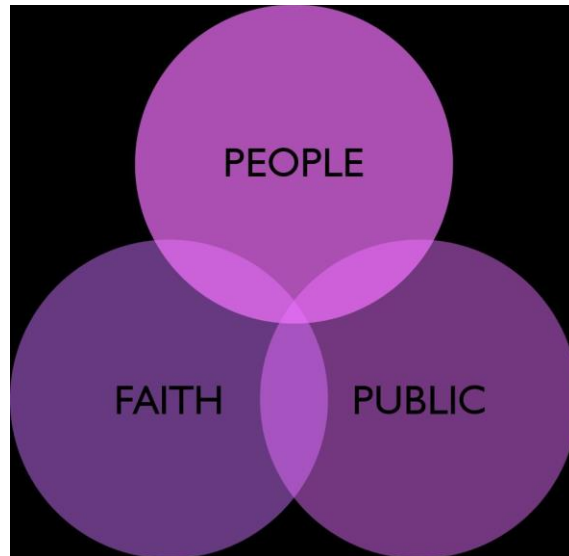


Figure 2.1: International migrant's synthesis of life framework.

Second is the framework of his public professional life or student life, the original reason for his shift to the new city. This public profile is a vital nexus which effectively impacts the other frameworks positively or negatively. This profile (if the individual is a student) includes the migrant's entire quest to succeed as a student especially attending classes, doing assignments, working on projects, preparing for exams, extensive research, travel hours, and anything within the gamut of being a student. If the person is a professional it includes the pursuit to be successful in the workplace especially his work responsibilities, office projects, attending meetings, training programs, travel hours, and anything else which would further the role as a professional. Within this framework, are

also the disciplines required to successfully navigate life in a different city. Disciplines like financial management, transportation plans, accommodations, and food arrangements are important factors to be considered daily.

Third is the framework of the community which revolves around him or her unintentionally or he or she chooses to purposefully develop around him or her. No man or woman lives on an island without any people. He or she is surrounded by people who either take a movement towards the migrant or the migrant should take a movement towards them. These people are in the local neighbourhood where the migrant lives in his or her own house or sharing with other people. In some cases, students live in college campuses in dormitories sharing with students from other countries. In college classrooms and canteens, migrant students also are surrounded by other students in the degree program they have enrolled for. Migrant professionals are surrounded by office colleagues and share in their lives for a major part of the day. These human networks form the community which the migrant happily engages with or forcefully endures as he or she pursues a life in the new city. A Christian migrant seeks the community of church relationships as a crucial element to his or her faith framework, to help him or her grow in his or her faith journey.

The ability of the migrant to effectively blend these three frameworks will determine the depth of his or her faith experience and the missional impact of his or her faith expression. In the context of these three vital frameworks, it is important to understand the migratory nature of Christianity. Both Andrew Walls and Jehu Hanciles point to the fact that Christianity thrives and grows through migration. Andrew Walls makes a valid point about the uniqueness and the survival traits of Christianity. It is

because of “its capacity to expand across cultural frontiers in a manner that renders ‘each new point on the Christian circumference...a new potential Christian centre’”(Walls, "Missionary Movement" 22). Hanciles also notes that Christianity is a migratory faith, and migration movements have been a functional element in its growth (Hanciles, "Migration and Mission" 149).

Therefore, when a Christian migrant steps into a new city, in any part of the world, he potentially sets the base for a new center for new Christ-followers. This new ‘centre’ is not radically formed through aggressive and militant expansion. Though some Christian denominations tend to do that and bring more harm to the movement than establishing growth. This new ‘center’ is not necessarily a physical entity set up by the migrant, but a relational invisible community where Jesus is displayed through his or her life.

Living in a religiously pluralistic environment, the response needs to be two-fold. First, as a migrant Christ-follower, he or she should have a more in-depth understanding of the religions around him or her. He or she needs to live compassionately towards his or her neighbours, with a genuine desire to understand their worldviews, traditions, and beliefs. Second, the migrant needs to discover practical ways to engage with people in the host culture in friendship and practising civility of friends from other faiths (Johnson and Bellofatto 21). Howard D. Owens in his lecture presented at the National Meeting of the Evangelical Missiological Society in 2005 presents a challenge that the mission mandate is given to every Christian of all times in all places according to Matthew 28:19 (qtd in Gordy 4) Every Christ-follower should have a mission vision for the nations of the world.

Paula Harris did a comparison of training and sending “full-time” missionaries to go into worldwide mission enterprises. The costs of training seminary students in a traditional model are exorbitant and then the costs of maintaining traditional agency-supported missionaries “on the field” were unreasonably high (Harris 33-50). A better recommendation is the need for professional migrants or students living the message wherever they go in the world and live “discipled” lives leading to discipling others around them. Tereso Casino aptly explains the influence that a migration allows the migrant to make in any context he is placed in:

Migration flows provide providential opportunities for people to gain access to the gospel. This goes both ways: believers in diasporic contexts may influence the nationals of the host countries with their testimonies of God’s love and forgiveness, and non-believers may move to areas where the gospel is readily accessible. Some people can encounter Christ in the process of moving or migrating even without the direct or sustained contact with believers; others can hear the good news for the first time as they become acquainted with believers in times of need. Migration flows, in fact, could serve as natural conduits for fulfilling God’s missionary intention among people on the move. Furthermore, ministry-sensitive Christians will find migration as a strategic channel for doing their own share of the missionary task. ... The fact remains that the missionary God is in total control over everything, and that adverse events and circumstances currently taking place would not be able to thwart his missionary intention in the world.(Casino 35)

Therefore, how can the Christian migrant, living in the context of the three frameworks of faith, public profile, and community, appropriately experience his or her faith and express his or her faith? The key word in the context of this project for an effective missional living is discipleship. Inviting Christian migrants to live a life of discipleship, in any cultural context, will be a critical epicentre to bring a successful synthesis of the three frameworks.

Practising Discipleship

Understanding discipleship

Discipleship is the crux of effective expressions of Christ-likeness in the life of a believer. This brings one to ask this crucial question on the definition of discipleship and how does discipleship look like in the life of a believer. There is a vast range of Christian literature available on discipleship, and most of them provide interesting perspectives on discipleship.

According to the International Consultation on Discipleship, discipleship is a “process that takes place within accountable relationships over a period of time for the purpose of bringing believers to spiritual maturity in Christ” (R. Webber Loc 111) This Consultation took it a step further by making it one of its vital goals to avoid diluting the cost of discipleship for the sake of numbers. They decided their focus in discipleship would be to teach people to obey everything Jesus commanded. (R. Webber Loc 157). Chris Shirley stated the definition of discipleship as simply the process of following Jesus. (Shirley 210). John Stott and Richard Foster present the journey of discipleship as becoming like Christ. (Stott, "The Model" 1; Foster 27)

Chris Shirley, Christopher Beard, David Watson, and Richard Foster in their understanding of how Biblical discipleship looks like, give interesting perspectives which would be useful to the overall direction of this project. Chris Shirley articulates an integrative model of discipleship for the local church. It is integrative in the sense that it joins together three indispensable elements in the discipleship process: a *paradigm* for the authentic disciple, the *practices* of discipleship in a local church, and the *production* systems used to make disciples in a local church. The paradigm uses John 15:1-17 as the key passage to develop the attributes of a disciple as living in Christ, loving one another, and labouring for the kingdom. The practices use Acts 2:42-47 to outline the basic functions of the church as they help believers to grow in discipleship: evangelism, teaching, fellowship, ministry, and worship. The production systems talk about the different platforms through which believers can grow in discipleship: family relationships, small groups, large meetings, and church ministries. Shirley presents the framework of the integrative model where the paradigm path describes the characteristics of a disciple who is developed in an upward relationship of devotion to God through Christ, an inward relationship of love for the Body and outward relationship of compassion for the lost world. (Shirley 223). Shirley takes it for granted that discipleship will happen within a church context and all believers have a church to connect to. But what happens to a migrant when he doesn't have the context of church and needs to create one?

On the other hand, Christopher Beard does a study of missional movement literature and refines a definition of being a missional disciple. According to him, missional discipleship is the experiential process of identity formation which results in a

disciple who exhibits tangible evidence of the life components of mission, community, and obedience in his or her life. Mission is non-compartmentalized, incarnational, and holistic where living missionally is a way of life engaging with the Mission of God in the world. Beard refers to the concept of inclusive community, using the first-century church as a model, where the Christian movement was the only place where women, children, and non-Jewish people could all be together. Obedience to the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit is stated as critical to the success of the movement (Beard 190).

Becoming like Christ is a key theme for Richard Foster in his understanding of discipleship. Forster invites disciples to participate in the God-ordained means of grace which will enable one increasingly to be shaped into the character of Christ and His manner of life. Work, trials, and following steps of the Holy Spirit are considered as experiential means of grace to form a disciple into the image of Christ. Formal means of grace like prayer, study, fasting, confession, and celebration shape a disciple in his spiritual formation. Finally, instrumental means like water baptism and the Lord's Supper are essential elements to help grow a disciple in his faith journey (Foster 28-31).

David Watson and Paul Watson in their book, *Contagious Disciple-Making*, define a disciple as one who embraces and obeys all the teachings of Christ and seeks by word and deed to make more disciples. The authors categorically state that it is the disciple's responsibility to become like Christ in all things, including knowledge, attitudes, thoughts, relationships, and actions. Watson's focus is not just on developing a disciple but equipping a disciple to start a movement of disciple-makers. He states these six indispensable elements which cannot be avoided at any cost, if discipleship must be successfully nurtured: being a disciple who makes disciples, prayer, engaging with lost

people, connecting to persons of peace, discovery groups, establishing churches, and leadership development (Watson and Watson 61).

Chris Shirley, Christopher Beard, David Watson, and Richard Foster have outlined key dimensions on developing discipleship in the context of today. For the sake of this project based on the perspectives of these writers, there are five foundational and progressive factors which can be developed to understand the spiritual formation of a Christian migrant living in an international city. These factors need not happen sequentially but can be developed concurrently to shape the life of a migrant in three frameworks: faith journey, public profile, and community.

Understanding discipleship in a cross-cultural context

These five elements of discipleship which will be outlined below can be specially adapted in the life of a migrant in a cross-cultural context. These five elements can be diagrammatically visualized in the shape of a circular cone, with each element initiated on the development of the previous element. For the sake of this project, these five elements are articulated using five words which attempts to communicate clearly the growth process of discipleship. The five words are: Christ, calling, community, course, and catalytic. Similar words which Malcolm Webber uses in the context of healthy leadership development, is called the *5C Model of Healthy Leadership*: Christ, community, character, calling and competencies (M.Webber). However, in the context of this project, these five words chosen enunciates the simple pattern for progressive discipleship in the life of a disciple.

First, developing a relationship with Christ is foundational to effective discipleship. Richard Foster talking about this relationship with Christ seeks to let “Christ

be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19), “conformed to the image of His son” (Romans 8:29), and “transformed into the same image” (2 Cor. 3:18) (Foster 27). This relationship with Christ is not necessarily a starting step to achieve better goals in life, but as Hirsch calls “it is in itself the fulfilment of his or her destiny” (Hirsch Loc 2330). Jesus’ invitation in John 15 to his disciples makes a clear invitation to abide in Christ or “living in Christ” as Chris Shirley defines this foundational relationship (Shirley 213). This relationship with Christ, as both David Watson and Christopher Beard emphasize, leads to obeying His teachings based on a love relationship with Him (John 14:15). This relationship with Christ cannot be achieved with just rigid determination, but it must be dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit. Michael Langford talks about the importance of spirit-driven discipleship and states, “If we are to help our youth toward holistic discipleship, whereby they are properly situated in subjective connection to an objective reality, we must help them recover a sense of God as Holy Spirit” (Langford 323). This relationship with Christ forms one’s character to be shaped into the character of Christ. The end result for a disciple is becoming like Christ where one’s identity is moulded in the identity of Christ leading to integrity in lifestyle. Beard stresses the fact that genuine discipleship takes place when one moves beyond information download and behavior change to a true transformation of identity rooted in a relationship with Christ. This identity is changed as God recreates the disciple into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and it is continually transformed by the renewing of one’s mind (Beard 179).

Therefore, the base of the pyramid is the critical circle of relationship with *Christ*. The heart of discipleship is becoming like Christ and that drives every component of the migrant’s faith journey, public profile, and community context. David Watson succinctly

puts across the relationship with God which impacts the consistency of our lives, “There’s a consistency of living in public and in private, in intimate and non-intimate moments. Our character stays the same regardless of our situation...It is living a consistent life that impresses on another human being the importance of knowing the Lord and living in this kind of relationship with Him” (Watson and Watson 72-73).

Second, discipleship attempts to be missional. Beard quotes McNeal’s definition of missional, “Missional is a way of living, not an affiliation or activity. Its emergence springs from a belief that God is changing his conversation with the world and with the church. Being missional involves an active engagement with this new conversation to the point that it guides every aspect of the life of the missional believer” (McNeal xiv). Chris Shirley in her presentation of the integrated model of discipleship, categorically states that every disciple is responsible for living with a missional perspective (Shirley 216). For a long time, discipleship was considered as an activity that happens within the church to grow a disciple in following Christ, while mission and evangelism were separated as an “outside” initiative for the passionate evangelist. But increasingly in discipleship literature what is noticed is that this segregation is not scriptural. The Biblical mandate tends to teach that within the inherent identity of being a disciple of Christ, is the clear calling to live a life in mission. Embodying the character of Christ, underscores that one lives missionally drawing people to Christ. Alan and Debra Hirsch states that one cannot be a disciple without being a missionary (Hirsch and Hirsch 29).

Thus, the second segment of the pyramid based on the relationship with Christ, is the migrant’s *calling*. Desiring to be missional is not just an activity that one accomplishes when the disciple goes on a mission trip, but rather it is a lifestyle lived out

in every framework of his life. Tim Keller in his book, *The Center Church*, features the key basics of a believer living out his missional calling. Often, it's organic and relational where it happens spontaneously, done in the context of informal personal relationships. It also attempts to prayerfully bring the Bible and gospel into connection with people's lives (Keller 280). Keller states, "We will have an impact for the gospel if we are *like* those around us yet profoundly *unlike* them at the same time, all the while remaining visible and engaged" (Keller 282).

Third, discipleship is nurtured in the context of relationships. Robert Webber states, "Knowing God, becoming a disciple, learning spirituality, and finding your Christian vocation all occurs in community" (Webber Loc 638). Christopher Beard calls community as "God's design" (Beard 190), and Chris Shirley places it within the paradigm of discipleship as "loving one another" (Shirley 215). This life of a disciple lived out in the context of other believers provides the loving, nurturing accountability to draw him closer to becoming like Christ (Foster 28). Watson speaks about the importance of "Discovery Groups" as an intentional building block towards discipling entire communities (Watson and Watson 141-156).

However, the strength of relationships lies in its potential to create a caring network that establishes an unfettered faith journey which is not limited to structures and systems. Discipleship cannot be too structured and systematized as done in planning for machines and business units. Discipleship, as Christopher Beard calls it, is a "non-linear process" that is often humanly speaking, spontaneous and impulsive, but follows the pattern of the Mission of God in each individual life (Beard 181) Robert Webber talks about the three aspects of discipleship that stand out in the New Testament and early

Christian era which are believing, belonging, and behaving (Webber Loc 314). But if there was a preferred order for discipleship to be impactful, it must start with belonging, and sense of belonging is often nurtured in the context of community.

Therefore, the third segment of the pyramid based on the foundation of Christ and calling is ***community***. A core teaching at The Assembly of God Church, Kolkata invites every believer to *share life together* to whichever network they are connected to. Structurally, believers share life together in the network of small groups called care groups they belong to. These care groups bring together friends and neighbors for a “*caring fellowship around worship and God’s word*” in the homes of people. In these care groups, more than the content of the teaching, the focus is on encouraging people to share life together without any bias to religion or caste or background. This focus ultimately leads to sharing life in Christ in a natural experience and expression without any intimidation or coercion. Alternatively, sharing life together is an invitation for every believer to spontaneously build normal friendships with whomever they are associated. The premise is this, a disciple living in Christ and walking in his calling will naturally reflect Christ to the unbelieving networks he interacts with. This concept of sharing life together is a valuable quality especially for a migrant disciple in a setting where on most occasions he wouldn’t have a “Christian” community to grow in his faith. Whenever the church family is available for him, he should gladly step out of his comfort zone and join the fellowship. However, in the likely scenario of not having a believing community around him, he has the responsibility of sharing life together with his non-believer networks.

Fourth, for successful discipleship to be fostered, it requires intentional habits. Richard Foster calls these habits “disciplines” that helps a disciple to train himself in godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). He refers to a menu of disciplines such as inward disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), outward disciplines (simplicity, solitude, submission) and corporate disciplines (confession, guidance, celebration) (Foster 30) Chris Shirley denotes these habits as practices of discipleship that include evangelism, teaching, fellowship, ministry and worship (Shirley 216). Rick Warren calls these habits purposes of the local church consisting of worship, fellowship, ministry, mission, and discipleship which every believer must intentionally focus his life around to fulfil his purpose in life (Warren 6-7).

These intentional habits tend to be a systematic course to guide a disciple towards effectiveness in his faith journey. However, intentional, and systematic as it is, it also requires spontaneity and flexibility to guide the disciple towards the goal of the habits, of being formed in Christ and live in mission within the caring network of a community. Breen and Cockram stated a critical element of learning and practising habits of discipleship that people learn best when there is a dynamic interplay between all three at one time: classroom passing on of information, apprenticeship, and immersion. (Breen and Cockram 18). Therefore, discipleship should be communicated to an eager disciple, not just in a classroom scenario with many weeks of sessions, but good habits develop when they are nurtured through personal training and community engagement. Discipleship must not be just ‘knowledge-based’ in a classroom setting, but ‘obedience-based’ lived out in the world (Watson and Watson 65).

Therefore, the fourth segment of the pyramid is following the *course* of discipleship. The migrant living in a different city can easily flow with the pressures of his new world and forget the disciplines required to achieve success based on scripture. Spiritual habits are critical, but they are not the only habits to be developed in the overall development of the migrant's discipleship journey. Often leaders and churches limit discipleship to spiritual dimensions and religious habits and leave out other important areas of growth as unnecessary to focus upon. However, a vital area for the overall formation of a disciple is following a *Rule of Life* that shaped the lives of ancient saints in history as well as leaders today. A rule establishes a rhythm for life in which is helpful for being formed by the Spirit, a rhythm that reflects a love for God and respect for how He has made a person (C. S. Lewis).

Encouraging a migrant disciple in following the Rule of Life that matures his spiritual habits, relational networks, creative abilities, missional development, and leadership capacities would be a significant course of action to make his discipleship real and practical. This Rule of Life would also need to integrate opportunities for him to attend classroom sessions, experiential trips, and internships which would further shape his discipleship journey. Especially for a migrant disciple, he cannot let the surroundings dictate the quality of his discipleship, but he should proactively choose to chart a course that will make him a productive disciple.

Finally, discipleship seeks to challenge disciples to reproduce disciples. A critical issue of discipleship which did not find too much focus in most of the discipleship literature, but a key theme of Watson is effective disciples reproducing more disciples to follow Jesus. Based on his experience, he states:

...Contagious Disciple-Makers focus on helping people come into a dynamic and growing relationship with Christ through prayer, Bible study, worship, evangelism, fellowship, and ministry. Disciple-makers first teach people in the Word of God, so they will know what to obey. Second, they train people in the skill sets necessary to be an obedient follower of Christ, so they will know how to obey. And third, disciple-makers equip people to their full capacity to serve God and others so they demonstrate lives of consistent obedience and make more disciples (Watson and Watson 48)

However, the starting point for this intense level of discipleship is the personal development of the disciple in his relationship with Christ, living out his calling in the world, engaging with the community and following a faithful construct of discipleship habits. Without that base, the disciple-maker will be a poor reflection to others he or she attempts to disciple around him or her. Beard says it best, "As the disciple interacts with the community and the Holy Spirit for the purpose of God's glory and the partnership of his redemptive mission, that disciple is formed and reformed to more resemble Christ. God works in the disciple as he works through the disciple" (Beard 185). A disciple committed to faithful discipleship will cause one to live the faith, share life together, and exemplify Christ-life to the world around him or her. Concisely put, a disciple who models Christ in his or her community makes Christ contagious to the world. It is also important to note that, a key element of discipleship is leadership development. As disciples seek to follow Jesus, the ultimate leader, they also model Christ-like leadership to people around them. The primary initiative of disciple-making is not only to increase

the numbers of followers of Jesus, but also shape the development of Christ-following leaders (Huizing 334).

So, the final segment which serves as the peak of the pyramid is being *catalytic*. Watson would prefer to call it as contagious, but for this project, a disciple who seeks to be catalytic by inspiring with the quality of his Christ-likeness, his or her calling, community, and course of life, can reproduce disciples. An important ingredient of being a migrant disciple who is catalytic is a willingness to grow in his leadership ability. Leadership development will help him or her to aptly develop his or her core competencies and creative skills which are valuable if he or she is to influence people around him or her to follow him or her on the journey of discipleship.

Johannine Discipleship and a Christian migrant

Johannine discipleship, as stated earlier, revolves around the author's purpose statement in John 20:31- "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John takes an eager reader through three stages of discipleship to help him reach a point of decision to consider being a committed follower of Christ. To reiterate, the three stages of discipleship are being a seeker, believer, and follower. At each stage, the reader is given the opportunity to consider three invitations which take him or her closer to the next stage. As a seeker, he or she is invited to see, recognize, and respond. As a believer, he or she is invited to believe, know, and commit. As a follower, he or she is invited to love, die, and lead. Each of these stages helps the willing reader to grow in his or her faith and experience fullness of life that is found in Jesus name.

In the context of this project, a primary question to consider for a Christian migrant living in an international city is: Which stage of Johannine discipleship is the migrant currently placed in his or her walk with Jesus? It would be wonderful to believe that all Christian migrants are living out their commitment as a follower of Christ, but the reality is that they are just “Christians” in religion with no faith experience or expressions. Therefore, a decisive starting point for this project is helping the migrant recognize which stage of discipleship is closest to his or her own spiritual journey. If he or she is a seeker, it’s time for him to seek God’s signs in his or her life and recognize who Jesus is in His life, and finally take the step to respond to His claims on his life. If he or she is a believer, it’s important for him or her to believe the claims of Jesus; know how it applies to his or her life and take the step to commit to following Christ in every area of his or her life. Finally, if he or she is a follower, the project can help him or her love Christ in abandonment, be willing to die to his or her own self and be willing to lead others on this journey of followership.

A second pivotal question to consider for the Christian migrant in the light of Johannine discipleship is: What steps is he or she willing to take to grow in his or her discipleship journey? If he or she is satisfied and comfortable with where he or she is in his or her journey, no amount of guidance or encouragement will push him or her towards growing in his or her walk with Jesus. But if he or she is willing to grow and is keen on taking any step which will make him or her an effective disciple, greater will be the impact of any discipleship program conducted for him or her.

A third question to consider is: Where in the journey of faith is the community around him or her? Based on this question, the migrant would need to know which stage

of discipleship his Christian friends are experiencing, if he or she has any Christian friends, either in the church he or she attends, or in his or her public networks. His public networks in his office or university or his neighborhood, will have unbelieving people he interacts with on a regular basis. Are they potential friends who are willing to be seekers in the journey of faith to follow Jesus? It's important for the migrants to gauge the level of their faith journey honestly and prayerfully.

A final question is: What can he or she do to grow his or her community in the journey of faith? The migrant needs to examine himself or herself and decide on the steps of faith he or she is willing to take to engage with his or her community to draw them closer to the experience of Jesus and knowing him or her personally. Each of these steps of faith will be determined by the context of the culture he or she lives in and the possibilities the Holy Spirit would want him to consider for the specific setting he or she lives in. As he or she grows in his or her faith journey, he or she must also be willing to take a few people on the journey of growth.

Each of these above questions has no easy answers, but as the migrant expresses a willingness to follow a pathway of discipleship, in the context of a loving community and guidance of the Holy Spirit, he or she discovers adequate responses which will help him or her be an effective Christ-disciple. For the sake of this project: the discipleship curriculum will guide him or her through answers and responses to the first two questions while providing resources and ideas for the final two questions. The aim of this project sharply focused on an experience and evaluation to grow his or her personal faith journey with a limited emphasis on the last two questions.

Framework for online curriculum for migrants

A key attention of this project is a discipleship program based on the gospel of John for Indian migrants located in international cities around the globe. Two important factors to deliberate in this regard are first, the nature of online instruction which will facilitate this discipleship program and second, the discipleship curriculum which would incorporate the key features of the discoveries of Johannine discipleship based on this project and the framework of discipleship discussed earlier in this paper. This section attempts to outline the key issues to be considered in the light of both these above factors. A key factor to consider is that most of the material available is in the context of theological education online and very limited information is available on spiritual formation and discipleship in the context of a local church. James Thomas' dissertation, *An Analysis of Discipleship in Online Environments*, was one of the few documents which provided content on discipleship using an online platform. Merging online platform with discipleship and migrants is a rare combination for which the researcher could not successfully find adequate literature.

Even before a discussion on the range of options to be considered for online instruction, it is important to understand the nature of digital culture which transcends a location or culture and encompasses the globe. P.R. Meadows talks about the digital culture in terms of material, symbolic and experiential narratives. Material narratives cover the physical machines like computer monitors, keyboards, digital pads, mobile phones, and any hardware which makes digital media a reality. Symbolic narratives draw upon memories and experiences to attempt to bring together through fictional novels, art, and film an interesting convergence of life in a real world and digital media. Experiential

narratives address the concept of ‘telepresence’, which is the digitally mediated sense of being somewhere else or being with someone else despite being separated by space and time (Meadows 168).

In the context of this digital culture, Meadows presents mission and discipleship as evolving into a way of life, that spans the embodied physical reality and the virtual world and attempts to be incarnational in both worlds. Flesh becomes telepresence through virtual relationships and telepresence is made flesh through face to face meetings. Meadows uses the word “digital native” as a twenty-first-century individual who converges the embodied and virtual life in his daily existence. Yu-Ling Lee, who does an ethnographic study of Christian university students using online technology at the University of British Columbia, outlines the characteristic features of digital natives in their own words (Lee 125-137).

First, “always-on” is the phenomenon that takes for granted that digital natives are fastened to this “always-on-us” communication (technology) and the people and things that are made accessible through them. Second, “searchability” is the ability to have access to large amounts of information through the medium of the internet, which unfortunately places them in a challenge of sorting through a plethora of data to find good and credible material. Third, an interesting discovery that Lee makes is that they “sculpt” what they want to say where they have moved from “oral-based to text-based communication” with greater control over how they are perceived by carefully crafting their words online. Fourth, the “oversharing” phenomenon means they divulge more of their personal feelings and opinions online than in person. Finally, students use the online

platform as a means of escape or a way to hide their emotions, thoughts, and struggles (Lee 126-132).

As Melinda Thompson pretentiously indicated, the digital culture with all its amazing advantages could lead to “making disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19 NRSV) seem “much more feasible in the Internet age” (Thompson 116). Meadows warns against considering digital culture as the ultimate solution to reach the world with the gospel, because of its obvious limitations. He states that despite the advantages of “telepresence”, there is “no substitute for the embodied presence of friendship that can be tasted, smelled, and touched.” The normal process of identity formation in real relationships shows the inadequacies of constructed identities on an online platform. Also, he carefully recognizes the difference between representations and real persons, sharing messages and mutual intimacy, virtual transparency and fully human authenticity, multiple connections and meaningful relations, and easy contacts and costly friendships (Meadows 169).

Edwin Christiaan van Driel, in context of online theological education, argues against “online delivery” with the question whether “this model of teaching and learning is optimal for theological education” (Driel 70) He reasons that spiritual formation that is Biblical and most influential requires an “apprenticeship model” of personally engaging a disciple to a teacher. “Seminary worship” and “ecclesial formation” are also both negated in an online delivery system of theological education. Based on these factors, Driel claims that online instruction is a much weaker platform for healthy leadership development and spiritual formation. In the context of this project, the ideal format of discipleship would be personal face-to-face discipling offered for these migrant students

and professionals. However, the migrants' choice to be in an international city is based on a range of factors which is often beyond them, to foresee the format of Christian discipleship available for them. Therefore, in a setting where often pastoral models are not available, Christian worship centers are not possible and no opportunity to be discipled in a Christian environment, the second-best setting is an online platform to engage with these migrants. The limitations of an online platform are not to be minimized, but neither should the prospects of an online environment be lost to this generation. James Thomas in his detailed dissertation, *Analysis of Discipleship in Online Environment*, makes this point:

The relationship between online technology and spiritual need provides a platform for Christian mission unparalleled in Christian history. With the dawn of the new millennium, unprecedented opportunities abound through the Internet and digital technology to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in creative and influential ways.

(Thomas 2-3)

What is needed is a humble willingness to provide the convergence between online platforms and offline settings creatively and intelligently to shape the twenty-first migrant to be a front-line catalyst for change in the setting he is placed in. Benjamin Forrest and Mark Lamport in their article, "Modelling Spiritual Formation from a Distance," talks about Apostle Paul providing spiritual formation to the Roman Christians and offers Christian educators insight into how this process can be approached even from a distance. They address this concern that theological accreditation agencies have often wondered about, "Is Christian nurture and spiritual formation possible in an online course or program?" Lamport based on research and experience states that online education

cannot merely digitize current methodologies but instead teachers need to create new methodologies for teaching because the medium itself is new (Forrest and Lamport 113)

Lamport describes Paul's modelling of spiritual nurture from a distance and its implications for spiritual formation. Paul uses different approaches to connect to the believers from a distance and guide them in their spiritual formation. With the gospel as the foundation, based on the authority of scriptures and individually praying for the Roman Christians, he provided the basis for discipling them from a distance. At a relational level, Paul instilled transparency, accountability, dialogue, and encouragement in a network of a caring community to shape their faith.(Forrest and Lamport 116-119)

Lamport, in the context of online theological education, concludes by recommending different online avenues to engage with the students. Some of the avenues he explores are weekly encouraging devotionals on email or text message, phone call prayers, discussion board forums, weekly announcements to clarify expectations, personalize connections through Skype and social media and face-to-face meetings if the opportunity arises (Forrest and Lamport 119-122). However, a key factor to be considered, which Lamport doesn't suitably address, is the importance of understanding the culture of the student or the disciple for the successful engagement of the online program. Melinda Thompson and Meri McLeod and Mary Quinn, Laura Foote and Michele Williams offer interesting perspectives on cultural considerations and integration of key worldviews involved in implementing an online program.

Melinda Thompson and Meri McLeod talk about the cultural considerations for the successful implementations of an online program. The social and technological adjustments are required especially in cities where the participants would struggle with

the use of the internet as well as the use of an online device. The cultural adjustments are required, especially when participants of different cultures interact together on an online platform. Thompson and McLeod recommend that the right course design can be the key to create the online environment that provides the support students of diverse cultures and ethnicities often need. The course design would need a healthy cohesive structure that includes a social presence, teaching presence and a cognitive presence. Social presence refers to online forums that invite active participation and interaction between students and teachers. Teaching presence would avoid long video lectures and explore shorter summary videos with forums for online responses. Cognitive presence considers the development of the student from knowledge to real-life application. (Thompson and McLeod 122)

Mary Quinn, Laura Foote, and Michele Williams use the Four-Lens Model – namely Learner Lens, Process Lens, Educator Lens, and Context Lens – as a basis for development enabling the online developer to “construct a broader, more holistic vision in learning in adulthood” (Quinn et al. 165). The learner lens focuses on the individual adult learner with key factors such as learning styles, the role of experience, mind-body connections, and right learning environments. The process lens focuses on the way that adults learn which includes learning processes, interaction, reflection, dialogue, transformational learning, and experiential learning. The educator lens’ emphases is on the instructor’s teaching philosophy and the role which covers his teaching styles, his beliefs, assumptions, and willingness to consider changes in approach. Finally, the context lens focuses on the concept that learning is not an isolated process but covers a variety of cultural considerations (Quinn et al. 171).

Robert Danielson similarly offers an alternative approach to the four-lens model by considering learning in physical and online classes as occurring in four domains called context, community, resources, and content. Danielson echoes what Mary Quinn and Thompson stated earlier, that the local context is paramount. He states, “Each local context is important, and we must find ways to connect the principles and ideas we are teaching to each student’s local context. The best way to do this is through assignments that take the student away from the computer and into the mission field where they are located” (Danielson 212). Danielson stresses the fact that in the absence of face-to-face interaction as in a physical classroom, the student’s assignments and projects become the primary field of learning and the professor’s role assumes a role of “guide and mentor along a journey of explorative learning” (Danielson 209). A question to be considered especially in the light of this project is, whether this format would work to provide discipleship for a migrant especially as he is under no compulsion to do assignments and projects? It can be effectively considered for online theological programs, but it may not work for a voluntary discipleship program for migrants.

A response to that query is given later in this section, but what Danielson appropriately covers is practical online platforms which would be useful for the sake of this project. His platforms can help develop group projects that can be done online through GoogleDocs to facilitate a community of learning. Using online games to introduce the students to course concepts is a creative idea to engage students of different cultures. Use of video resources and graphic images will enhance the quality of the course. Danielson refers to Marlene TeFever’s work on learning styles to help develop the design of the online course, so that different segments of the course appeals to

students with different learning styles. The categories of learners are divided into four groups: imaginative, analytic, common-sense, and dynamic learners and based on the character traits and ways of learning each style, the course can be developed. Danielson makes this key comment which captures the need of the hour to focus on the quality of the online course:

The world of online teaching is currently full of examples of poorly done or mediocre classes. The challenge of teaching cross-cultural principles to students in multiple contexts is a reality that has not been frequently addressed. As we forge ahead with teaching missions online, we need to be committed to finding ways over this hurdle. Equally, we must remain committed to teaching with excellence, remembering that our task ultimately has eternal, as well as pedagogical, repercussions. (Danielson 218)

Therefore, in the light of the above considerations in the context of online education, how does it apply to a discipleship program for international migrants? The response would need to be considered keeping the specific factors which are unique to international migrants' lifestyle and community. First, unlike an online theological program which was the choice of the student, a migrant believer would need to be convinced on his accord on the importance of the discipleship program. In a sense, it is a voluntary step he or she takes which he or she feels personally compelled to undertake for his or her own spiritual formation. Hence, secondly, this online program cannot be rigid and 'assignment-heavy' like a theological institution, because the harder it will be to pursue it the migrant would find it difficult to continue it. The discipleship program, though structured, cannot be designed like a theological college program but relevant for

a student or professional in an international city. Third, the online program would need to be practical in the three frameworks the migrant constantly lives in. It should help him or her grow in his or her personal faith journey, engage with the activities in his or her professional or student life and be pertinent to his or her community life. Fourth, the online program would need to be interactive for the migrants participating in the course and relational with the researcher leading the course as well as with each other. Fifth, creativity and originality would help the participants enthusiastically engage with the program. The migrants live busy lives and would need to carve out time to associate with the program; therefore, it is important they are intensely interested in joining the program. Sixth, the time factor would need to be considered especially when the migrants are in international cities with different time zones. The attempt should be to make it accessible for everyone, based on the time of day so that they can engage meaningfully.

Lowe and Lowe states:

If student formation empowered by the Holy Spirit takes place in a variety of settings and contexts, some of which involve physical proximity, some of which involve virtual community, and some of which involve individual encounters with texts, images, sounds, and their own mental constructs, then we need an explanatory model that enables us to consider all of these as potentially beneficial to student spiritual development.(Lowe and Lowe 100)

Based on these above factors, the online program should consider using the following online platforms for the successful implementation of the discipleship course. First, the basic medium for conducting the online discipleship program would need to be Google Hangout. For the program, Skype would not work as it allows a maximum of

three people for an online classroom. But Google Hangout allows a maximum of ten members to participate at the same time, which would fulfill the requirements of this project. A great benefit of this medium is that it automatically records the online sessions and provides a private YouTube link for future viewing. Second, four different mediums which would be used during the program to enhance the excellence and the interaction are PowerPoint presentations, video resources, online games, and visual images. The combination of these mediums would be crucial to the course as it helps the migrants to engage based on their styles of learning. Third, regular contact and follow-up conversations with the participants beyond the online sessions would be facilitated through private Facebook groups, emails, Google calendar, and WhatsApp. Each of these mediums would be useful to help the migrants track information regarding the online sessions, share their progress in their discipleship journey, provide a virtual learning community, and allow the researcher to be in personal touch with these migrants across the globe.

Research Design Literature

As the researcher was involved in an intervention study, he used a mixed approach using qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher used under the quantitative method, pre-test, and post-test surveys to gauge the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices regarding discipleship in a cross-cultural setting. After completing the training program, the researcher also conducted focus groups to gather qualitative information to understand better the effectiveness of the program.

Current scholarship tends to advocate the use of a mixed approach with qualitative and quantitative methods as it draws upon the strengths of both approaches and minimises its weaknesses (Fetters et al. Loc 2135). As Fetters et al. state, “The qualitative data can be used to assess the validity of quantitative findings. Quantitative data can also be used to help generate the qualitative sample or explain findings from the qualitative data” (Fetters, Curry, and Creswell Loc 2135). While use of a single method tends to have its limitations, triangulation offers a multifaceted assessment of the intervention enabling a “thicker” understanding that allows the researcher to substantiate his data and thereby providing a holistic depth to his analysis and increases the reliability of his research (Sensing Loc 1891). In the light of the specific parameters of this ministry project, using this mixed approach of research design was most effective to gauge the effectiveness of the program.

Summary of Literature

Indian Christian immigrants living in international cities, either as a student or a professional, no longer just pursue a career for “greener pastures”. They were potentially embracing the mission of God the Father, being formed into the image of Jesus Christ, and following the pathway of the Holy Spirit. Living within the framework of their personal Christian faith, their public professional or student profile and their immediate network of friends, they were called to a life of discipleship.

Discipleship is at the core, and as Alan Hirsch states, “Discipleship is becoming like Jesus our Lord and Founder and experiencing his life as it is lived through me/ us, and it lies at the epicenter of the church’s task” (Hirsch Loc 2167). If a migrant student or professional focused all the energies of his life towards *becoming like Jesus by being like*

Jesus and *doing like Jesus*, he would effectively impact his immediate community in whichever part of the world he lived in.

The Johannine model of discipleship took a migrant Christian on a journey to rediscover his faith to become like Jesus in all areas of his life. It did this by first, being a *seeker* who honored Jesus' invitation to come and see, recognize, and respond to his claims on the migrant's life; second, being a *believer* who responded to Jesus' invitation to come and believe, know, and commit to the demand of followership; and finally, being a follower who plunged into Jesus' invitation to come and love, die and lead.

Taking the migrant Christian on this track of discipleship was no easy task considering most of them are often in settings with no existing churches, have no contact with other believers and are being daily confronted to compromise their own faith in a foreign setting. Therefore, the Johannine study of discipleship was applied using globally applicable online platforms which actively and creatively engaged the migrant disciple and held him accountable towards a systematic growth process. This growth process encapsulated five elements which were embedded into his daily framework of faith, work or study and friendships. These five elements were: being like *Christ*, fulfilling his life's *calling*, walking in a *community*, following a *course*, and finally leading a *catalytic* movement.

The Lausanne movement which represents leaders and believers of the global church, presented the following in its Lausanne Covenant introduction:

We are deeply stirred by what God is doing in our day, moved to penitence by our failures and challenged by the unfinished task of evangelization. We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his

grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation. (Lausanne Committee For World Evangelization)

In the light of Jesus' call to discipleship of nations and emphatically reflected in this Lausanne covenant, this ministry project was dedicated to faithful discipleship of these migrant believers from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata and sought for lasting impact on the manifold, multi-faceted communities in key international cities.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents the purpose of the project and outlines the specific instrumentation to fulfill the corresponding research questions. The role of the researcher in his ministerial setting is explained to give a context to the purpose of the study. The participants of the study are clearly described along with the precise criteria for choosing them. The ethical considerations that were undertaken to ensure the respect and confidentiality of the participants are clearly explained. A detailed description of the instrumentation used for the study is given along with the feedback received from the expert reviewers to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. The process of data collection and data analysis is clearly clarified to provide a procedure for future researchers.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Young Christ-followers who leave Kolkata and migrate to other countries for future career prospects often fail to be effective in their own spiritual walk or bring impact for His kingdom in their new setting.

Young India is positioned to make a worldwide impact in the next ten years, with strong potential that one out of four employees working in the global work scenario will be of Indian origin. The prospects for an Indian Christian to influence the international context are huge. What is needed is a good local church structure preparing a young follower to face the challenges of a new city and make a missional impact in their new community.

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an online six session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to increase the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of young international migrant believers from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in cross-cultural settings in international cities.

Research Questions

Research Question #1.

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices prior to the program on discipleship based on Jesus in the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

The information compiled for this question provided a baseline that measured the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices prior to the intervention. In the pre-test survey, question numbers 1-11 measured the participants' level of knowledge, question numbers 12-22 measured the participants' level of personal attitudes, and question numbers 23-33 measured the participants' relational practices.

Research Question #2.

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices following the program on discipleship based on Jesus in the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

The information compiled for this question provided a baseline that assessed the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices following the intervention. In the post-test survey, question numbers 1-11 measured the participants'

level of knowledge, question numbers 12-22 measured the participants' level of personal attitudes, and question numbers 23-33 measured the participants' relational practices.

Research Question #3.

What specific components of the program contributed most to the observed changes in knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices towards effective discipleship in a cross-cultural setting?

The purpose of this question was to collect qualitative data beyond the quantitative analysis to enable a larger and deeper perspective of the intervention's influence. The focus groups discussion protocol that was used to lead the four focus group interviews permitted the participants to share freely about their discipleship journey, personal experience and give a feedback on the overall learning from the intervention.

Ministry Context(s)

My role as the researcher was unique in the context of this project because of my ministerial setting. I served as the assistant pastor at the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata, India especially giving leadership to the youth, small groups, and media ministries of the church. I joined the pastoral team of the church sixteen years ago as the youth pastor, a capacity I continue to serve to the present day.

First, I shared a special *pastoral relationship* with the members of the congregation, even with young believers who have migrated to other countries. The young international migrants currently based in urban centers were actively involved in the life of the church during their time in Kolkata. They faithfully attended the church with their parents or attended our small groups or served as youth leaders in my youth

ministry. The pastoral relationship extended even to their parents who were grateful for the investment of the church in their children while in Kolkata and expressed anxiety even as their children lived beyond national borders in unique settings. One of my pastoral concerns was to see the young migrants grow in their spiritual vitality and make an impact for God's mission wherever they go. My heart breaks whenever I received information about migrants' seemingly lack of commitment to God, from either their parents or through their friends. Therefore, my relationship with the participants through this discipleship program, met a pastoral need for the church, for the parents and even for the participants themselves.

Second, young Indians living abroad, is a global trend on the rise with predictions that by 2025, twenty five percent of the world's workforce will be of Indian origin. Therefore, young believers leaving the shores of India is not a statistic to be discouraged, but a *demographic reality* to be embraced by the church for the fulfillment of His mission.

Third, an online discipleship program which gave personal access to the young believers across the globe was undertaken to envision a *vital coaching of the next generation of marketplace leaders*. These marketplace leaders mentored right with strong spiritual foundations, had the capacity to influence the globe wherever they were planted. For the last ten years, I led the young adults' congregation, which was attended by about forty percent migrants (students and professionals from other parts of India). Every two years, this forty percent left our city and church to other parts of India and abroad. My overarching theme in our public and private conversations was to challenge them to make a difference for the Kingdom wherever they go and whatever they do. This reconnection

with the migrants using the online discipleship program, was a vital aspect of this earlier conversation.

Fourth, the *technology boom* in the last ten years shrank the social networking, professional leadership development, and corporate business to one platform where interactions and conversations with friends and partners were engaged across continents with no lapse of time or energy. I was personally convinced that the local church had the opportunity of a lifetime to use this platform to engage the world with the word of God. With my growing passion for technology and media, and current involvement with media at our church, I wanted to galvanize a movement of youth leaders who are networked beyond borders to make a global impact with the gospel.

Finally, young believers who migrated beyond India and pursued their life's calling in different international urban cities literally carried His kingdom and His mission with them. If they are discipled right, they have the potential to be catalysts spearhead a *global church planting movement*. A movement which had no church buildings, but communities of Christ-followers knit together to declare the cry of the kingdom: Lord, let your kingdom come! My role as the researcher was personally integrated into the cry of the kingdom.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

These participants were chosen as they fulfilled the criterium for the purpose statement of this project as students or as young professionals in their setting. First, the participants in the research were originally from The Assembly of God Church and had been involved in the activities and programs of the church while they lived in Kolkata.

Second, they currently are living on different continents of the world, living in an urban international city. Third, these participants were chosen based on their representative age category between eighteen and thirty-five. Finally, they were students studying in university campuses or young professionals working in a corporate setting.

Description of Participants

The participants in the research were ten international migrant young believers originally from The Assembly of God Church, currently living in different international cities of the world. I had a prior personal pastoral relationship with them while they were in Kolkata and intermittent contact with them even after left the country. All of them are students or young professionals who have migrated from Kolkata and based in urban centres in China, United Arab Emirates, Germany, France, Australia, and United States.

Contact with Participants

The participants were initially contacted on 28th November 2017 through the medium of Facebook Messenger/WhatsApp with a personalized text message inviting them to consider joining this online discipleship program. I invited them to consider joining the project and requested them to kindly share their email addresses for the initiate the instrumentation steps of the program.

Program Plan

My intervention project was a six-week online discipleship program which started with the first session on 9th December 2017 and the last session was completed on 19th January 2018. A mixed-method approach was undertaken to assess the usefulness of the program, involved quantitative and qualitative instruments. As a researcher, it is important to first collect and examine quantitative data, and then collect and analyse

qualitative data (Fetters et al. 2136). The quantitative instruments included pre-test and post-test surveys to evaluate the knowledge level, personal attitudes, and relational practices of the participants before and after the program. The focus groups discussion protocol conducted the week following the final session in four focus groups helped to assess the specific components of the program that contributed most to observed changes in the life of the participants for effective discipleship in a cross-cultural setting.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were invited to consider partaking in this program by filling an online consent form which formed the introduction to the Discipleship Discovery pre-test. (See consent form in Appendix B.) The online consent form told the interested participants the purpose of the project and thereby invited them to consider joining in the project of their own free will. They were given the choice of deciding not to participate or even withdrawing themselves from the program at any given time.

The procedure of the pre-test survey was explained which gave them the option of filling their own form involved in either responding to the survey or participating in the program.

The following steps were undertaken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. First, the consent form gave the participants of this program written assurance that their confidentiality would be maintained. Second, the information collected in the form of data was stored in a password protected electronic format. Third, the participants were informed that the results of the study would be used for scholarly purposes only and none of the data would be used otherwise. Finally, the names of the participants were kept anonymous and they were given code names. (Namely, MMUAE, LRUAU, ASC, DRG, STF, MAA, JJUS, SSUS, EAUS, ABUS)

Instrumentation

Two researcher-designed instruments were used to collect data for this project. Two quantitative instruments were used, namely a survey pre-test and a survey post-test in response to the research question 1 and research question 2 respectively. One qualitative instrument used focus groups discussion protocol with four focus groups to measure research question 3.

The survey pre-test was called Discipleship Discovery Pre-test for this project. It was a researcher-designed survey with thirty-three questions which helped evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and relational practices of the participant in the context of discipleship in an international city. This pre-test was conducted prior to them participating in the discipleship program and enabled me to gauge the current reality of their personal walk with Jesus. This pre-test helped me examine and measure quantitatively the depth of their knowledge of their faith journey, personal motivations which guided their spiritual life, and daily faith habits that they followed to live out their faith.

Questions 1-11 examined their understanding of faith and core spiritual beliefs which undergirded their living in a foreign setting. This knowledge was vital to understand their theological framework which would influence other areas of their lives. Question 12-22 assessed their personal attitudes on their personal walk with Jesus, their calling, their relationships, and their commitment to serve Jesus. Questions 23-33 measured the daily habits that they lived out in their personal and public forum.

These thirty-three questions could be responded online on a Likert-scale of 1-5 using one of the options of “never, rarely, sometimes, mostly, always”. A measurement

of this scale presented a quantitative description to understand the current reality of their walk with Jesus. The Discipleship Discovery Pre-test was administered as an online instrument, using an online application called Google Forms, which made it accessible and convenient for the participants to respond quickly. This online application also was useful for me as the researcher to collect data systematically in an organized electronic format.

The survey post-test was called Discipleship Discovery Post-test for this project. It was a researcher-designed survey with thirty-three questions which helped evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and relational practices of the participant in the context of discipleship in an international city. This post-test was conducted after the participants attended the discipleship program, and it enabled me to gauge any measurable changes in their personal walk with Jesus. This post-test helped me examine and measure quantitatively any changes in their knowledge of their faith journey, personal motivations which guided their spiritual life and daily faith habits that they followed to share their faith. The Discipleship Discovery Post-test was the same in content as the Discipleship Discovery Pre-test and sought to examine any measurable differences in any aspect of their faith journey. The Discipleship Discovery Post-test was also administered as an online instrument using Google Forms.

The focus groups discussion protocol with four online focus groups gave a personal perspective of the participant of his experience and learnings from the program. These four focus groups were created based on the time zone of the participants. Online Focus groups work slightly differently from traditional focus groups and it was important to research further on the nuances of online focus groups.(Stancanelli 761) The four focus

groups were created as there were substantial time zone differences and by creating four focus groups it enabled the participants to participate at a time more convenient to them. The focus groups discussion protocol questions (shown in Appendix C) attempted to learn from the participants a subjective and qualitative perception of the online discipleship program and any observed changes because of the program. The advantage of focus groups is that it helps participants respond to a series of questions that allows the researcher to quickly gather data from several points of view. (Sensing Loc 2945) The questions focused on their specific experience through the program, growth in their faith journey, key aspects of the program and future steps they envisioned because of this program. The online application called Google Hangout was used to schedule the focus groups for a video conferencing session. Google Hangout has a video conferencing feature to bring together online up to ten people and the capacity for the online conversation to be video-recorded with a private online link. The online link was useful to help me as the researcher to transcribe the online conversation.

Expert Review

I designed the Discipleship Discovery Survey (Pre-test and Post-test) to collect specific data to measure research questions 1-3. Based on an understanding of the literature review especially based on the study of John, several of the questions were formatted. The Focus Groups Discussion Protocol was prepared to specifically understand the effectiveness of the online discipleship program and gauge the increased knowledge, attitudes, and practices in the lives of the participants.

Both my instruments were submitted to two experts for their feedback and review: Dr. Arthur McPhee, my DMIN coach and adviser and Dr. Milton Lowe, academic adviser.

Both the experts were emailed an Expert Review letter (Appendix A) that included descriptive details of the project which included the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions and definition of key terms and attached also were the two researcher-designed instruments and the evaluation forms for expert review. (Appendix D and Appendix E)

Overall, the experts expressed satisfaction at the design of the instruments and suggested few changes for each of them. The Discipleship Discovery Pre-test and Post-test survey had no recommendations for change from the first reviewer, while the second reviewer suggested a couple of changes which were dutifully made. He had suggested that the word 'build' to be changed to 'encourage' for statement number 12. Also, according to him, statement number 22 seemed complicated and he suggested that it be removed or made into two statements. However, I did not want to change the balance of the survey and wanted to stick to 11 statements for each category of knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Therefore, I changed the statement by making it simpler and at the same time conveying the purpose of the original statement.

The Focus Groups Discussion Protocol which was comprised of seven questions had few changes suggested by the reviewers. One of the reviewers suggested that the title of the instrument be changed from 'Semi-structured interview protocol' to 'Focus Groups Discussion Protocol' as the former was conducted usually in the context of one-to-one interviews. This change was incorporated into the instrument.

The other reviewer suggested the removal of a question which was similar in content to an earlier question, and recommended the addition of a couple of questions, which were duly made into the final focus groups discussion protocol.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

The researcher-designed instruments were administered for consistency of design and appropriate procedures were followed to ensure the reliability of the measurement. The corresponding results of the test scores were examined and the subjects being assessed supported the validity of the findings. To increase the reliability and validity of the project, the following steps were undertaken:

Reliability

The researcher-designed Discipleship Discovery Pre-test and Post-test were conducted as online surveys using Google Forms to ensure a quick response from the participants. The participants were contacted directly by using email application (via Gmail.com) and quick messaging applications (WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger). The personal and direct informal conversations through WhatsApp and Messenger permitted a quick response to the Pre-test and Post-test. Both Pre-test and Post-test, were submitted by the participants within two days of the emailing the online survey to them. The online format of the survey which enabled the participant to click on a scale of 1-5 without having to write any responses encouraged the participants to respond. Based on the feedback of the expert reviewers, the thirty-three questions were readjusted in certain sections to ensure the accurate assessment of the measure of the knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

To grow the reliability of the project, the qualitative instrument of a focus group's discussion protocol using focus groups was administered. The expert reviewers also assessed the interview protocol to ensure that the questions fulfilled the specific focus of the purpose statement. I served as the moderator for the focus groups to ensure the confidentiality and the pastoral engagement of the sharing of the subjective experiences of the participants. The online focus group was video-recorded, and a private link generated for follow-up for me as the researcher as well as any Asbury-authorized personnel.

Validity

The purpose statement, research questions, and the literature review guided me to carefully prepare the design for the Discipleship Discovery Pre-test and Post-test. The thirty-three statements were sub-divided into segments of eleven questions each to measure the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the participants. The statements integrated closely with the framework of the study of the gospel of John as well as key elements of discipleship that I considered in the literature review. The feedback received from the expert reviewers and the subsequent changes ensured that the online surveys were accurately measured for the validity of the project. The participants responded on a scale of 1-5 which gave the participant the opportunity to respond at a subjective level comfortable to his or her current journey of discipleship.

The validity of the project was safeguarded by considering triangulation as a qualitative measure to provide a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas (Creswell and Miller 127). My role as the researcher was augmented as it guaranteed a pastoral connection

with the participants at a personal level to increase their engagement and involvement. Through the platform of the focus groups, using the focus groups discussion protocol that was reviewed by the experts enhanced the independent value of the project based on real settings in different international urban centres. Using an online platform throughout the duration of the study with the participants, using social media, audio, and video elements, enabled a valuable research trace which provided guidance not only for the researcher but for the key collaborators of the project.

Data Collection

The six-week discipleship program was initiated with a personal online text message conversation with each of the ten participants on 28th November 2017. The online conversation started with an informal personal discussion using quick messaging applications WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger with each of the participants. All the requested participants informally agreed to be part of the program and sent me a text message with their email addresses.

Based on their response, the Discipleship Discovery Pre-test was emailed to them on 30th November 2017, and a follow-up message was sent to each of them reminding them to kindly check their emails. The Discipleship Discovery Pre-test was created on Google Forms with clear and precise information on how to access and fill the survey. (See screenshot of Google Form format in Appendix.) However, one of the participants, based in a country where the laws of the land do not permit the use of Google Forms, was emailed Word Document of the Pre-test Survey. The informed consent form was part of the Pre-test, and when they clicked ‘agree’ on the form, they also gave consent to

participate in the survey and join the discipleship program. The responses of all ten participants were received by 2nd December 2017.

The Discipleship Discovery Post-test following the same procedure was emailed to the participants based on when they completed their final session between 17th January and 22nd January 2018. I received responses from all the participants by 24th January 2018.

The data information received from the responses of the participants was automatically generated by Google Forms and entered into an online Google Spreadsheet. Data collected from both pre-test and post-tests were documented and a database created using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for further examination.

The online focus groups followed a similar pattern to the online discipleship program sessions. The focus groups were conducted in four groups based on their time zones. Using Google Hangout, the participants were informed through text message and online meeting scheduled using Google Calendar. I created four separate messaging discussion groups on WhatsApp few days before the focus groups discussion, to facilitate discussion on the best timings which would suit the participants in the specific focus group. These WhatsApp groups also served the purpose to orient the participants on the technical and logistical details of preparing for the focus group.

The four online focus groups were conducted on following four dates: Focus Group 1(19th January 2018 with MMUAE and LRUA); Focus Group 2(20th January with JJUS, SSUS, and EAUS); Focus Group 3(23rd January with DRG and MAA); and Focus Group 4(24th January with STF and ASC). The Focus Groups questions were not only verbally asked in the online live conversation, but they were also sent as a text

message on WhatsApp and stated in the chat section of the Google Hangout. At the end of each of the focus groups, the video of the conference call was saved as a private video link for transcription purposes. The video link on youtube.com has a button which allows for automatically generating a transcription of the entire online focus group. This transcription was about eighty percent accurate and needed to be carefully read while listening to the video again to decipher and correct few of the words. The recorded information was transcribed and coded by descriptions and themes for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The Discipleship Discovery Pre-test and Post-test collected the quantitative data for this study. The information was systematically recorded in Microsoft Excel and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Using the formulas and tabulation formats available in Microsoft Excel, the mean and standard deviations of the individual questions were calculated to provide data which would assess appropriate responses to the research questions. The mean and standard deviations were also conducted based on the grouping of categories of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices. These values were further tabulated within Microsoft Excel to provide charts and tables which would methodically present the data. I further conducted inferential statistics, to ascertain tests of significance on the Pre-test and Post-test, based on Paired T-test to examine any significant changes because of the intervention.

The focus groups discussion protocol conducted through the four online focus groups collected the qualitative data, which was video-recorded, and a private link generated for transcription. I conducted an initial exploratory analysis by reading the transcribed data and capturing an overall idea of the response of the participants. Based

on the focus groups discussion protocol questions, I wanted to discover key elements of the discipleship program that impacted them the most to consider any vital changes in their walk with God in a cross-cultural setting. Reading the transcribed data several times, recurrent descriptions and themes were coded and separated into sections for content analysis.

CHAPTER 4: EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents the evidence for this project based on the quantitative and qualitative instruments mentioned in chapter 3. The socio-demographics of the participants for the intervention project is clearly described based on their age, gender, location, work/study profile and a few other categories. The evidence for the project is presented in response to the three research questions, using quantitative instruments for Research Question One and Two, and using the qualitative instrument for Research Question Three. Based on the evidence presented, the major findings of the project are briefly stated.

Young Christ-followers who leave the Assembly of God Church Kolkata and journey to other countries to make a career often fail to be fruitful in their own faith life or bring influence for His kingdom in their new international city. The possibilities for an Indian Christian to influence the international context are significant. What was missing was a good local church program preparing a young follower to face the trials of a new city and make a missional impact in his or her new community.

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an online six-session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to increase the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of young international migrant believers from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in cross-cultural settings in international cities.

Participants

Ten migrants were invited to participate in the online discipleship program in November 2017. Using the instrumentation of Pre-test Survey, all the participants who were invited to participate in the program, agreed to register for the program and were willing to complete the requirements of the program including the pre-test and post-test surveys and the online focus groups. The participation of the ten participants was considered valid based on their completion of three criteria: First, they were currently living outside India and were willing to follow the requirements of the program. Second, they were originally from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata. Finally, their fulfilment of three elements of the program: reading session notes weekly emailed to them, attending online sessions, and engaging with commitments associated with the program. All ten attended the six online sessions in different formats: live video conferencing sessions, audio call sessions, recorded video sessions, and two sessions were conducted in person with two participants who came to Kolkata for holidays.

The demographic description of the participants presented the portrayal of the age of the participants, geographical location, gender, marital status, current profile, and duration of stay in the international city. (See Figure 4.1) They were between eighteen to thirty-five years of age. They lived in United States, Europe, Middle-East, Australia, and China. Nine of the participants were young men while one was a young lady. Only one of the participants was married. There is a blend of full-time students and full-time young professionals in the program. Most of them have migrated to the international city within the last three years.

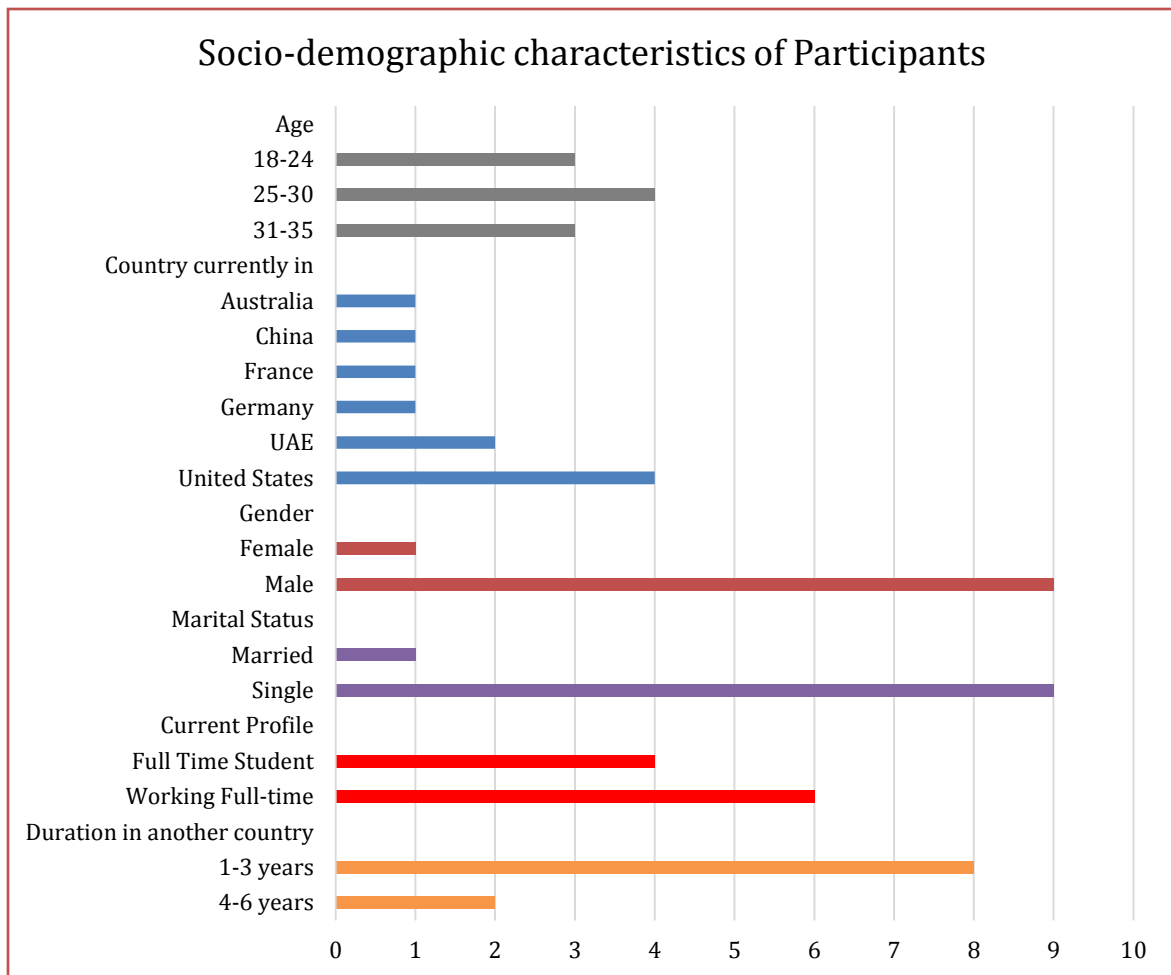


Figure 4.1. Socio-demographics of participants (N=10).

Research Question #1:

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices prior to the program on discipleship based on the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

In the Pre-test survey, question numbers 1-11 measured the participants' level of knowledge of discipleship: their belief system and factual understanding regarding what it means to be Christ-follower conceptually covering the framework of being redefined in

the image of Christ, redirected towards their calling, recreating their community, retracing their course, and reigniting their catalytic calling. This conceptual structure was based on the study of the gospel of John leading the disciples to grow in their understanding from being an interested seeker to a committed follower of Christ.

The question numbers 12-22 measured the participants' level of personal attitudes regarding following Christ. Once again, the same conceptual framework was applied, but it sought to gauge the participants' personal convictions and willingness to follow through on commitments about their knowledge of following Christ. Finally, question numbers 23-33 measured the participants' relational practices which would make them effective as Christ-followers in their context. Using the above mentioned conceptual framework, the participants' relational qualities were assessed to gain a perspective on the influence of the knowledge base and personal attitudes on their ability to impact the community around them.

Out of the thirty-three questions, there were five questions (Question numbers 6, 14, 16, 17, 25) displayed a higher deviation from the mean ($SD > 1$) which indicated that the participants are broadly varied when it comes to these aspects of discipleship. (See Table 4.1.) Interestingly, these aspects are spread right cross the knowledge base, personal attitudes, and relational practices.

Table 4.1: Standard Deviation greater than 1

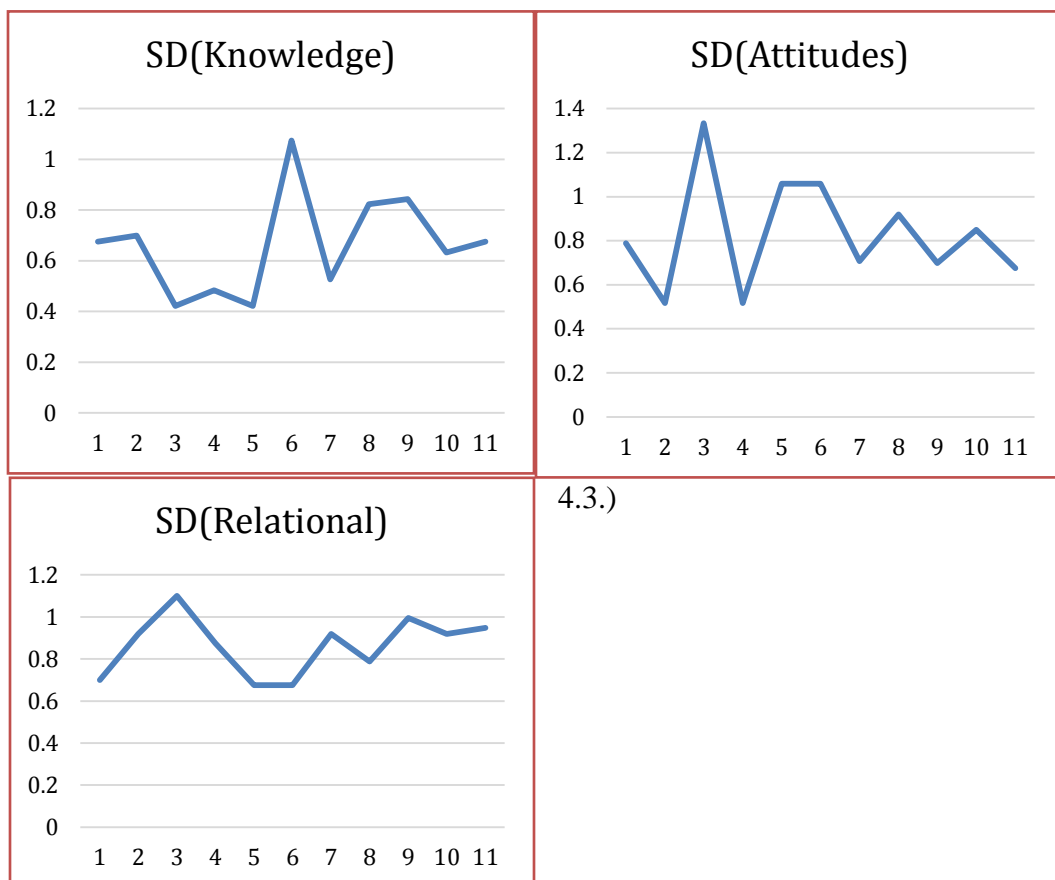
Question	Pre-Test Mean	Pre-Test SD	Always %	Mostly %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never %
6. I know that God has called me to lead others to follow Him	4.40	1.07	70%	10%	10%	10%	0%
14. Leading others to follow Jesus requires me to die to my own plans	4.00	1.33	50%	20%	20%	0%	10%
16. My workplace/university provides an opportunity for me to live out my walk with Jesus	3.30	1.06	10%	40%	20%	30%	0%
17. I am motivated to have a small group of friends with whom I can share my life	3.70	1.06	20%	50%	10%	20%	0%
25. I am intentional about connecting my friends to Jesus	3.90	1.10	40%	20%	30%	10%	0%

On the other hand, there were five questions (Question numbers 3, 4, 5, 13,15) that showed the least deviation from the mean ($SD < 0.5$) which reflected that the participants are generally committed to these aspects of discipleship (See Table 4.2). Interestingly these aspects cover only the knowledge base and personal attitudes.

Table 4.2: Standard Deviation lower than 0.5

Question	Pre-Test Mean	Pre-Test SD	Always %	Mostly %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never %
3. Showing love and care to people around me is a commandment of Jesus	4.80	0.42	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
4. I am called to do whatever Jesus wants me to do.	4.70	0.48	70%	30%	0%	0%	0%
5. I choose to follow Jesus based on Who He is and not just based on what He does for me	4.80	0.42	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
13. I choose to believe in Jesus and His works even when things go wrong in my life	4.60	0.52	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
15. As a Christ-follower, following Jesus is the top most priority in my life	4.60	0.52	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%

A closer scrutiny of the standard deviation of the question numbers 1-11 (See Figure 4.2.) and question numbers 12-22 (See Figure 4.2.) reveals a wider diversity in the understanding of discipleship of the participants when it comes to knowledge and attitudes. The lesser diversity in the standard deviation of the question numbers 23-33 (See Figure 4.2.) reveals that the participants seem to generally echo the same relational practices when it comes to discipleship. However, the higher mean for question numbers 1-11 and 12-22 and much lower mean for question number 23-33 show the disparity in the knowledge and attitude base and relational practices of the participant. (See Figure



4.3.)

Figure 4.2: Standard Deviation Trends for Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices

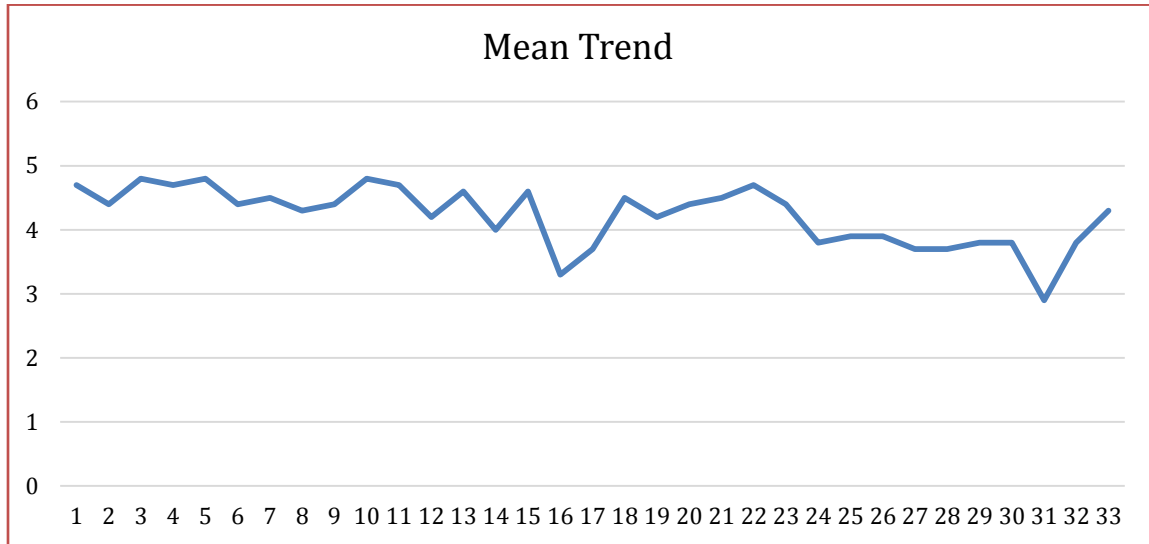


Figure 4.3: Overall Mean Trend

Especially note that question numbers 16, 17, 24, 31, have the lowest mean in the survey, (See Table 4.3.) which reveals that participants overall struggle to live these attitudes and practice them.

Table 4.3: Table showing questions with the lowest mean

Question	Pre-Test Mean	Pre-Test SD	Always %	Mostly %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never %
16. My workplace/university provides an opportunity for me to live out my walk with Jesus	3.30	1.06	10%	40%	20%	30%	0%
17. I am motivated to have a small group of friends with whom I can share my life	3.70	1.06	20%	50%	10%	20%	0%
27. I make time alone to grow in my walk with Jesus in prayer and Bible reading	3.70	0.67	10%	50%	40%	0%	0%
28. I make time to build relationships with people around me	3.70	0.67	10%	50%	40%	0%	0%
31. I spend time teaching others about Jesus and His words.	2.90	0.99	10%	10%	40%	40%	0%

Research Question #2:

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices following the program on discipleship based on the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

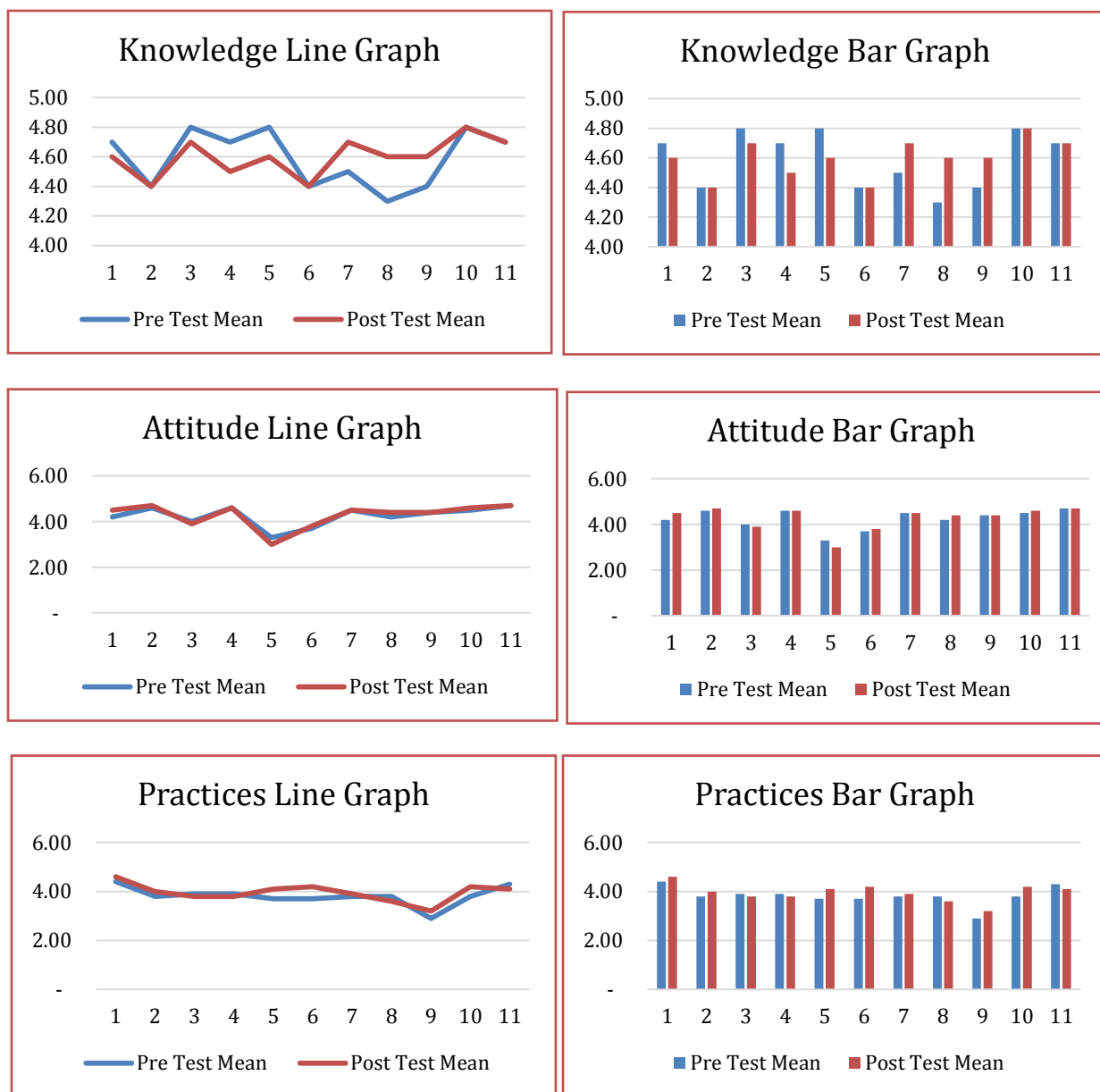


Figure 4.4: Comparative Difference in Mean of Pre-test and Post-test surveys

In response to this question, I conducted a Post-test survey to assess if there were changes in the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of the participants after having completed the discipleship program. Initially, I calculated and compared the mean between the pre-test and post-test for knowledge base (questions 1-11), attitude level (questions 12-22), and practices (questions 23-33). The comparative charts (See Figure 4.4.) reflect that there is no substantial change in the knowledge base and attitude base of the participants. However, the relational practices of the participants seem to be affected more as a result.

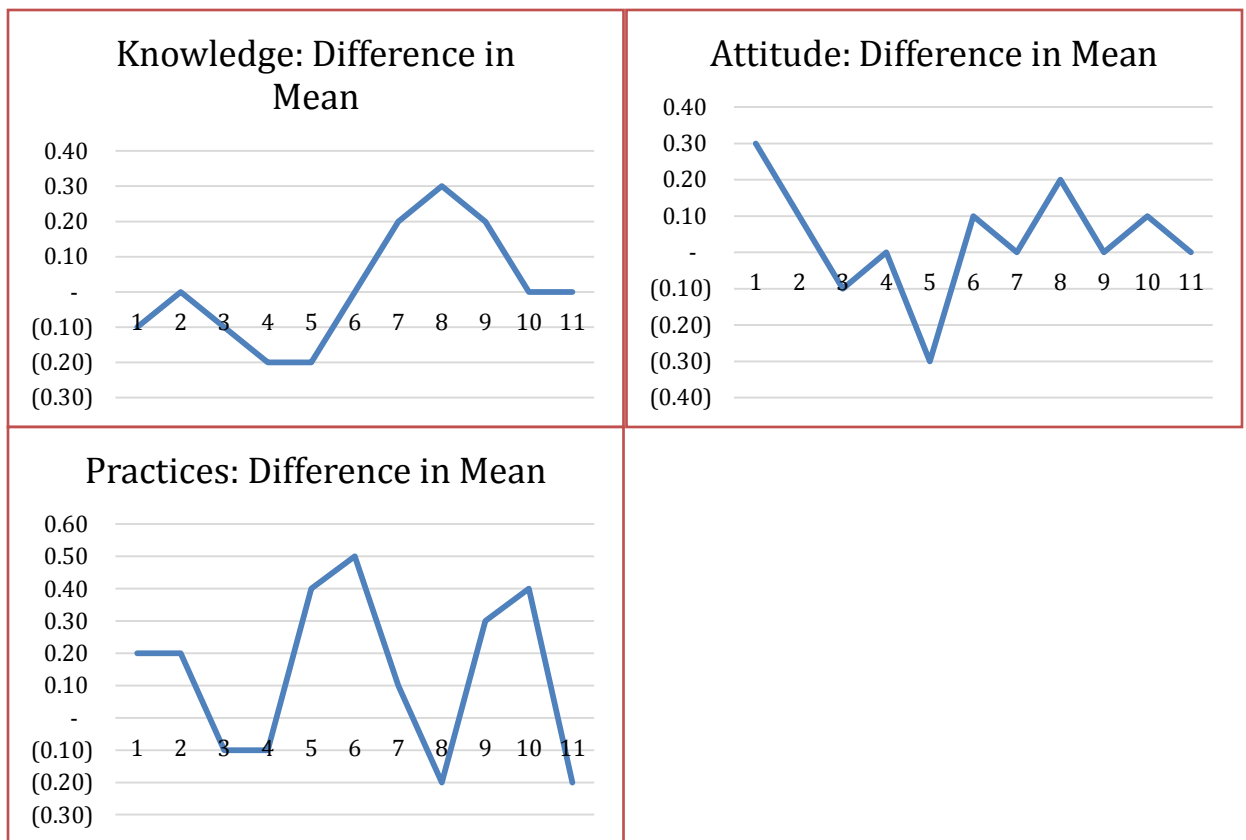


Figure 4.5: Difference in Mean for Knowledge, Attitude, Practices for Pre-test and Post-test surveys

The difference in mean for the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices is shown separately (See Figure 4.5.) to reflect the key questions where there was a positive change or negative change. Closer scrutiny of these questions reveals that for 15 of these questions, the mean has increased after the program (see Table 4.4), for 10 questions it has decreased (see Table 4.5), and for 8 of them there has been no change (see Table 4.6). Focusing further on the 15 questions of the questions, the top four results have all to do with relational practices.

Table 4.4: Positive Changes in Mean

Question	Pre-Test Mean	Post Test Mean	Diff in Mean
28. I make time to build relationships with people around me	3.70	4.20	0.50
32. I help my classmates/office colleagues in any struggle they face	3.80	4.20	0.40
27. I make time alone to grow in my walk with Jesus in prayer and Bible reading	3.70	4.10	0.40
31. I spend time teaching others about Jesus and His words.	2.90	3.20	0.30
8. Sharing life found in Jesus name with my networks is a mandate of Jesus for my life	4.30	4.60	0.30
12. I am called to encourage people around me to be like Jesus	4.20	4.50	0.30
7. I know helping and serve the people who live in my neighbourhood will help me reflect the love of Jesus	4.50	4.70	0.20
19. I have this calm assurance that inspite of compromising situations I am placed in, I will walk in the light of Jesus.	4.20	4.40	0.20
24. I follow the pathway of the Holy Spirit and go wherever Jesus wants me to go	3.80	4.00	0.20
9. In private and public forums where I am bombarded with conflicting belief systems, I know Jesus is the only door of salvation for eternal life.	4.40	4.60	0.20
23. God is at work in my life in tangible ways	4.40	4.60	0.20
13. I choose to believe in Jesus and His works even when things go wrong in my life	4.60	4.70	0.10
29. I actively look for opportunities to share Jesus with people in my life	3.80	3.90	0.10
17. I am motivated to have a small group of friends with whom I can share my life	3.70	3.80	0.10
21. I am called to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all areas of my life and work or study	4.50	4.60	0.10

Table 4.5: Negative Changes in Mean

Question	Pre-Test Mean	Post Test Mean	Diff in Mean
16. My workplace/university provides an opportunity for me to live out my walk with Jesus	3.30	3.00	-0.30
4. I am called to do whatever Jesus wants me to do.	4.70	4.50	-0.20
5. I choose to follow Jesus based on Who He is and not just based on what He does for me	4.80	4.60	-0.20
33. I invite people around me to come and see the miracles that Jesus has done in my life	4.30	4.10	-0.20
30. I make time to walk with others around me and show the love of Jesus to them	3.80	3.60	-0.20
1. I am called to live my faith in Christ in whichever setting I am placed in	4.70	4.60	-0.10
14. Leading others to follow Jesus requires me to die to my own plans	4.00	3.90	-0.10
25. I am intentional about connecting my friends to Jesus	3.90	3.80	-0.10
26. Making time for my small group of friends will help me share Jesus with them	3.90	3.80	-0.10
3. Showing love and care to people around me is a commandment of Jesus	4.80	4.70	-0.10

Table 4.6: No Change in Mean

Question	Pre-Test Mean	Post Test Mean	Diff in Mean
2. Practicing intentional habits in my personal and public life will help me become more like Jesus	4.40	4.40	-
6. I know that God has called me to lead others to follow Him	4.40	4.40	-
10. In fearful situations even of life and death, I know that God is my Resurrection and Life and He is in control.	4.80	4.80	-
11. I know Jesus is God and always guiding all details of my life.	4.70	4.70	-
15. As a Christ-follower, following Jesus is the top most priority in my life	4.60	4.60	-
18. Faced with difficult situations, I am confident that Jesus is the source of my satisfaction and fullness.	4.50	4.50	-
20. In circumstances where I am faced with pain, attacks, and crisis, I am dependent on Jesus for total shelter, care, and guidance.	4.40	4.40	-
22. I am called to be fruitful for Jesus in my private and public life.	4.70	4.70	-

T-Test analysis

Evaluating the data by means of paired two-sample t-tests was performed on individual questions and the grouping of knowledge levels, personal attitudes, and relational practices, comparing the Pre-test and Post-test responses. The t-test is one type of inferential statistics. It is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two responses. The level of probability (alpha level, level of significance, p) one is willing to accept before the data is collected ($p < .05$ is a common value that is used) (William Sealy Gosset). The T-test analysis for the thirty-three statements for knowledge, personal attitudes and relational practices are presented in Tables 4.7; 4.8; and 4.9, along with the measure of each of the statements in comparison to $p (.05)$. Based on the analysis, none of the results are deemed to have a significant change.

Table 4.7: T-Test Results: Knowledge

Question	Ttest Value	Ttest Value greater than p (.05)
1. I am called to live my faith in Christ in whichever setting I am placed in	0.76	0.71
2. Practicing intentional habits in my personal and public life will help me become more like Jesus	1.00	0.95
3. Showing love and care to people around me is a commandment of Jesus	0.73	0.68
4. I am called to do whatever Jesus wants me to do.	0.51	0.46
5. I choose to follow Jesus based on Who He is and not just based on what He does for me	0.17	0.12
6. I know that God has called me to lead others to follow Him	1.00	0.95
7. I know helping and serve the people who live in my neighbourhood will help me reflect the love of Jesus	0.44	0.39
8. Sharing life found in Jesus name with my networks is a mandate of Jesus for my life	0.47	0.42
9. In private and public forums where I am bombarded with conflicting belief systems, I know Jesus is the only door of salvation for eternal life.	0.62	0.57
10. In fearful situations even of life and death, I know that God is my Resurrection and Life and He is in control.	1.00	0.95
11. I know Jesus is God and always guiding all details of my life.	1.00	0.95

Table 4.8: T-Test Results: Attitudes

Question	Ttest Value	Ttest Value greater than p (.05)
12. I am called to encourage people around me to be like Jesus	0.52	0.47
13. I choose to believe in Jesus and His works even when things go wrong in my life	0.68	0.63
14. Leading others to follow Jesus requires me to die to my own plans	0.88	0.83
15. As a Christ-follower, following Jesus is the top most priority in my life	1.00	0.95
16. . My workplace/university provides an opportunity for me to live out my walk with Jesus	0.63	0.58
17. I am motivated to have a small group of friends with whom I can share my life	0.85	0.80
18. Faced with difficult situations, I am confident that Jesus is the source of my satisfaction and fullness.	1.00	0.95
19. I have this calm assurance that inspite of compromising situations I am placed in, I will walk in the light of Jesus.	0.68	0.63
20. In circumstances where I am faced with pain, attacks, and crisis, I am dependent on Jesus for total shelter, care, and guidance.	1.00	0.95
21. I am called to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all areas of my life and work or study	0.76	0.71
22. I am called to be fruitful for Jesus in my private and public life.	1.00	0.95

Table 4.9: T-Test Results: Practices

Question	Ttest Value	Ttest Value greater than p (.05)
23. God is at work in my life in tangible ways	0.51	0.46
24. I follow the pathway of the Holy Spirit and go wherever Jesus wants me to go	0.59	0.54
25. I am intentional about connecting my friends to Jesus	0.81	0.76
26. Making time for my small group of friends will help me share Jesus with them	0.80	0.75
27. I make time alone to grow in my walk with Jesus in prayer and Bible reading	0.27	0.22
28. I make time to build relationships with people around me	0.18	0.13
29. I actively look for opportunities to share Jesus with people in my life	0.81	0.76
30. I make time to walk with others around me and show the love of Jesus to them	0.59	0.54
31. I spend time teaching others about Jesus and His words.	0.54	0.49
32. I help my classmates/office colleagues in any struggle they face	0.17	0.12
33. I invite people around me to come and see the miracles that Jesus has done in my life	0.68	0.63

There were possibly three reasons for the T-test analysis not having a significant change. Firstly, I noted that the participants gave themselves a high rating on their Pre-test survey for most of the statements, especially for the knowledge levels and personal attitudes, which could not be improved significantly on a Post-test survey. Secondly, for

the knowledge levels, the ratings for the Post-test survey dropped from the Pre-test survey. My personal observation on the possibility of this drop in the ratings may be because of the participants' honest evaluation of their knowledge based on their learning from the online program. Finally, three of the statements (Question 14, 16, and 17), were misunderstood by most of the participants and hence resulted in responses which were quite different from the rest of the personal attitudes statements.

Research Question #3:

What specific components of the program contributed most to the observed changes in knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices towards effective discipleship in a cross-cultural setting?

The four focus groups interviews were transcribed as separate documents based on the separate focus groups. Since the focus groups were online hangout sessions, videos were automatically generated for the same using the youtube.com platform. I downloaded these videos and then transcribed the sessions based on the transcription facility available on the YouTube channel. The separate focus group documents were compiled into one consolidated document and sub-divided based on the individual focus group questions. Several readings allowed the responses to be categorized based on the following: First, relevant responses to each of the questions; second, personal stories that were shared in the light of the queries; and finally, critical feedback about different components of the program.

These responses were sub-divided into three categories to review the response to the research question: What *specific components* of the program contributed *most* to the observed changes in knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices towards

effective discipleship in a *cross-cultural setting*? (The emphases on the bold and italics reflect the focus of these categories)

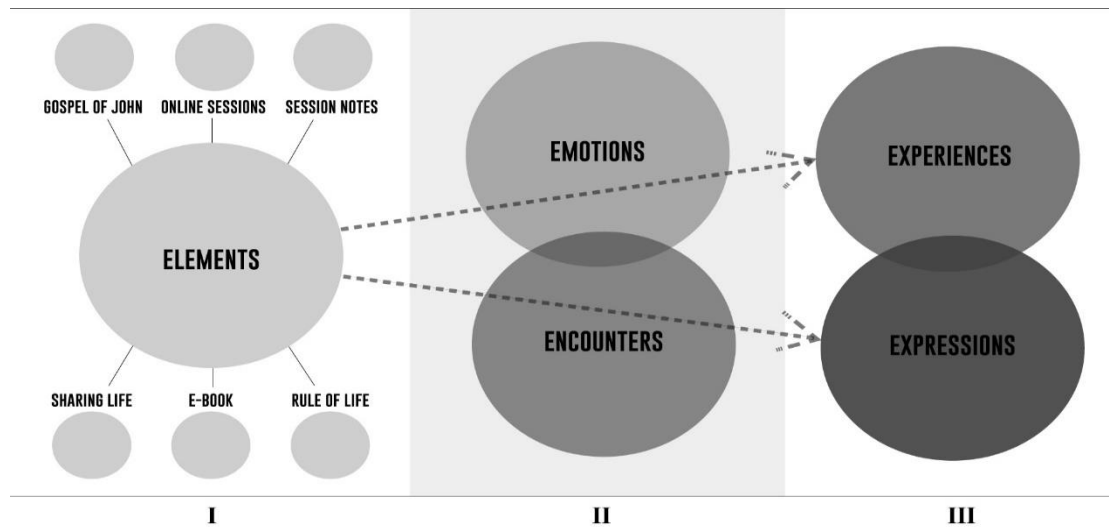


Figure 4.6: Infographic of Focus Groups findings

The specific components of the discipleship program can be defined as the key *elements* (See category 1 in Figure 4.6.) that shaped the intervention project.

Understanding the vocal responses and the subtle silences to the key elements of the program helped me evaluate what specific components were impactful or otherwise in the context of the program. Understanding these responses guided me to measure substantial learnings, changes, and commitments in the life of these participants which can be termed as *experiences* and *expressions* in the context of Chapter 4. (See category 3 in Figure 4.6.) However, these experiences and expressions emerge in the context of the personal lens of the participants which can be termed as *encounters* and *emotions* which were produced as the participants interacted with the different elements of the program. (See

category 2 in Figure 4.6.) It is important to summarize the response of the focus groups by understanding these three categories.

Elements

The key element of the online discipleship program had the following important elements: Reading of the Gospel of John/ReBoot Bible Plan, Session Notes, Online Sessions, E-book, Sharing Life with Mentors, and Rule of Life. These components were crucial for the spiritual formation of the participants through the six weeks.

Responses to the Components

The vocal responses of the participants for certain elements and their subtle silences helped us evaluate the elements that impacted them the most. Their responses included the following.

Reading of Gospel of John/ReBoot Bible Plan : The participants were encouraged to read the gospel of John during these six weeks and write down their key learnings from this Gospel. I had designed an online Bible plan (ReBoot on YouVersion Bible app) for the participants to use and share what they have learned with the other participants (See Appendix I). Their reading of John's gospel and response to any specific passage which stood out for them resulted in the following replies:

- 1) **EAUS**: "I read Gospel of John before, but then this time when I read it, it was more of a deeper meaning and there are things that I found out and I didn't notice last time. After talking to you yesterday, I was like I need to go through Gospel of John again to know in fact to know about more about Jesus and how his direct disciple(s) saw his spirituality you know... The story of the lady at the well... the Samaritan woman okay...that was a good one... yeah

the fact that Jesus took time to stay there in the village and I was something...I am a ...person who never plans for the road trip then I go to places like last time you went to Colorado we were booking the next day hotel the day before...yeah I was like, Jesus was like me...He changed His plans.”

- 2) **MAA**: “I read the whole Gospel of John ... that's something that we continuously learn but then we don't take a stop and try to understand it from a different angle.”
- 3) **LRUAE**: “...this online session that you started ... an amazing journey for me why because I'm a guy who I used to even read six to seven verses every day but the thing is that from the last two and a half weeks what I'm doing it taking out time in the office to read at least a chapter of it...the thing is that I never read John so interestingly as I read it now like for this three weeks.”
- 4) **JJUS**: “...most striking thing ... Jesus says in John 20:22 he breathed on them and said to them receive the Holy Spirit and that that's the spiritual life he gave like He promised like He had promised he gives them and this is a spiritual promise... spiritual life he gave so when in Genesis God gives you know the physical life to man right here gives you know the spiritual life so this is the more important. So, the last Adam, so Jesus gives the thing so I just I just like I find this correlation really cool and it's it's interspersed with a lot of things but this is I find I found this by far the most profound thing reading the studying the Gospel of John.”
- 5) **SSUS**: “...what stood out the most for me from that gospel is the clarity of presentation and the emotional content and the Samaritan woman at the

well...because it was it is just a story of so much transformation for a lady who was not respected in her society actually becoming the chief evangelist and leading people to Christ and then you know and then those people coming to Christ and tasting and believing...”

Session Notes: Each of the session notes were emailed to the participants and sent on WhatsApp as a PDF file on the Monday of each week to help them read and process the material before we met for the online session. The responses of the participants to these session notes involved the following replies:

- 1) **EAUS:** “It was nice and especially with all the all the diagrams and all the small snippets and small things that you added it made it easier ...I like the reboot notes maybe because I like to draw and all those things so I that had different colours and different fonts for different things and small notes on the side small key points the triangle so if we run my eyes through it I know what I am reading right so when I want to revise it or when I want to go back and check something I can easily get to the point because of the different headers and subject lines that you have over there.”
- 2) **STF:** “...reinforce a lot of this program has been reinforced because someone who grew up in the church it it's not exactly unknown to me, but these are more like consolidations of the facts which I know which I find extremely helpful especially again into the notes which are like this side guidebook which I can use along with the Bible.”

- 3) **ASC**: “I went through the notes well, certain stories, the testimonies that that hit me and then I could you know I learned something that I that I can incorporate in my life.”
- 4) **DRG**: “There was a point to point description of like how you can do that for example...”
- 5) **LRUAE**: “When I got your notes...it helped me to know Jesus much more better ... it really helped me to take my faith level to a different to a different phase actually ... it helped me to know how can we go for the Lord out of the box ...when I went through this notes and gospel together, things went so clarified in my mind like things I especially about the Holy Spirit I learned a lot about the Holy Spirit.”
- 6) **SSUS**: “...the reading of the notes was a good preparation for sessions especially the stories they brought it to life...”

Online Sessions: Each of these sessions was conducted using the online platform of Google Hangout or YouTube Channel. Since these online sessions were conducted traversing about five time zones, some of these sessions did happen at odd hours for some of the participants. The feedback received on the online sessions is as follows:

- 1) **JJUS**: “It's very good even late in the night it seems really nice to talk about it ...it has really encouraged us to really talk as a team and discussing, dissect a lot you know these things won't happen often so you know we really appreciated that we been brought together and that brings us a sense of you know where we don't feel like we obligating but you know we are wholesomely doing it because you know ultimately this is shaping us you

know it's shaping us personally...coming together as a group and really talking about matters of God really have it's it's (sic) so interesting you know we that we you're spending so much time and giving us giving so much thought and effort into this as we speak you know with a lot of excitement.”

- 2) **SSUS**: “...being able to interact with other members of the group that was also here all on this journey together, so it helps to see different perspectives...”

E-book: All the participants were encouraged to read a 43-page E-book called ‘The Five Habits of Highly Missional People’ by Michael Frost. The comments about the e-book were as follows:

- 1) **MAA**: “...five habits in indulging every day or every week, every month in that that is something new again to the walk of which which (sic) because I don't get because I'm so consumed with my daily activities at that those five habits and I'm not highlighted like the five habits... the book that you asked us to read there's something there's so much something new that I learned from there which actually stood out was listening to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.”
- 2) **JJUS**: “...Is that the e-book I finished the e-book missions’ habits ...it was a very nice read and it's you know the stuff which was proposed was very radical and you know simple yet radical...”

Sharing life with Friends/Mentors: The participants were encouraged to share what they are learning with at least three of their friends and engage proactively in a small group.

The participants were also encouraged to find a mentor and be accountable to them. They made the following comments:

- 1) **MMUAE**: “I’ve good friends, yes with good friends you know it’s the positive life which I share which you know makes them inquisitive and want them to know like you know why is he so happy why is he so positive, so you know there are many friends like you know...”
- 2) **ASC**: “...sharing with M (name of friend), I mean the friend that I had...so that helped me because.... I...before this course... I didn't in engage myself in people like... talking about Jesus so much or even what I'm doing or what I'm experiencing like that helped me yeah in my face and yeah it help me...specially the notes...”
- 3) **DRG**: “I just started talking to people like getting engaged I was a very lonesome person before that.... Go to class, take notes, finish all your work...and go back home, go to the library and stuff like that I was ... like living alone basically... Nowadays I've started talking to like my classmates taking an interest in because life in (name of country) is very monotonous...they will only study study study, work work work, and in the night they will party party party...that that's (sic) it over here so doing this...getting like like (sic) getting to know people and engaging in their lives it's it (sic) will be a challenge I have started it but we let’s see how it does.”
- 4) **SSUS**: “...sharing life with friends, I have a support group a prayer support group that I really rely on a lot and I share life most intensely with them as

well as with my fiancé because we we (sic) pray every night together and with my family.”

5) **MMUAE**: “...honestly I have not got any mentor you know here ... I was in India I had a mentor I used to share honestly.”

6) **LRUAE**: “...you have been the mentor, have been speaking to I have got no other mentor...when we share things and all that's the biggest thing I have with you basically I don't have any mentor here.”

7) **MAA**: “I don't have something called mentor I don't have a mentor, but I look up to people. I look up to...to follow...I have like you like you are one of them ...but yeah so you know I look up with people and and (sic) I and I and I (sic) take I take advice from from (sic) them so has has (sic) some point has this helped us.”

Rule of Life: The participants were also encouraged to write down their rule of life which would help them intentionally practice their discipleship. I shared with them in one of the sessions, my personal rule of life to help as a model. Following were their responses:

1) **MMUAE**: “...what I've developed is every day at least even if it's five minutes give that five minutes all to God and you know read his Word and just meditate...”

2) **LRUAE**: “.... developing a rule of life ... there are two things ... obedience obey the Lord in every single step of your life. wait obedience is my first rule accordingly basically a second thing is a I(sic) need I just want I just I just don't want to let that obedience be just obedience when I go with that obedience I want to go with that faith ...faith that acts.”

- 3) **ASC:** "... I started doing something like ...I even wrote down certain goals ... lose weight and to be a better person and anger management."
- 4) **SSUS:** "...a rule of life I have not, I mean I got yours, but I haven't had the time to sit down and do it myself but I have a handy model in what you send and I do intend to sometime take out the time to write down mine even if it is you know just a gist of it."

Analysis of the Components

If each of the components of the online program can be assessed based on the vocal responses of the participants and their silences, you can analyze it as follows:

Reading of Gospel of John/ReBoot Bible Plan: Most of the participants engaged themselves with this component. Though their busy schedule did not allow them to successfully complete the John's Gospel in the allotted 6 weeks of the program, they expressed their eager engagement with the Gospel. The ReBoot Bible plan did not find much value for most of the participants, except for one participant. Two of the other participants who started the Bible Plan, did not express much about its contribution to their growth.

Session Notes: This was of most value for most of the participants as they expressed how these notes helped them and how it would continue to provide guidance beyond the program. Few of them expressed that these notes would be useful for them to share it with their network of friends.

Online Sessions: The novelty and the possibilities of using the online platform for discipleship were genuinely expressed by the participants. They were glad that I could provide personal mentorship to them through this format. However, a couple of the

participants expressed a desire for greater correlation between the session notes and the online sessions to help them process the content better.

Sharing life with friends and Mentors: The impact of developing relationships with people was something new that the participants endeavoured to genuinely practice. Most of them expressed their attempts at building rapport with people around them. The silence regarding sharing with mentors is a factor to be noted, illustrating that the participants were not able to follow up on this commitment.

E-Book: Out of the ten participants, only three participants specifically stated how it blessed them while the rest of them did not mention it at all. Once again, the discipline of reading a book in a busy season is a commitment which all participants could not enthusiastically engage in.

Rule of Life: Though most of the participants expressed the value of the rule of life based on Session Five, most of them were not able to tangibly share specifically a rule of life they had formulated towards the end of the program.

Encounters

Engaging in the specific components of the program brought to the surface, memories of key encounters that the participants had with God, with people, at the church or other encounters. These encounters were raised, as the context and content of the program shaped the participants. These multifaceted encounters were formative in shaping the final expressions and experiences of the participants. These encounters could be termed as God-encounters, encounters with people, encounters with church systems, or even attempts at sharing the online program with their network of friends. Some of

these encounters may not have happened during the six weeks of the program, but it triggered memories of past encounters which are crucial in the light of this project.

God-encounters:

Several of the study participants spoke about their encounters with God.

- 1) **MMUAE**: “I've started believing him more because there was a phase in my life where I faced a problem in my workplace, but you know by praying by believing his word you know when he can do miracles 2,000 years back He can do now also so that's how my life also has become a miracle. God has helped me to move ahead in life I believe the coming days are more exciting so practically I believe in him more and through His works He has done through me.”
- 2) **MAA**: “I was always struggling with ...I always believed that the Holy Spirit is talking to me, Holy Spirit speaks to me ... see and if there's something is going to happen something good or you know that that's going to take place in my life, I...I may see a I may see a pattern forming right so I feel like the Holy Spirit speaks to me but then there are times that I'm like okay... why can't I hear the voice of the Holy Spirit why is it so difficult for us to you know hear the voice of the Holy Spirit so in your book which you had... the e-book...helped me understand what it means to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.”
- 3) **STF**: “...it's something which is which is very important for me like the time I left my I accidentally left my bag in the tram or my bike got stolen so those times somehow I mean just I really don't know how but it worked out there

was an answer for it...I got both of those things back which is really miraculous.”

People-encounters:

Several of the research participants spoke about their encounters with other people.

- 1) **MMUAE:** “God has been great to me before there was none who wanted to meet me and be with me but now you know every day or every day every people want to meet me and spend time with me so this is something I was ...God’s blessing...Earlier I was the one to call and you don't want to meet but no one wished to meet me but now you know so I believe it's not just by you know God's level of success which he has put in us but it's also about our qualities you know people just don't see your success they see your quality they see your attitude they see your personality and they see what is the reason of happiness it's definitely it's God you know. That happiness is from within not from just outside what you show physically.”
- 2) **LRUAE:** “... a Pakistani guy. so it's like it's like when he was losing it I just knew one thing that I know I can can't do anything from my side from office or something like that I know anything because he's a person who is much more lower than lower in salary and lower in post so we have no authority to go and speak to the manager and tell him, this is the guy please do things for him. Why, because it's not our concern he's a friend we know that, but boss doesn't know that. the thing is that the only choice I was left with was is my Lord my intercession ... Within a week or something like that he got his

accommodation ...I trusted my Lord. I will keep on praying for you the thing is then after this happened he came to me and he said thank you for being with me and thank you for supporting me in touch when no one do. Why just one I just I just told him, that it was not I who did it, it's my Lord who did it. Thank you everything that He did during this session.”

- 3) **DRG**: “... some guys were like ...one fellow yeah one Chinese guy he did not know what Christmas was ...he is like ...he asked me whether it's part of the New Year celebration in the week of the New Year celebrations... I was like there I found an opening over there... and then I went through telling him what happened...”
- 4) **EAUS**: “...I went for a movie with a guy named James and this, the movie Son of God, that trailer came up and I was sitting with James, David and few other guys and then James says what is this about. Then David tells him oh it's the story about Jesus and all. Oh, I have never heard about him. I was like, you should ask his dad where he got his name from. So, there are lot of guys who may have good Christian names, but they hardly know anything, what Christ it is just about drinking and having a good time. Life is a party.”
- 5) **STF**: “...well the way in which I have done that in the past is well once with one of my friends who are really cared try to force feed the gospel to them did not work so well...”

Encounters regarding Online Program:

Several of the participants shared their feedback about the online program.

- 1) **DRG:** “I don't have that many local friends they're just a small group and then you know that our Indian group here, we are quite close to each other but there none of them are Christians so well I told them that that I'm going to do this program ...they were not... when you bring up...really like God and stuff they were automatically push me like ...yeah that was the reaction I got from them....but from in our church there's a small group for English-speaking people ...I shared with a couple of people that what is the program doing. I'm doing a program with my pastor in India and they were like quite impressed that it's that a pastor is taking effort to reach out to people who are in other countries and so and I showed them that what... what we do ...what I did learn from the program and they were like very impressed.”
- 2) **STF:** “I actually took the effort to share this with cell group so that was important to me yeah I took the effort to share some ...some teachings from the documents to my cell group so that was quite important I think and it ...it helped in you know actually getting the teaching out there.”
- 3) **ASC:** “... my friends yeah when they got to know when I told them that I'm doing this discipleship course. They...they were like they did at first, they did not believe me but then when they... they saw me going through the notes and reading the Bible sometimes, so they were shocked, and they started respecting me and I started respecting them. Yeah it helped me like not ignore peopleI shared about this... this program with one of my friends who's the Bible study leader as well...Back in my college so she was very happy when she heard that I got engaged into this program because I was derailed for a

very long time and then she used to talk to me every time about this and then and then we used talk about the different areas of life where you can relate things and then after that like the Bible group people there even they started talking to me.”

Emotions

Besides encounters, what also surfaced are deep personal challenges in the context of migration and personal feelings which are entrenched in the life of the participants. This too, was decisive in shaping the final expressions and experiences of the participants. The following remarks reveal some of the participants’ emotions:

- 1) **EAUS**: “...far from home and far from the comfort of people that I know ...”
- 2) **ASC**: “...there were times where I felt like someone should talk to me well when when I wanted people to talk to me but then there was no one and I felt I felt like left out and hopeless.”
- 3) **DRG**: “...coming here especially in (name of country) life gets a little bit depressing over here because you can't socialize much because of the language and the people themselves are a bit cold. They were so...so a sense of loneliness...and... some stuff like it happens it's natural when you're new to country where you don't know anyone you can't talk to anyone, so you start feeling yeah what...what did I do make a mistake and stuff like that...”

Expressions

The final themes or personal experiences that flourish in the life of participants gave way to expressions or intended commitments. Even before outlining the final

themes or experiences, it would be useful to look at the expressions in the life of the participants because of this program. They are revealed in the following comments:

- 1) **SSUS**: "...involve me intentionally going out and being in places where you have students from other universities that are secular universities and ...and there are ministries that that reach out to them that I have been a part of so that would be involved but also on a regular basis."
- 2) **EAUS**: "... I wrote down few friends' names and two of them hardly goes to church... so I was like I can talk to the good friends but then what's the point if I can't have them in heaven with me. Right, so that's the so I... I have to use it properly this time so I haven't used it yet the, but I know this will help me of course it has given me the proper motivation."
- 3) **MAA**: "listening to the Holy Spirit I have not put into practice...it's not already practiced...so I would not know... I need to put that in practice..."
- 4) **LRUAE**: "I'm a good singer but I there are there are people who invited me for church worship, but I never went ...some way or the other...I felt no it's... it's not useful and as if I'm staying far so I never took a step basically...so what I want to do is I want to take all those areas of my life I want to write it down with the pen and paper and take all those areas of my life and I want to pray for it. I'm gonna ask the Lord to help me on those areas. So, I can glorify his name on high ... I spoke to my pastors and they said most probably this year there are many transports that are going from A. (name of country) so more gracious helpfully I'll be I'll be joining the healing sessions ...I'll be joining the healing school."

5) **DRG:** "... actually in (name of country) it's say you know it's like the cultural historical significance is very good here so the old churches and the huge like culturally and historically it is very significant and so when we go and for us students it's very it's a thing it's a mandatory thing to like go around the Europe and look go to all these places and everywhere you will find something Christian everywhere...maybe Catholic or maybe something churchy... I feel this opens up a very good opportunity to speak in God's message over here so everybody would be asking like for instance in our my own city the world's tallest church is there ...so whenever I take up for a friend they be overawed with the architecture and everything and then they will focus on who's this who's that who is this and what is this signify what is that signify and then I will try to explain to my very best ...God did not come here to like bring judgment. He bought us to spare our lives and like that, I start sharing the message so that one I feel very like practically you can it's an easy way to like tell people about God...oh yeah and over here another your lifestyle like for instance I don't drink and drinking in G.(name of country) it's like mandatory it's like culture if you don't drink they will look at you like what's wrong with you and then that way I've already like made few many people who is like question me like, why don't you drink and that opens up another way another door to like share what oh you have been brought up what values you have and how what God what you believe it and then then they become (name of country) in turn are very inquisitive they want to know and then they dive and dive deeper like why are you saying this and

These 139 words were further grouped together to form key strands which emerged as the major themes. Six major themes developed with varying ranges of importance among the participants. Figure 4.8 gives an approximate percentage value of the key themes in the light of the overall project. The summary of the six major themes based on the experiences of the participants are highlighted below:

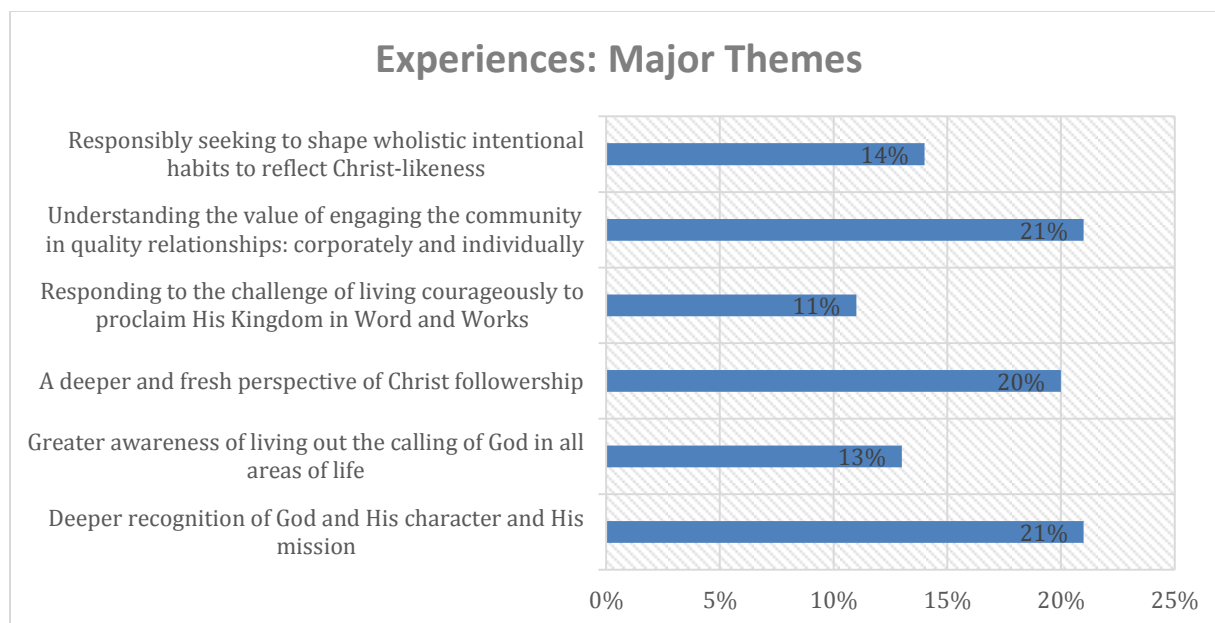


Figure 4.8: Major themes of Focus Groups

Deeper recognition of God and His character and His mission

The online program stimulated in the participants a distinct acknowledgement of God and His encompassing love, which was used by the participants.

- 1) **LRUAE**: "... he is always there with us since he is taking care of us. We rely on him and on him and we need his strength and his presence into our lives."
- 2) **DRG**: "...if you're in God's hands that nobody will be able to like harm you or take away what He has given you that that he will always be there for us."

- 3) **MMUAE**: "...closer to God and you know understand his purpose over my life you know it's not by mistake or by my plan or by my family plan that I am here. I believe it's all God's plan and you know in the coming days he has a greater plan for me...you know I don't fear...tomorrow my job will go... tomorrow you know this will happen that will happen, No! These sessions, has helped me to believe in God more no matter what happens God has a great plan for me at the same time you know I am working hard I am keeping God first so definitely God will not just leave me and you know put me in a situation I cannot come out but definitely God has planned everything."

Greater awareness of living out the calling of God in all areas of life

Another key understanding that was stressed by many of the participants was to express that following Christ was beyond "attending a church". Recurrently used were terms like "various fields of life", "all the time", "different things", "through your life" and "everyday action". The participants also shared the importance of living our God's purpose based on their current location.

- 1) **MMUAE**: "The main thing I've learned about this session is not only by going to church physically, being present in church every Fridays, but that's more like you spending your time alone with God in all your ways of life."
- 2) **EAUS**: "...made me more aware of the fact that especially that goes where the part comes what's the primary purpose in life ... what's the primary purpose in life, yeah, is to live for God and that's the primary thing."

- 3) **MAA**: “I need to make more effort to give more effort on getting on a preaching the word of law of God wherever I go, whoever I speak to...and be an influencer.”
- 4) **EAUS**: “...telling about God ... in everyday action that I can have not just maybe it's for Tuesday it's a Friday no it's an everyday walk that I can always have.”
- 5) **LRUAE**: “ ...whatever way I do I just express Jesus and every single thing...”

A deeper and fresh perspective of Christ followership

The participants used certain words frequently to express how this program helped them gain a fresh perspective on following Christ. Words like “reinforced”, “deepening of understanding”, “aware”, and “conscious” used by the participants echo this deeper learning. However, a few of the participants candidly stated that their walk with Jesus was “derailed” or “out of focus” before this program, and this experience brought them back to the Lord and ‘back in line’. While others found them grow in their passion to follow Jesus.

- 1) **ASC**: “...following Jesus is not just believing, or you know like, looking for Jesus only when you need him but going after him.”
- 2) **DRG**: “...whole program like bought me back ...let me focus right back, like to prioritize like what really happens, I'm like what is important. So, I was basically before the program like taking life as it comes like let's see what happens next like that but this program ... helped me prioritize what is what is what should come first instead of other things. The program helped me to like

know, what it means to be a like a real believer and it not just following a set of rules.”

3) **SSUS**: “... it was more of a deepening of understanding of what it is to be a Christian and to follow Christ.”

4) **JJUS**: “...we are called and whatever he is saying that if it's much more harder when you are making a committed stance to follow Christ that you stumble a lot...find a lot of opposition ... we need to persevere to the end. So, that's what my hope is in and that's you know but I think that's what I think it means to follow Christ.”

5) **LRUAE**: “I wanted basically in my journey with Lord I just wanted that YES coming out of me, with that strong faith that I'll do it for you Lord, I will do it for you, Lord. No matter what, how less I am in life doesn't matters, what matters is how much you want to give me in life.”

Responding to the challenge of living courageously to proclaim His Kingdom in Word and Works

The participants did acknowledge the importance of proclaiming His Kingdom publicly in bold public preaching, and equally important role of presenting Christ in acts of service. However, some of them admitted the challenge of doing so, especially in the multi-religious context they live in. Words like “move out”, “go and change”, “witnessing”, “spoke about God”, “evangelism”, and “tell good news” mirrored their honest desire to proclaim His kingdom.

- 1) **STF**: "...well, what we have as religious community, but also move out and actually show love in various fields of your life and not to be confined to just one area."
- 2) **SSUS**: "...being a catalyst, I think was a great culminating point in that journey of discipleship because it's like you get moulded and then you put out into the world to go and change."
- 3) **MAA**: "I feel is very important for me personally, because sometimes we are too afraid to speak to someone...I feel intimidated not to speak to a non-Christian about Christ ... would lose a friendship, well, you know things would go apart...but it's so important that you know we take those moments to encounter people. So, that you know you may not know by getting one by just getting one saved you can get hundred saved you know one could make a whole lot of difference to the others."
- 4) **EAUS**: "... I will use it to talk to people not just evangelize non-Christians, but then be a support to Christian friends ...I want to be more approach more non-Christians and tell them what their lot many people who have Christians names in US but don't know anything about Christ."
- 5) **ASC**: "... it's not easy it's very difficult here...ya, know it's not very easy here and it's too strict everything is strict... I can't I can't talk about Jesus..."

Understanding the value of engaging the community in quality relationships: corporately and individually

The participants shared how this program helped them understand the value of "showing love", "engaging with people", "being out with other people", "understand people", "not

ignore people” and “approach unbelievers”. Interestingly, three of the participants stated their goal as making people around them “wonder”, “curious”, “inquisitive” about their faith and lifestyle.

- 1) **LRUAE**: “... you made me understand about that thing that we need to first understand people for then to know them then to help them there to be with them and then lead them. I have been doing this twice or thrice doing this, it was very amazing.”
- 2) **ASC**: “...understand how to put up how to put up in front of other people like people who are not believers...how to follow Jesus and live with other people of different faiths and still follow Jesus... I started respecting them yeah it helped me like not ignore people yeah it it helped me this you know help me work out in certain areas of my life where I should invest my time and not like talking to taking time to talk to people.”
- 3) **STF**: “...a lot about just getting a better understanding and although some people might not know it's still important to not disregard but treat with an amount of not only respect but also love and care for ...that with the session sessions we had ...it all made me look into the caring for those part more seriously.”
- 4) **DRG**: “... I tried applying that whatever teachings it taught it then by my social life. I don't have much social life but, in my classrooms, and stuff and casually engaging in people, yeah, it was very it was helpful. It helped me like before that we had just a formal relationship, studies, asked for notes, you know it's, clear your academic doubts, and oh yeah that's it and then would

everybody would go their own way. So, but now yeah, I felt after like I tried to like engage with them when they had opened up because everybody's from different nationalities.”

- 5) **SSUS**: “...just to just you know, be more present with people around me which is something that I do and try to do but like I said this makes it more conscious ...”
- 6) **EAUS**: “...in a way, my life should be a mystery for them, to find what is that makes you happy what is it that is different in you so that could put my question in and I can share...”

Responsibly seeking to shape holistic intentional habits to reflect Christ-likeness:

The participants shared how the program set them thinking about the need to establish intentional habits, to holistically follow Christ. Most of them expressed the ‘practical’ aspects of the program and how it set them on a ‘course of action’ towards being a faithful Christ-follower. They referred to words like “new methods”, “simple things”, “systematic”, “goals” and “rule of life” to highlight their intention to formulate daily life habits.

- 1) **MAA**: “.... I would bless people just randomly but having a course of action like that, five habits, in indulging every day or every week every month in that that is something new again to the walk.”
- 2) **DRG**: “...in a very practical sense the whole study was very helpful... the sharpening and the lifestyle how you can alter.”
- 3) **SSUS**: “...biggest one, was when you shared yours, the way you had chalked out what you wanted to do in the next year and that was a very practical way

of going about achieving an aim writing it down on paper and it was a model of how you should chalk out what you want to do in the year. It was also very timely, because it came around the beginning of this year so around the time that you're preparing to you know launch into another chapter so that for me was very practical advice of how to walk out what was being taught before.”

- 4) **ASC**: “I wrote down certain goals ... lose weight and to be a better person and anger management and everything.”
- 5) **JJUS**: “... doing really simple things but profound things that is just you know so you know they take time you know. I really, it's not our want to do it, but the thing is our hesitation to how to start where to start so that's those are the questions I am facing you know.”

Final comments on observed changes

Based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments on the observed changes in the knowledge levels, personal attitudes and relational practices of the participants, few final comments can be made:

First, the knowledge levels were qualitatively deepened and reinforced, but the participants did not seem to express considerable impartation of fresh new knowledge. What can be debatably pointed out, is that greater the engagement of the participants with the literary contents of the program (for example: Gospel of John, E-book, or the session notes), the greater the expression of new information qualitatively.

Second, the personal attitudes did not reflect the substantial change, but resulted in greater awareness and responsibility. What can be argued is that these personal

motivations were inherently present in the participants and hence it did not change their attitudes noticeably.

Third, relational practices of the participants experienced the greatest impact qualitatively and quantitatively. Based on pre-test and post-test analysis, and focus groups responses, the participants expressed the shift in their relational practices to proactively influence their network of friends.

Summary of Major Findings

Several important findings emerged based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis. They are listed below and will be explained in detail in the final chapter.

- 1) Equipping international migrants to recognize the global mission of God has the potential to prepare catalytic mission-minded Christ-followers.
- 2) Engagement with the Bible is an important foundation for healthy discipleship for international migrants
- 3) Structured and methodical pathway of discipleship is a valuable process to provide spiritual formation
- 4) Intentional relational habits prayerfully nurtured build relationships with existing networks of relationships for creative influence for the Kingdom and life.
- 5) Active involvement in the key elements of an online discipleship program prompts vital personal encounters and emotions that are crucial for shaping God-honoring experiences and expressions in an international context.
- 6) Advanced pre-planning of the program, excellent formulation of the online sessions, and more follow-up after the program leads to greater fruitfulness

CHAPTER 5: LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter outlines the learning report of the project. The six major findings are presented as a synthesis of my personal observations, literature review, theological and biblical foundations. Based on these findings, the implications and impact on a local church ministry are distinctly stated. The complications that interfered with the intended design, the suggested changes for the program, improvements for the instrumentation, and the concerns towards the generalization of the project are clearly specified. The unexpected or surprise findings also helped gauge fresh perspectives towards the project. A vital piece was the important recommendations to be considered from this project for tomorrow's church, along with preliminary proposals for future research. I concluded with a short reflection on how this project impacted me and would form the rudiments of my future ministry.

Followers of Christ who migrated from Assembly of God Church Kolkata and moved to international urban centres to pursue a career or profession often lacked productivity in their own journey of faith or failed to become catalysts for His kingdom in their new international city. A vital need was for a formative local church program preparing a young Christ-follower to transition to a new life, in a new city and make Kingdom influence in his new community.

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an online six session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to increase the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of young international migrant believers from

the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in cross-cultural settings in international cities.

Major Findings

First Finding: Equipping international migrants to recognize the global mission of God has the potential to prepare catalytic mission-minded Christ-followers.

I formed a couple of biased perceptions, based on the global trends and local church realities (Stated in Chapter 1.) and constructed on my informal interactions with international migrants and national migrants from Assembly of God Church. First, migrants living especially in international urban centres would be lonely, prone to be far from God, and would not find time to participate in a local church and live in a meaningful community. Second, they would be more guarded about sharing their faith especially because of concerns of living in a multi-cultural and multi-religious community, with fears of endangering their student or work visa.

However, in my personal online interaction with the participants during the project, I was pleasantly surprised that the participants were keenly interested in their spiritual life, eagerly desiring to take necessary initiatives to stay connected to God and people. Most of the participants were willing to decisively address issues in their own lives which would hinder their spiritual formation. One of the participants, MMUAE, is aware of the limited freedom for the expression of his faith because of the political scenario in his country, was willing to make the necessary sacrifices to live out his faith. Most of the participants' personal life stories recognized how God opened doors for them to transition to the new country and the specific miracles God did in their new city.

The more I examined the statements of the participants based on the focus groups discussion protocol, I sensed a deep acknowledgement of God's presence in their lives and a passionate reliance on God in prayer for all areas of their lives. What the program accomplished, was to merely help them to 'connect the dots' (as MAA stated) in their personal lives to what God was doing. It seemed to me that more than people's initiatives towards God, there was a sense of God supremely at work orchestrating and permeating their life and their circumstances to draw them closer to His purposes. One of the participants, LRUAЕ, indicated how his passionate prayers for the housing situation of one of his Pakistani colleagues, resulted in God intervening supernaturally and enabled him to share Jesus with his friend. Another participant, STF, shared how God miraculously restored to him his bag and his bike which was lost in the new city. STF was reminded of God's care for him in the smallest details of his life.

These personal observations are an important preview to highlight two principles from the migration trends especially found in church history. First, churches and fellowships that diligently equipped migrants to be faithful disciples 'wherever they go', experienced unprecedented results of effective church plants in unreached cities of the world. Second, ongoing engagement and mentoring the immigrants by the local church results in greater influence in these new communities. Tereso Casino, Samuel Escobar, and Jehu Hanciles all tend to agree on the strategic role of migration towards fulfilling the mission of God. The primary fact is that the missionary God was in absolute control over the nations, and that hostile events and circumstances taking place around the world, cannot hinder the global mission of God (Casino 35).

John Stott's perspective on the mission of God is valuable to understand how we as the church would need to pursue "His mission" instead of galvanizing "our mission". As he stated, "Mission arises from the heart of God himself and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God" (Stott 335). A local church that is captivated with the image of God, the Father, dynamically pursuing His mission, is passionately engaged in preparing "global people" in a "global outreach". This preparation process follows the pathway of the Holy Spirit, who is "endlessly inventive" and refuses to "stay within the tramlines we set him" (Goodhew et al. Loc 661-666). This mission interestingly does not evolve with the Great Commission, in Jesus' mandate to his disciples (Matthew 28:18-20), but as reminded in Chapter 2, it started with God's call to Abraham to "go" and "be a blessing" and let "all nations" be "blessed through you" (Genesis 12:1-3). Every migrant going as a student or as a professional from Assembly of God Church, Kolkata to his international urban centre, has the potential to fulfil the call of the Abrahamic covenant.

Therefore, the implications of this finding for a local church in the Indian context, is that the church must "let go" and release their students and professionals, trusting God would want to use them more in His preferred mission location than in their local church. A program of this nature is a reminder to the participants and many others like them, of the valuable connection with the local church in their home city. A program of this nature provides a point of reconnection with the local church and the possibilities of rekindling a passion to serve God where they are located. This program works best, if they are in a setting where there is no church, or minimal opportunity to be involved in a fellowship. This was evident from the over-enthusiasm of the participants (MMMUA, LRUAE,

ASC, DRG) who had limited contact or opportunity to be involved in a local church because of their specific geographic location or the religious opposition in the country they had migrated to. In such a setting, if they are prayerfully disciplined online, we could consider the possibilities of starting a community of Christ-followers where none existed before.

However, if they are already involved in a church community, the program should seek to fan the flames of active immersion in the local church. “Over-connection” with the “home church” is not a healthy sign. A clear example of this overbearing engagement in the lives of the migrants exists with some of the South Indian churches that establish church planting networks across North India and even beyond. The migrants in the North Indian cities are encouraged to send their monthly tithes to their “home church” instead of the local church. Over-involvement to the local church in the host city is discouraged, as they would need to be faithful to the vision of the “home church”. This vision is communicated periodically by videocast on YouTube and other online platforms. I presented this scenario, just to understand the potential dangers of an online discipleship program conducted by a “home church” especially in a scenario where the migrant can attend a local church.

Another valuable consideration, is the comparative study presented by Paula Harris (as stated in Chapter Two) on the costs of training and sending “full-time” missionaries for global missions enterprises (Harris 33-50). In the future, a local church with a global mindset would be wise to consider the value of training and equipping students and professionals instead of “full-time” missionaries, as they potentially have a greater impact in a variety of locations at much lesser financial cost!

It was the pursuit of this “global mindset” that guided me in preparation for the final session of the ReBoot program entitled “*Rediscover the Catalyst in You – How do I follow Christ?*” Using John 20:21: “...*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,*” as the Johannine Commission (as stated in Chapter 2), I encouraged them to consider, that the participants are, “...like Jesus in this world. Where you are based in China, Germany, Dubai, France, Australia, or United States is not an accident. God has definitely placed you there so that the world might see Jesus through you.”

Second Finding: Engagement with the Bible as an important foundation for healthy discipleship for international migrants

Discipling urban youth in our church context, like in any other part of the world, can be an intensely emotional activity requiring patience and personal presence of the pastor or the leader. Often, in our church setting, when we think of “discipleship”, the primary format considered is enrolling the young person in Equip Tracks, which are classroom teaching sessions offered by the Assembly of God Church, followed by personal moments with the young person guiding him in his personal walk with Jesus. One of the most popular youth discipleship tracks offered by our church is called, RAVE Lifestyle Journey (RLJ), which requires the young person over a period of three months to attend twelve classroom sessions, along with other practical personal disciplines and other public missional church involvements. One of the personal disciplines is challenging them to read the New Testament within a period of three months with reading reports on each of the New Testament books. The purpose of this discipline was to inculcate a spiritual discipline of reading the Bible within each of these students. Alternatively, as a church we have varied forms of structured discipleship programs

available for different age structures to help them in their spiritual formation. My purpose to present this background, in the context of this finding, was to help us observe that “engagement with the Bible” in our context was not intentionally a valued foundation for discipleship. If it did happen, it was one of the “many” things that a young believer considered in his spiritual formation.

However, it was only during this project, that I realized the value of connecting international migrants foundationally to the scriptures as their basis for spiritual formation. Often, our themes and topics within a discipleship program can be forgotten or overlooked, but there is a unique “mystery” to the Word of God deposited into the lives of eager believers, which our rational mind often can fail to understand or grasp totally. My reading of Paul and David Watson’s book, *Contagious Disciple Making*, and the influence of scripture-reading on disciple-making was formative in this direction. A quantum step to understand the value of the engagement of the Bible and discipleship was our time with church planters in Thailand as part of our immersion international experience with Asbury Seminary. Disciple-making movements in each of the church plants, which has lasted beyond a generation, has a significant emphasis on scripture-reading for new believers.

I made a couple of valuable amendments to my online program to enhance the engagement with the Bible. First, I had the participants focus for the entire duration of the program on reading the gospel of John and invited them to consider what it means to follow Jesus based on the gospel of John. Second, my initial plan for my six sessions in my online discipleship program was to do a structured study of the notes I had prepared and emailed in advance to them. However, this shift in understanding made me change

the format of the online session, whereby the online session started with a reporting of their personal learnings from the gospel of John in the previous week as well as the lessons they learned in the notes I emailed to them. Following this introductory segment, I invited the participants to read a passage of scripture from the gospel of John, each participant reading a specific section, to help them recognize the foundational value of the scriptures in discipleship.

My analysis of the participants' focus groups discussions responses made me realize that more than any segment of the ReBoot Online Discipleship program, the personal engagement with the scriptures was of the most value to the participants. It confirmed my personal discovery that God's Word invested in the lives of the believers has a greater impact than any other systems of discipleship. The "mystery" is in the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit to use His written Word to speak into the specific situations of students and professionals located in any part of the globe. No discipleship program is of any value, if it fails to leave "center space" to the Holy Spirit to direct and govern the lives of the disciples.

A study of church history reveals that every time church leaders excluded lay people from reading and learning the Bible, the basis for personal discipleship was shattered (McCallum et al. Loc 862) That was one of the reasons, that David Watson considers engagement with the Bible through the Discovery Groups as an indispensable element if discipleship is to be successfully nurtured. He assertively stated that disciple-makers must first teach people in the Word of God so that they will know what to obey. (Watson and Watson 48) However, both Watson and Christopher Beard underline that this obedience to God's Word, is based on a love relationship with Him (John 14:15).

The natural outflow of this love relationship with the Lord requires us to embrace the mission of God the Father by being willing to understand the Biblical narrative of the *Missio Dei* (mission of God). Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians underscores that one of the key building blocks for the goal of the fullness of Christ in a believer's life is the "knowledge of the Son" (Ephesians 4:11-13). However, as Leslie Newbigin stated, the effort does not aim towards teaching Christ-followers the story of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed, recorded, and studied for knowledge's sake but to be mentally believed and assented upon (Newbigin loc 627). It is more purposefully seeking to be partakers of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and seeking to live out that experience in the twenty-first-century world.

James Samra provides a valuable pattern of discipleship, based on the gospels and the epistles. In the gospels, the disciples physically *followed* Christ by learning to be like Him and doing what He does. While, in the epistles, discipleship was *imitating* Christ by copying the lifestyle modelled by the disciples (Samra 224). In the twenty-first century, this pattern can be tangibly "fleshed out" by primarily reading the Bible and following His words. The study of the gospel of John provided the essential nexus, to accentuate this major finding. Jesus' invitation to experience Him as the "Bread of Life" beyond the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand in John 6, helps one to commit to following the "Words of life" (John 6:68). "Abiding in the True Vine" is possible when a Christ-follower chooses to obey His commandments (John 15:10). The role of the Holy Spirit is the vital link to provide the "spiritual" formation in the life of the believer through the reading of scripture. Eugene Boring's description of the role of the Holy Spirit, based on John 14-16, portrays that the Spirit would teach the disciples "all things" which includes

those perceptions which could not be shared with them during the days when the earthly Jesus was with them (Boring 453).

There is a two-fold significance of this finding, especially for a local church with a global mindset. First, one must trust God's Word to have a greater impact on the life of a believer than any systematic design of a discipleship program. Pastors must humbly pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to the disciples entrusted to their care, by opening their spiritual eyes to the truth of God's word and God would give the Christ-followers boldness to obey His Word. Second, the pastor must guide especially their international migrants to online resources, books, and apps which would help them to better understand the Scriptures. A wide range of websites and apps which would be quite valuable for young mobile Christ-followers are readily available. However, as a caveat, it's important to note that there are certain parts of the globe, which would make it illegal for the public reading of scripture or even ban online Christian resources or apps. For example, my ReBoot Bible plan on YouVersion app was inaccessible for ASC as the country he was located in banned and blocked the use of the app. Pastor Dean Curry, the lead pastor of Takoma Life Center, makes this valid point that our vibrant relationship with Jesus, the Living Word, must be our vital foundation even when the Bible in any format is inaccessible to us (Curry).

Eugene Peterson in his book, *Eat this Book*, articulates the primary premise of this finding:

The Christian Scriptures are the primary text for Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality is, in its entirety, rooted in and shaped by the scriptural text. We don't form our personal spiritual lives out of a random assemblage of favorite texts in

combination with individual circumstances; we are formed by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the text of Holy Scripture. God does not put us in charge of forming our personal spiritualities. We grow in accordance with the revealed Word implanted in us by the Spirit. (Peterson Loc 184-187)

Third Finding: Structured and methodical pathway of discipleship is a valuable process to provide spiritual formation

Once again, based on my personal observation in my local church context, discipleship as a program seemed to be a long process, and only those who had the time and energy could afford to be ‘discipled’. Most of our programs seemed to be tailor-made for young people who could schedule themselves to come to the physical venue of a church campus and was available to consistently attend these sessions. However, for mobile young professionals, like air hostesses or call center employees, or even for migrants who live out of the city or in another country, this traditional form of discipleship program cannot help them. First, their work or study schedules do not permit them to be regular in a church weekend service, and hence they are not able to be consistent in a program based at the church location. Second, because of the long duration of the program, students or professionals cannot meaningfully participate in it and as a result, they miss out on personal follow-up from the teacher.

This finding seems to be opposite of finding number two. Being subjectively and spontaneously led by the Scriptures seems to be of greater value than following methods or systems. It was only during the study of the project that I began to consider that individuals by nature can imprecisely be categorized to understand perspectives and concepts either descriptively or instinctively, or on the other side of the spectrum,

quantitatively or analytically. Some speakers and writers would consider it the “head” and “heart” dichotomy. Once again, my time in Thailand with the Asbury cohort helped develop my understanding as I realized that often in the Thai culture, knowledge and learning is received intuitively and personally, quite differently from the Western world. I began to make a clear distinction between how often some people love to learn by listening to stories and experiences, while others discover truths by rationally and methodically following a structure. In that respect, the Indian culture, based on my personal observation, is an interesting mix of both these categories. This discovery helped me in my preparation for the online discipleship program. The weekly session notes which were emailed to the participants, considered both these dimensions, going beyond a systematic structure to help the participants grow in their discipleship. It also presented personal life testimonies of the migrants and practical questions to help the participants to understand subjectively at a personal level. The online sessions with the participants, though it had a review of the session notes, focused on a Biblical passage, which was presented to the participants in an expository manner and guided them to evaluate their walk with Jesus at a personal “heart” level and not just at a “head” level.

Based on the responses I received from the focus groups discussion with the participants, most of the participants appreciated the systematic flow of the discipleship program. One of the participants, EAUS, stated:

...in the program everything was written down, categorized things, and categorize things that how I can improve myself then there is a method in it so that is helped like where I can write down my goals for this year and then different things that I aim for in my spiritual life my career life and all this thing I can write it down and

then have a systematic and an attainable way that has been one important thing about this course yeah.’

First, the participants appreciated the use of the ‘pyramid’ as a diagrammatic depiction (see Figure 5.1) of understanding their personal journey in discipleship. Second, they were glad that since there was a systematic presentation of doing discipleship, it could be a useful tool to teach new believers around them. Finally, from my personal observation, the discipleship program was for a duration of six weeks, which enabled me to keep it short and help provide sessions especially for migrants during their busy schedule. If required, these sessions could be conducted in any format: individually in person, in small groups or even conducted online.

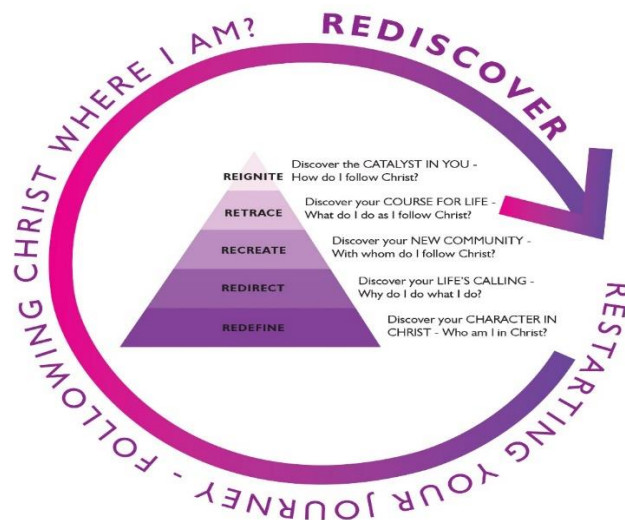


Figure 5.1: the Diagrammatic depiction of the ‘Pyramid’ of Discipleship

Reviewing the literature of this program, each of the authors, Chris Shirley, Christopher Beard, David Watson, and Richard Foster, provided a systematic and methodical framework for discipleship. The International Consultation on Discipleship,

considered discipleship as a ‘process’ that takes place within accountable relationships over a period of time for the purpose of bringing believers to spiritual maturity in Christ (R.Webber Loc 118). Seamands, presented the order within the Trinity as a crucial connection to encourage disciples to graciously follow Him. The Trinitarian circle of Father, Son and Holy Spirit was an open invitation to the ardent Christ-follower to enter into the life of the Trinity and be graciously included as a partner (Seamands Loc 68). Every believer needs to remember this framework offered by Seamands: a Christ-follower is invited to the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world (Seamands Loc 101). Discipleship based on the gospel of John, as reflected upon by different scholars, presents the value of a methodical journey towards becoming like Jesus. My presentation (as stated in chapter two) of the progressive journey from being an interested seeker to a fully committed follower of Christ, depicts the value of an orderly format of discipleship.

As I expressed in Chapter two, first, there is *spontaneity* which is evident from the way Jesus interacted with his twelve disciples as well as potential disciples. Second, there is *intentionality* which is apparent from the manner of Jesus’ discourses and his thematic teachings. Both these words: spontaneity and intentionality, seems like a strange blend, but John’s rhetoric and style in his gospel thrives on this unique paradox of discipleship. It fosters the power of the Johannine discipleship which makes it attractive for Christ-followers in any culture.

The value of this finding, in a local church, especially in its outreach to migrant communities, is to form and design discipleship programs which would consciously consider the needs of mobile students and professionals. The short duration of a program

and methodical arrangement of a discipleship program would find greater response and involvement from students and professionals who are living in urban centres and with a higher propensity for analytical and critical thinking.

Fourth Finding: Intentional relational habits prayerfully nurtured build relationships with the existing networks of relationships for creative influence for the Kingdom and life

At the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata, much of our existing discipleship curriculum does not seem to intentionally help believers to individually build relationships with people outside the church. If it did happen, it was more incidental than intentional. It seemed relationships were more developed by believers who had extrovert qualities, while others hoped their “quiet” lifestyle would reflect Christ. There were a couple of reasons for this seeming aversion for relationship building with the world outside. First, the “Pentecostal” focus on the dependence of the Holy Spirit for outreach and missions, would rather seek to be led by the Holy Spirit than waste time building relationships with people in the community. Also, building relationships seem to be a long drawn out process, with no guarantee for fruitfulness in the immediate future. Second, the roots of the Pentecostal denomination in the Holiness movement, which propagated a dogmatic theology that genuine Christ-followers should not “hang out” with unbelievers but should “come out from among them and be separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

From a local church perspective, relationship building happened more in the context of care groups, in group settings in home groups or ministry groups within the church campus. Individuals intentionally building relationships outside the church

campus to share life with existing networks of friendships was not a core value that Christ-followers in the Assembly of God church or the participants in my program has intentionally considered for their spiritual formation.

A vital concern that I wanted to address with the participants of my program was to help them to take the online discipleship program “beyond the online screen” and into the real world of people. I wanted to deliberately address the value of sharing life, whereby they seek to build networks among unbelievers. Firstly, a crucial element of the discipleship “pyramid” for me was helping the participants to build a community of friends where they lived. Most discipleship programs would emphasize only the significance of a relationship with “Christ” and how to discover your “calling”. But a crucial step in discipleship is seeking to share life with friends in “community”. Second, I encouraged them to read a short book written by Michael Frost, *The Five Habits of Highly Missional People*, to help them process the key steps of building relationships in the community(Frost). Third, I asked them to pray daily for three of their friends in their current networks and consider sharing what they are learning in this online program with any of them.

After the online discipleship program, my analysis of the focus groups’ responses seemed to clearly indicate the value of building relationships with a network of friends. The participants shared the value of this teaching and how it affirmed for some of them what they were already doing, while others considered this a new teaching which they have never considered before. At least two of the participants shared how they have prayerfully nurtured this quality and their dependence on God to guide them in building relationships with people.

Most of their individual stories on how they have developed relationships is quite motivating and inspirational, especially in their diverse international urban centres. Most of them are actively involved in small groups in connection with their churches. In fact, one of my participants, had to miss one of the ReBoot online sessions, because the session was pre-scheduled during the time when he had opened his home to host a prayer meeting and a fellowship meal. I was also pleasantly surprised, that the participants sincerely sought to be actively involved in the life of a local church, willing to make necessary sacrifices and adjust their schedules to eagerly seek Christian fellowship.

One of the challenges, international migrants need to overcome was the tendency towards a strong ethnic group consciousness especially with host societies and a sense of co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries (Casino 30). These inclinations help international migrants prevail the initial pangs of transition to a new city, but I am concerned that often it sets them in a cocoon from any missional influence. As addressed in Chapter two, every international migrant expresses his life in a new city in a synthesis of three frameworks (see figure 5.2): Faith journey, public life, and his community. The participants of the online program confirmed this blend of frameworks, and how it was helpful for them to process their current journey in their new city. It is essential to identify the importance of proactively seeking to engage one's community with meaningful acts of relationship-building.

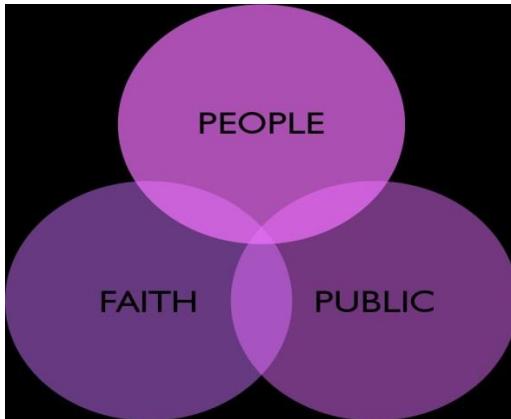


Figure 5.2: International migrant’s life framework

Therefore, based on the focus of this project, discipleship in a cross-cultural setting in the twenty-first century can lean towards an extensive use of digital media to “grow” in their personal faith journey and even missional outreach. But, as stated in Chapter Two, Meadows warns against considering digital culture as the ultimate solution to reach the world with the gospel, because of its obvious limitations. He states that despite the advantages of “telepresence”, there is “no substitute for the embodied presence of friendship that can be tasted, smelled, and touched.” The normal process of identity formation in real relationships shows the inadequacies of constructed identities on an online platform. Also, carefully distinguishing the difference between representations and real persons, sharing messages and mutual intimacy, virtual transparency and fully human authenticity, multiple connections and meaningful relations, and easy contacts and costly friendships (Meadows 169).

The community which exists within the Trinity for mission depicts the theological framework for this finding. This relationship within the Trinity presents a dynamic missional emphasis in its relationship to the world (Wright Loc 3929)” Wright describes

this Trinity as the “sending God” where God the Father sent the Son and the Spirit; the Son sent the Spirit and the Apostles and the Spirit sent Jesus and the Apostles (Wright Loc 3929-3940). As stated in Chapter 2, following the pathway of the Holy Spirit, is vital for an international migrant as he prayerfully seeks to build relationships for kingdom influence. It’s worth asserting again the key theological framework as presented by Michael Moynagh and P. Harrold, in the context of the Fresh Expressions Movement in the United Kingdom: Being missional, contextual, formational, and ecclesial (Moynagh & Harrold Loc 199-204). Though these four factors are considered in the background of the fresh expressions, it would be useful to consider how these basic watchwords could provide the personal paradigm for an immigrant to consider discipleship in a cross-cultural setting. First, the migrant can be *missional* by following the pathways of the Holy Spirit to engage with individuals and people groups who are not Christ-followers. Second, the migrant can be *contextual* by seeking to fit into the culture of the people they live and work or study with. Third, the migrant can be on a *formational* journey with believers and unbelievers aiming to be like Christ and serve like Christ. Finally, the migrant can be *ecclesial* towards creating communities or living in a community that establishes the mission of God where there is no reign of God.

The gospel of John presents in John 13, the best example for relational intentional habits in all the gospels when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and invites his disciples to do likewise (John 13:12-17). Jesus makes it clear that following Jesus requires the follower to walk in love with other Christ-followers. When international migrants prayerfully and intentionally initiate steps to demonstrate Christ’s love to believers and even sceptics, the world will be drawn to Jesus. I am convinced, based on

my reflection of this project and the eager responses of the participants, that discipleship is made real in relationships outside the precincts of a local church campus or a classroom setting.

Fifth Finding: Active involvement in the key elements of an online discipleship program prompts vital personal encounters and emotions that are crucial to shaping God-honoring experiences and expressions in an international context.

My primary expected outcome of the ReBoot Online Discipleship Program was two-fold: First, help the international migrants to grow in their walk with Jesus. My desire was that they would seek to be deeply committed to their followership of Jesus and understand crucial elements of Biblical discipleship. Second, prepare the migrants to be more effective in their Christian witness. Effectiveness in witness would be a natural outflow of one's relationship with Jesus, which seeks to reflect Christ in lifestyle, acts of service, and boldly proclaim Jesus in the community. In my design of the content and context of the program I endeavoured to closely follow this desired outcome. The ReBoot discipleship pyramid, foundationally, aimed to shape the personal relationship of the migrant based on the character of Christ. Based on this foundation, the pursuit was for a catalytic Christ-follower who would honor God and serve people in His experiences and His expressions.

During the facilitation of the online program, my personal moments online with the participants, and even my analysis of the focus groups discussions, I sensed a few interesting unrelated outcomes. First, the different elements of the online program stirred different emotions in the life of the participants during these six weeks. These emotions extended to different spheres of the migrant's life: memories of personal life experiences

back in the home city, reminiscences of lessons learned in home church, and even perspectives of religious expressions in the home country. All these emotions were voiced in comparison to their current life scenario in the new city. Given below are a few of the emotions expressed:

- 1) **EAUS**: "...far from home and far from the comfort of people that I know"
- 2) **DRG**: "...coming here especially in Germany life gets a little bit depressing over here because you can't socialize much because of the language and the people themselves are a bit cold they were so so a sense of loneliness...and... some stuff like it happens it's natural when you're new to country where you don't know anyone you can't talk to anyone so you start feeling yeah what what did I do make a mistake and stuff like that ..."
- 3) **LRUAE**: "...Pastor Cynthia used to teach us and you know exactly like Rock solid ...like I felt I was back to Rock solid classes. ...like I am back to the basics."
- 4) **MAA**: "...even in India I had walked in a bar...friends non-believers had a good time with them and show them that these are my values and when they asked me about about my values I shared the Lord with them."
- 5) **MMAUE**: "...my Scenario of work it's not like honestly you know being in a place like UAE so what to speak little about facts like you know you cannot which is we are aware which you know and you know like we don't have the freedom to you know even hold churches in any kind of building it is limited like you know hotels now before it was allowed in Schools now it is not

allowed so out here you know you cannot like so freely go out and share about Jesus”

Second, I noticed that the program also encouraged vital encounters during these six weeks. These encounters (as already described in Chapter 4), once again emerged in different spheres of the migrant’s life: deeper encounters with God, personal encounters with individuals, encounters in small groups, and encounters to promote the veracity of the reboot program. These emotions and encounters experienced by the participants were divulged usually during personal moments with me as the organizer and rarely during the formal facilitation of the online program. An illustration of the transparency of these personal moments occurred when one of the participants, who came home to Kolkata during the semester break in his college and needed to have a makeup session with me in person. During this makeup session, he frankly expressed the real status of his faith journey before the start of the program. He was struggling to follow Jesus especially in an international setting with limited opportunities for vibrant public witness, and he had hit rock-bottom in the conduct of his public testimony. He struggled with a few vices, which made his ‘Christian’ friends condemn him, and drew him even further away from following Jesus. He confessed, the ReBoot program, was exactly what he needed to help him on the path to recovery.

These “emotions” and “encounters” which were activated within the participants because of the online program, drew them to seek God-honoring experiences and expressions. However, there can be no planned methodical system to be strategically implemented to ensure this awakening of these emotions and encounters. It is a work of

grace based on the study of God's word, graciously stirred by the Holy Spirit leading these migrants towards His desired mission.

Cohen, expresses the emotional challenges of the migratory transition explicitly: ...they are often traumatically dispersal from an original homeland; they leave their homeland in search of work, pursuit of trade, or to further colonial ambitions; they share a collective memory and myth about the homeland; and they possess an idealization of the supposed ancestral home. There is also a return movement or at least a continuing connection observed among them. They tend to have a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and a troubled relationship with host societies... (Cohen 161-162)

Brian Seim, Roger Waldinger and Jehu Hanciles in their writings state the wide gamut of the challenges faced by a migrant starting life in a new international city. However, Hanciles and Arthur Walls, presents the pivotal role that these emotions and encounters enable the migrant to become in a new setting. Andrew Walls makes an argument about the uniqueness and the survival traits of Christianity, it's because of its capacity to expand across cultural frontiers in a manner that renders "each new point on the Christian circumference...a new potential Christian centre" (Walls, "Missionary Movement" 22). Hanciles also records that Christianity is a migratory faith, and migration movements have been a functional element in its growth. (Hanciles, "Migration and Mission" 149).

As stated in Chapter Two, the specialized branch of theological studies, diaspora missiology is a missiological framework to understand and be involved in God's redemptive mission among people living outside their place of origin. (Lausanne

Committee for World Evangelization) In a sense, this dedicated focus on the diaspora in theological studies is a key initiative to better understand the migrants' emotions and encounters in a cross-cultural setting and make them effective towards fruitful experiences and expressions. Enoch Wan's book, *Diaspora Missiology*, is a vital resource to better understand the migrants' lifestyle in migration.

The Gospel of John, the main textbook for the online discipleship program, is a series of encounters and eruption of emotions, which culminate in God-honoring experiences and expressions. As stated in Chapter Two, the purpose statement of the Gospel of John was, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31).

The "signs" in John's gospel are a sequence of emotions and encounters shared with the Son of God. The miracle at Cana, feeding the 5000, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead are examples of how the emotions of people were activated in their encounters with Jesus. The response of Jesus and His intervention to bring healing and transformation in each of these lives resulted in confessions of faith. According to Alan Culpepper, each of these signs are "recognition scenes" giving an opportunity to the characters in the story or the reader, the choice to recognize the true distinctiveness of Jesus as the Son of God. These signs are "exposures of that mark of Jesus' true identity which the we-voice of the prologue claimed to have seen (1:14)" (Culpepper, "Cognition" 253).

What is the consequence of this finding to an online discipleship program? The value of helping international migrants to honestly share their emotions and nudge them towards encounters is vital to lead them to our desired outcome. Three practical steps would be important to ensure this specific direction. First, increase personal interactions with the migrants on the online platform during the program. These personal interactions should be spontaneous through text messages or phone calls or social media, and not necessarily stringently programmed and structured. Second, allow migrants to freely share their personal memories and recollections. Once again, these moments cannot be deliberately planned, but the facilitator would need to prayerfully invite the Holy Spirit to lead the conversations and work in the hearts of the participants. Finally, commission the participants to share the learnings from the online program with their closest friends. This charge mentally prods the participants to relate to people around them and generates worthwhile encounters.

Sixth Finding: Advanced pre-planning of the program, excellent formulation of the online sessions, and more follow-up after the program leads to greater fruitfulness

Serving with students and young professionals for the last sixteen years, especially between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five in urban centres, I recognized three qualities of young people in the context of programs and events. First, they appreciate excellence and creativity in the presentation of programs. Second, they value the depth and quality of the sessions presented to them. Finally, they are grateful if the dates of the sessions are notified to them in advance and clearly made aware of the expectations and requirements of the program.

Recognition of these qualities made me systematically work towards making the program excellent in presentation and delivery. I requested the help of our church graphic designer to help with the designing of the session notes. I designed and emailed a PowerPoint presentation in advance to the participants to help them process certain elements of the program. I created a Team Google Drive (titled ReBoot) where all the files of the program would be available for the participants from any device. I created a ReBoot Bible Plan on YouVersion Bible app to help them process their study of the gospel of John. For each of the sessions, I sent them in advance short one-minute videos, which I personally created, to prepare them for the online session. I equipped a Media Assistant to help me with the technical requirements of the sessions and facilitate the PowerPoint presentations for each of the online sessions.

In my preparation for the online discipleship program, I was mindful of the additional skills required to facilitate the online sessions and I tested my capacity and experimented with the online tools in a variety of ways. I serve as the youth director for the Assemblies of God North India (AGNI) leading the youth movement for a network of 1300 churches. I organized online mentoring sessions with my core team of leaders using Google Hangout. I was also coordinating a South Asia Youth Leaders event, which required me to administer and organize the event with a core team of leaders. Once again, I used online tools over a period of four months to plan towards this event. However, as I conducted the weekly online sessions, I experienced multiple hurdles (which I describe under “Limitations”), which did not allow me to implement the sessions in the exact format I originally envisioned. I also discovered that the speed of the internet and the specific country of a participant is a determining factor in the quality of

the interaction. I had formulated a plan for ensuring attentive involvement of the participants in the online sessions. The forty-five minute online sessions had the following outline: 1. Introductory Questions from me as the facilitator, 2. Responses by the participants, 3. Collaborative reading of the scripture passage, 4. I lead the discussion in describing the Bible passage, 5. Any feedback from participants, 6. Concluding remarks, 7. Participants shares their personal prayer requests, and 8. I conclude in prayer.

At the end of the online program, in my personal interactions with the participants, they expressed a desire for continual periodic contact with them to help them grow in their journey. Even the responses from the focus groups discussions, helped me discern that the participants would like to intentionally practice their faith and they desired a continuing connection with me on an online platform. It was a mentoring opportunity for me to listen to their joys and concerns and equip them for effective Christian leadership.

A critical discovery as a subset of this finding was the possibilities of integrating group online interactions with personal one-on-one sessions for enhanced discipling and mentoring moments. My original structure for the online program proposed six group sessions which would bring together all the ten participants together at a time suitable for all of them. However, because of several complications (explained under the “Limitations” section), I ended up doing numerous personal one-on-one sessions. This seemingly critical deviation from the intended design was welcomed by most of the participants, as it gave them an opportunity to personally interact with me and it helped them in their discipleship and mentoring.

Mark Lamport, Melinda Thompson, and Robert Danielson in the Literature Review provided important perspectives towards coordinating an online program. Lamport describes Paul's modelling of spiritual nurture from a distance and its implications for spiritual formation. With the gospel as the foundation, based on the authority of scriptures and individually praying for the Roman Christians, Paul provided the basis for discipling believers from a distance. Lamport, explores avenues for online programs like weekly encouraging devotionals on email or text message, phone call prayers, discussion board forums, weekly announcements to clarify expectations, personalize connections through Skype and social media and face-to-face meetings if the opportunity arises.(Forrest and Lamport 119-122). Thompson recommends that the right course design can be the key to create the online environment that provides the support participants of diverse cultures and ethnicities often need. As stated in Chapter Two, Danielson makes this key comment which captures the need of the hour to focus on the quality of the online course:

The world of online teaching is currently full of examples of poorly done or mediocre classes. The challenge of teaching cross-cultural principles to students in multiple contexts is a reality that has not been frequently addressed. As we forge ahead with teaching missions online, we need to be committed to finding ways over this hurdle. Equally, we must remain committed to teaching with excellence, remembering that our task ultimately has eternal, as well as pedagogical, repercussions. (Danielson 218)

An important responsibility for the success of the online program lies with the facilitator's willingness to stay in touch with the participants intimately and informally

beyond the program. Discipleship as Robert Webber stated was to “follow after” Jesus as a lifelong journey based on the Hebraic concept of journey and walk (R.Webber 22). The execution of an online program does not necessarily guarantee effective disciples, but continued follow-up with participants provides for them a guide and mentor who would concertedly lead them in the path of discipleship. As Aaron Wheeler stated, the need is for strategies that look beyond just conversion but seeks growing, healthy disciples (Wheeler 161). As stated in Chapter two, Stephen Moore makes a valid point about Johannine discipleship which is important for the formulation of this online program:

Johannine characterization...is entirely Christocentric. Jesus is a static character in the Fourth Gospel...The functions of the other characters are to draw out various aspects of Jesus' character by supplying personalities and situations with which he can interact, and to illustrate a spectrum of alternative responses to him...Such characterizations are strategically oriented towards the reader, pushing him or her also towards a decisive response to Jesus. (Moore 49)

However, my research, did not sufficiently address two areas in connection to this finding. First is the importance of a longer duration of a follow-up process for an online discipleship program. Just like in a traditional format of discipleship, online discipleship also needs specific plans for follow up after the program. *Leading Small Groups in the Way of Jesus* by Scott Boren and *Organic Discipleship* by Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery are recent resources I studied which would help process concepts towards this follow-up. Second is a methodology to successfully conduct an online session with a detailed outline of the technological and logistical requirements of the program. *The New Media Frontier* edited by John Mark Reynolds and Roger Overton and *Conducting an*

Online Focus Group by Jeanine Stancanelli provides resources and perceptions to have a better understanding of conducting an online session.

Discovery vis-à-vis the nature of an ‘Online’ Program

In this discussion I confer the importance of considering appropriate online platforms for different contexts and countries based on laws and internet apps applicable to them respectively. I had basic assumptions in preparation for the online program. First, I anticipated internet connections globally would be better than India, at least in the urban centres I was focusing on. Second, I assumed that online applications for social networking would work uniformly in each of these urban centres. Third, I presumed that the age category I was focusing on between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five would be much better poised to navigate online forums in any format. Unfortunately, as I experienced during the facilitation of the online program, all these three assumptions were shattered at different levels.

Within India, with the launch of a new internet provider called JIO in 2016, at unbelievably low tariff rates, internet speeds have considerably improved with internet access available even for the poor. Trushar Barot in his article, *The Jio-Fication of India*, presents the JIO story and its implications for the future (Barot).

In my facilitation of the online sessions, I experienced a few complications which changed considerably the format of my sessions (These complications are explained in detail in the “Limitations” section of this chapter). The change of the format affected the quality of the online conversation and interactions with the participants. For example, ASC, could not access Google Hangout, and I had him join my sessions on a WhatsApp Video chat on my mobile phone. MAA, could not log in for a session, on the online link I

had generated for him, though he had no issues with the previous sessions. I discovered that each of the countries where my participants currently lived in, had internet speeds which were exceptional to their setting, and even unique legislations which banned certain social media online apps. Another discovery was the changing technical requirements of online applications even within a few weeks of time. For example, I was dependent on the Google Hangout video chat format using the Google Calendar to work precisely in the manner I had formerly used for my pilot tests. However, for my first session, I discovered that the Google Hangout Video chat format had changed its features and was available as a Hangout App on the Youtube.com website.

Therefore, at the conclusion of the program, I made a few personal observations regarding the technical aspects of this program. First, running prior tests of each participant's apps and online forums before the program started would have been helpful. It would have helped me prepare appropriately for each of the participants unique situation based on each person's specific situation and need. Second, no one online delivery system works for all the participants uniformly. Finally, not all of the participants were as tech-savvy about on online forums as I anticipated, and they needed to be coached and guided on certain essentials of the online program.

One of the recommendations I had considered before I started the program was the use of quality video conferencing software like Zoom or GoTo Meeting. Would the use of this software help in getting better connectivity or better online interface? For a couple of reasons, I negated the use of video conference software for my online program. A major factor was my limited financial budget which did not permit me to purchase upgraded versions of this software. Use of these applications had limited free versions

which would not be suitable for my online program. Secondly, as I discovered during the facilitation of this program, the fluctuation of the internet speeds and different legislation in different countries did not help the use of this software.

P.R. Meadows, Melinda Thompson, Mark Lamport and Robert Danielson provided important cultural perspectives and theological framework to understand the design of online platforms for the facilitation of online discipleship programs. However, my literature review failed to adequately address two issues: First, a brief study of the international internet legislation in the specific countries my participants were living in and second, the trending online apps in each of the urban centres of the participants and the changing trends and features of the apps.

As stated in chapter two, David Goodhew, Andrew Roberts and Michael Volland describes the creativity of the Holy Spirit in the following manner:

In a helpful image, Tom Smail likens the Holy Spirit to an artist whose subject is the Son but who is endlessly creative in the ways he depicts that subject. The Holy Spirit operates in the same way as artists like Monet or Van Gogh, whose many pictures of haystacks or sunflowers are each subtly different. The Church is not endlessly pluriform for it is rooted in Christ. But it is endlessly inventive, because it is filled with God's breath – the Holy Spirit – who will not stay within the tramlines we set him. This makes sense of the huge variety of Christian churches both across the world now and across the past 20 centuries. They are related to each other but different. (Goodhew et al. Loc 661-666)

Implementation of an online program requires us to follow the pathway of Holy Spirit, who is always fresh with new ideas and constantly seeking to operate beyond fixed

standards we set for Him or for ourselves. By unquestioningly following where the Spirit leads, often in ways neither premeditated, branded, nor understood, the church acts out the hope that it is given by the presence of the Spirit who is the living foretaste of the kingdom (Newbigin Loc 897-899). The key is to understand the context of a location and prayerfully understand the culture in using tools and resources which bring maximum impact. It is vital to remember the Johannine Commission, as advocated by John Stott, which seeks to be incarnational by being with others and vulnerable (Stott 3). This vulnerability enables us to seek the specific circumstances of our participants and being willing to understand which format of online technology would be of most value to them.

The journey of discipleship is not presented as a systematic and methodical pathway towards Jesus, but a spontaneous, often impulsive personal journey which is unique to each person. However, as stated in Chapter Two, there is no ambiguity in the message. The central character of the narrative, Jesus Christ, calls for a choice between belief and unbelief, and the effects of either choice are clear (Conway 324).

This discovery helps the local church notice the need for discipleship and mission to be strategized with the knowledge that we need “different strokes for different people.” Even as the twenty-first century presents the potentials of technology explosion and knowledge exposure, it also requires wise leaders within the church to reflect theologically and contextually on the appropriate mediums for different kinds of audience.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

Based on the above six findings in the light of the project, there are key implications that impact the knowledge levels of how a church perceives discipleship and

mission and migration. They also impact the corporate attitudes and relational practices of the church family.

First, the local church should be captivated with the hope that its members who are not physically present on a Sunday morning because their education or employment takes them elsewhere, they can *'be the church'* somewhere else in the world. In this connection, when migrant students or professionals leave a church and transition to another city, it's no longer a loss for the local church, but they have the possibilities of impacting new communities in other parts of the world. A local church that provides spiritual formation for migrants intentionally and prayerfully, prepares catalysts to fulfil the global mission of God. The church, as the New Testament defines it, is not a religious institution but rather a dynamic community of believers who participate in the way of Jesus and his work in this world (Hirsch and Frost Loc 656-658). When the church sends out a missionary or a church planter, it publicly prays for them in the church service, but why is it that very rarely does the church publicly send out students and professionals as global church planters?

Second, the local church should put primary emphasis on the Word of God as the basis for discipleship. Every local church needs to challenge every believer to the reading and learning of the Bible. We need to encourage believers to consider different formats and methods of reading scriptures. In the twenty-first century, we should expose our younger believers to consider using online Bible apps and digital Bible reading plans. Leadership teams should creatively use Scriptures and engage with their church believers using social media private groups and online platforms. The purpose of this scripture emphasis, as Eugene Peterson states, is to ensure that every Christ-follower is reading the

Scriptures not as an activity discrete from living the gospel but one integral to it. It means “letting Another have a say in everything we are saying and doing” (Peterson Loc 56).

Third, the practical ramifications of using a methodical discipleship program as designed for this project are manifold. Following are a few of the possibilities: 1) Invite every believer in the church to consider following this six-week discipleship program to help them evaluate their own faith journey. 2) Ask every believer to personally lead a fellow believer or a new believer in this program. 3) Facilitate an online discipleship program with mobile professionals living in different parts of India. I am especially focusing on flight stewards, air hostesses, call-centre employees and many others in this category who cannot attend a Sunday morning service because of their work timings. 4) Facilitate an online discipleship program with students or professionals who have migrated to different parts of India. 5) Train pastors and leaders to personally mentor believers and take them on a structured format of discipleship.

Fourth, when every Christ-follower lives as the ‘salt of the Earth’ and ‘light of the World’ and the ‘city on the hill’ (Matthew 5:13-16), the possibilities are dynamic. The more that disciples prayerfully nurture relational habits with people around them, the more they rub shoulders with the world, and the more they have an opportunity to share life in Christ. The “fullness of life” that radiates from a Christ-follower has better possibilities of attracting the interested seeker to Christ than any attractional event can.

Fifth is the value of a preparing a local church system that is available to listen, care, and pray with international migrants. Scott Boren in his book, *Leading Small Groups in the Way of Jesus*, provides a systematic pattern of leading a small group in a local church. In that context, he makes this valid point, “Most of the things that lead

groups into great experiences do not depend on our ability to do a technique properly.

While how-to training is a good thing, real breakthroughs in people's lives almost always call for something other than technique" (Boren 33). The author unfolds the need to meet a person individually and adapt as necessary based on the person's need. Programs that are formulated must be based on the migrant's personal needs, reveal sensitivity and understanding of the person's emotions, and demonstrate loving care for each participant.

Finally, the local church must discern the needs of its own context and discipline itself to strategically conduct programs of this nature. These online discipleship programs can be conceived and developed within a city, within a country, and even beyond national borders. It establishes the value of relationship building and mentoring via digital screen beyond church walls. It also reinstates the fact that discipling for spiritual formation and mentoring for leadership development can happen beyond classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

Complications to the intended design

There were a few complications that interfered with the successful implementation of the program in its original intended design.

First, the *time zone* differences of the ten participants made it difficult for the original plan of having all ten of them participate on one online platform. None of the sessions could be arranged with the designated time on Saturdays at 9:00 a.m. IST (India Standard Time) with all the participants. While few of the participants could make it for this specific time slot, I had to plan for make-up sessions with most of the participants throughout the week. It took close to thirty sessions to complete these six sessions

(Figure 5.3 shows the breakdown of the online sessions over the six weeks. Kindly, look at Appendix E to note the schedule of online sessions.)

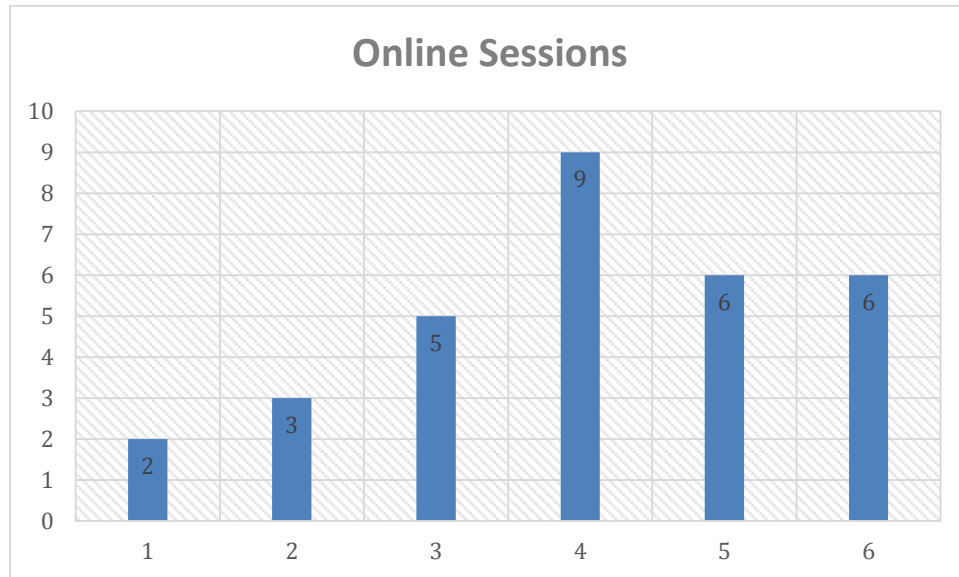


Figure 5.3: Breakdown of online sessions over six weeks.

Second, the *internet speed* was a major hurdle to be overcome. A few of the participants had slower internet speed based on their location or country or data connection. Therefore, it interfered with quality video and audio online group conversations. Several of the sessions with a few of the participants, had to be conducted in the audio mode as the internet speed was weak, or the participant made an international call to me and I conducted the session on a normal phone call.

Third, the *software issues* faced by the participants made it complicated for the participants to absorb attentively. At least three of the participants were blocked out from Google Hangout/YouTube channel by the law of their respective countries. Two of the participants had to navigate with mobile devices which had older software which could

not run the Google Hangout application. One participant had a broken mobile screen which made it difficult to engage in discussion with the other participants.

Fourthly, the *busy season* during which this program was conducted online, made it intricate for devoted involvement and committed attendance of the participants. The program started on 9th December 2017 and was completed on 13th January 2018. During this season, two of the students in the program came back home to Kolkata for their college holidays, so they participated in at least two of the sessions while they were in Kolkata. Some of the working professionals, had additional work commitments during this season, and they could not attend the sessions at the designated time or even fulfil a few of the readings of the session notes. As the researcher, this was also busiest season as a pastor, with a series of pastoral commitments: Christmas outreaches, weddings, funerals, New Year programs and similar events. The six sessions and the makeup sessions had to be scheduled amid these commitments for the participants and for the researcher.

Fifth, the *short duration* of the program, made it difficult to practice few of the components of the program especially in the busy season. As expressed by the participants themselves, it required at least a month to engage proactively in a few of the elements and experience its results.

Finally, the *voluntary nature* of a distance program has a drawback whereby the participants have no compulsion to fulfil some of the requirements because it is not a formal curriculum program. Though the participants may have had every good intention to fulfil its requirements, often their study and work commitments took priority over the voluntary program.

Suggested Changes for Future

The participants recommended a few changes to improve the quality of the program. The recommendations are outlined as follows:

- 1) **STF**: definitely the time difference... if there was nothing... there were no such thing such as time zone

(Possibility of working out the time difference between participants!)

- 2) **ASC**: ... that the timing I mean the rest was good

(everything was good, except the time factor)

- 3) **MAA**: ...and maybe the six weeks is too short for us to implement most of all within the six week I may not have met that same group of people that I'm talking to you about also so I don't get the chance to practically ...it's good it's a six-week program ...should give at least one month time for us to put it into practice.

(importance of giving more time for the participants to practice the lessons in the program).

I would suggest that the notes that you had given to us you should have asked us to return back ...so that would give you more information... I would suggest probably after the session just a five minutes... maybe one or two just one or two questions.....what you are trying to find out from that session you know...quickly... finish... can you please fill up these two sessions these two questions ... that would be much more helpful for you

(Allowing the participants to share their feedback on the questions asked in the session notes)

- 4) **DRG:** keep checking in like it's very easy to like during the program say yes, I will do this yeah okay okay but then when we are left alone that when that's when the real stuff, so a timely check-in sometimes would be good.

(Ongoing connection with the participants after the program)

- 5) **JJUS:** I liked your material and then the study what I felt was we got really less like...though went through the notes and all that I mean I always think if it would have been more you know those questions which we were ..when I was looking at the notes I thought like you know I had to finish this and do that but you know I felt that maybe you know if you were to put these headers or something like that that would a made me think or something and then we would have talked about it anyway when we had our sessions so that's just a thought...right so it seemed like we'd really did not cover a lot so we like really glossed over some stuff so you know if we really had everything concise then we would have really covered everything with it.

(The material in the session notes were not specifically covered in the online sessions in its entirety. Covering the session notes and allowing time for feedback would have allowed more focused study)

Based on their feedback, and my personal observations, I would plan for the following changes if the program was repeated:

First, I would plan for pre-session individual orientation for the participants regarding the different elements of the program. During this orientation process, I could also run a series of tests, on the online applications and format and gauge which works best for each participant.

Second, I would plan and schedule in advance for a combination of group sessions and individual sessions. Out of the six sessions of the discipleship program, three could be assigned to group sessions while the other three could be individual sessions.

Third, I would use of the structure of the session notes as the main content for the online sessions. It would help the participants to process the session notes better. The online session could conclude with a brief study based on the Bible passage. During the online session, time could be carved out for responses to the 'Feedback questions' in the session notes.

Fourth, I would look at the possibility of submission of two assignments to be incorporated into the program to help them process the program better. The first assignment can be a two-page essay on their key learnings from the Gospel of John. The second assignment could be the submission of their rule of life.

Finally, I would include a schedule for two follow-up sessions, once a month for two months, after the official conclusion of the program. This would help the participants to be more accountable to me as the facilitator on the follow-up steps they have taken after the program and share their personal learning experiences.

Improvements in the Instrumentation

Based on my experience with the use of the quantitative and qualitative instruments used for the project analysis, I would suggest the following changes:

First, make a slight change in Questions 14, 16, and 17 in the pre-test and post-test surveys. Based on my personal observation of each of the responses of the participants for the pre-test and post-test, I strongly feel that the participants were

confused on the appropriate response to give to each of these questions. The graph for each of these statements dipped in comparison to the other statements for the personal attitudes queries. I would change the questions to be stated accordingly: Question 14 was, “Leading other to follow Jesus requires me to die to my own plans.” I would change it to read, “Leading other to follow Jesus is a sacrificial calling.” The wording in question 16 was, “My work place/university provides an opportunity to live out my walk with Jesus. I would change it to, “I am called to live for Jesus in my work/place university. Question 17 was “I am motivated to have a small group of friends with whom I can share my life. I would change it to “I need to have a small group of friends with whom I can share my life.”

Second, I would consider a different format of questions within the pre-test and post-test surveys. I would probably add a section of questions with short descriptive answers which gauges better their responses to this program.

Third, I would contemplate replacing the qualitative instrument of Focus Groups Discussion Protocol with a semi-structured interview protocol. Conducting Focus groups online was a tough proposition, as it was dependent on a variety of factors like group scheduling and internet speed. Semi-structured interview protocol would give better flexibility in conducting the qualitative instrument.

Finally, I would add a qualitative instrument of a participant journal, whereby each of the participants submits personal responses to each session’s experiences and insights. This would give deeper and holistic perspectives on their gleanings from the weekly sessions. However, the volume of data collected would significantly increase for data analysis.

Generalization

For the ReBoot online discipleship program to be broadly applied in other contexts, there are a few considerations:

First, internet speed and related internet legislation in different countries determines the quality of the sessions in international urban centers. The program works best within one country in the same time zone. Multiple time zones and different countries require greater coordination by the facilitator to be successfully implemented.

Second, unique factors that influence the participants determines the degree to which the participants engage in the project. For example, the level of religious freedom in the participant's adopted country affected the participant's willingness to engage in the project. Three of the participants (ASC, LR UAE, and MM UAE), were most responsive because of the limited freedom of the practice of religion in their setting. Another participant, DRG, was eagerly involved, because of the lack of Christian fellowship and being closely surrounded by unbelievers. Another unique factor is the duration of time that the participant had been in his or her new city. The shorter the duration of time in the new city (For example, DRG and STF who had been in their city for less than two years) greater the keenness to learn from the program. The relationship of the facilitator with the participants was also a unique factor. To successfully implement the program, prior relational rapport was vital to cherish the online engagement. The ten participants gladly enlisted themselves for the program, because all of them considered me as their youth pastor and a few of them trusted me as their mentor.

Finally, the responsiveness to the online program by the participants is dependent on the season of the year in which it is conducted. It would be wise to choose a season on the participants' calendar which maximizes their online participation.

Unexpected Observations

Some of the responses of the participants helped me understand a few new factors which would be useful for the future.

- 1) **DRG:** I just made like few notes here and there.....but I made notes and like for instance the John chapter 10 its it was something about ...it establishes that God gives eternal life
- 2) **JJUS:** know I noted down I wrote it in my diary so I you know you see a lot of things it's pretty
- 3) **ASC:** helped me the most was writing down notes okay what I learnt from the chapters from your notes and then writing down my separate notes because that that helped me reflect and put a check on myself like am i doing it that way or am I just reading it again like like how I used to ... am i just reading it... believing it or am I actually doing it so yeah I think ...writing helped me (ASC)

(Participants took time to write down their personal notes to help them in their faith journey)

- 4) **SSUS:** I think what was the most powerful and impactful was the one-on-one personal mentorship in fact the sessions that made the most impact on me where the ones where I missed the group and then we had makeup sessions and somehow because it was one-on-one it just you know it was just more influential for me

(Participants enjoyed the personal online sessions)

- 5) **JJUS:** the seven sessions of being very very very helpful for us and it's never had as you know video sessions like these I mean I know no one actually had programs like this or we weren't on programs like these, so this'll be really new

(a new experience for the participants)

Every online session gave me a few moments of personal time with a few of the participants while we waited for the rest of the participants to log in. Some of these personal moments, also happened when the participants missed the original sessions and they had to have a personal session with me. Also, every online session started with a few personal questions where I invited the participants to respond to informal life-questions are as follows: *Give us a short word of introduction about yourself. Your name, city, country and what you are currently doing; Please share your greatest experience thus far where you are; Please share your greatest challenge thus far where you are; What is the biggest thing you miss from India?;What do you dream to accomplish five years from now?;Tell me briefly about a friend you have made in your new location. His or her name, how often you meet them, how have they helped you or vice versa; What are 2 things you will do daily regardless of how busy your schedule? Share briefly your involvement with the local church or small group. What has been the most encouraging and most discouraging experience in this new-found community?*

Based on these personal moments as well as the participants' responses to these informal questions, it revealed to me several additional findings.

First, the participants were eager to participate in the program. Despite their busy schedules and the demanding season of December-January, they were willing to make the necessary sacrifices to be part of the program. Two of the participants, STF and DRG, had to wake up early morning and join in for the sessions at 5 am (European Time). While few other participants, JJUS, EAUS, and SSUS, were awake close to midnight (United States) to attend a session. It is interesting to note that one participant, LRUA, joined in for the session during his office lunch break at 1:30 pm (Middle East). The participants cherished each of these moments as they felt these sessions were important for their spiritual formation, and it also helped them interact with believers from around the world.

Second, the participants had personal concerns for their faith journey. Each of the participants, I perceived, were quite conscious of the different environment they were living in away from the comfort zone of their hometown and wanted to take every opportunity to grow in their faith journey. Each of them expressed at least a Christian small group they were all part of while others voiced multiple groups they attended to nurture their spiritual life. They were aware of the temptations and challenges in their new city, and they did not want to compromise on their faith life.

Third, the participants were ready to submit to the responsive section in the session notes. Each of the session notes had personal questions with blank spaces to help the participants' process and write down their thoughts on the theme of each week. I never intended for these personal questions and their responses to be part of my data, but an opportunity for private reflection for each of the participants. However, I was quite moved by the responses of the participants that they had strongly desired to share their

private reflection with me, either in verbal form or written form. This desire to express their private thoughts and challenges emerged out of their trust in me as their pastor and mentor.

Finally, the participants sought to intentionally build relationships with people around them. One of my concerns in my preparation for the program, was whether the participants had the capacity to build relationships in their local context and whether it would be overbearing on my part to push them towards it. Based on my personal interactions with them, I discovered that each of the participants had already chosen different avenues for sharing life in their local community. Fitness Gymnasiums, Sports centres, Drama clubs, business partnerships, and a variety of friendships bonded each of these participants in their endeavour to live vibrant lives in their community.

Recommendations for Tomorrow's Church

The key recommendations to be considered for the future Indian Church in the framework of discipling Indian migrant Christ-followers on an online platform are manifold. These recommendations need to be addressed bearing in mind the possibilities and perils of online discipleship platforms for mobile students and professionals. Fortunately, some churches in India have already implemented quite a few of the following recommendations to interact with their leadership teams, but very rarely with migrant Christ followers.

First, providing spiritual formation is primarily a personal activity which is most effective on a one-to-one basis (McCallum et al. Loc 716). As a local church, we must encourage the possibilities of connecting with migrants on a digital platform on an

individual basis, and not just as a name on the database by mass-production. There needs to be a shift from mass-production of online content to intentional relationship building.

Second, these connections with migrants on a personal basis, need to be custom-made to suit the varied needs of their professional lives. Digital discipleship models should be concerned about helping the migrant Christ-follower live Christ in his or her own cultural context and not just design a common program expecting everyone to intently follow it. As Scott Boren states:

Discipleship is about people, and people cannot be controlled or predetermined. We cannot prescribe the path of discipleship. Instead, discipleship occurs as we spend time together so that one person discovers from another where he falls short so he can die and rise to new life. Discipleship is about demonstration more than it is about instruction. It is not about going out and forming people into what we think they need to be based on what we see on the surface. (Boren Loc 792)

Therefore, for online encounters with these migrants a local church needs to plan meetings that are both spontaneous and scheduled. In the spontaneous category unprompted phone calls, encouraging text messages, emails and informal conversations on their social media handles are important points of contact with the migrants. On the other hand, frequently scheduling an online video meeting with them individually or even with a small community of migrant Christ-followers would help address some of their personal and spiritual concerns.

Third, migrants are not impersonally interacting with an “online version” of a local church, but lovingly embraced by a small community of pastors and lay leaders from the local church. This small community can intentionally connect with these

migrants periodically and be available to pray with them online as well as support them in prayer within their personal and church networks. As McCallum states, “When you successfully disciple your people in prayer, they will come to love praying with thanksgiving, praying in Jesus’ name, praying for others, and praying in a personal way” (McCallum et al. Loc 2421). Taking time to pray with the migrants online will help them to value the power of prayer in their own personal lives and public profiles.

Fourth, every local church needs to be captivated by the absolute grandeur of the mission of God. When a local church operates with that vision, every migrant potentially becomes a church planter wherever they go. Nguyen’s remark, stated earlier in the project, is worth quoting again, “When Christian immigrants travel, they bring their religion with them, or more personally, their God literally migrates with them” (Nguyen 206). Faithfully discipling migrant Christ-followers helps prepare them for impact in every corner of the globe (Im and Yong 264).

Fifth, a local church has the responsibility to avoid having a ‘silo mentality’ and the vital obligation of building networks with other local churches in other cities within India and outside. This networking will help the local church pastor to connect migrant believers with Christian fellowships away from their home church and provide the essential community to help them grow. In the last few years, countless Christ-followers have permanently or temporarily migrated out from our church in Kolkata and moved to other urban centres, especially to Mumbai, India, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The Assembly of God Church, Kolkata has fraternal church partnerships with Community of Hope, Mumbai and the Gatekeepers, Mumbai. Both churches have sent ministry teams to our church to gain a field experience of doing ministry in the Kolkata context. This

intentional relationship building exercises among churches provides the vital foundation for migrants moving to both cities to be conveniently connected to small groups in these churches. It also gives access for pastoral leaders to speak into their lives.

Finally, the local church should wisely gauge online tools and resources offered by para-churches and mission agencies and contextualize its content to maximize benefits to connect to migrants. Often, the resources available are excellent, but a local church makes a big mistake of using it without determining its appropriate value to the right audience. On the other hand, a local church requires discipline to faithfully study the resources and staunchly implement the program instead of losing the impetus when there are alternate commitments in a local church. The pastoral leadership in the local church can set up a core team of committed millennial leaders to brainstorm and discuss the steps towards using these online resources.

As a caveat to these recommendations, digital discipleship cannot replace real life community encounters. Use of online platforms to provide spiritual formation for migrants must result in better offline avenues of worship and service. Online discipleship models just enhance the fervour of opportunities to disciple them in person. Therefore, a local church needs to plan for ‘parallel tracks ‘of providing physical venues of discipleship of believers as well as online platforms to engage better with them.

Future Research

The findings of my research and the online discipleship program can be used at different levels by senior pastors, youth pastors and even lay leaders. It provides a potential framework to conduct a discipleship program within a local church and take church believers through six weeks of an organized program. Using the online platform,

the same program can be used to interface with mobile students and professionals within a local church. This program can also be prepared as a transition program for the migrants preparing to leave the city into other parts of India or other international urban centres. The findings of the research can help a local church envision a global mindset and use the exact format of the program, along with the suggestions for change, to disciple their believers in the other countries.

Based on this project, future areas of research can specifically build on at least four areas:

1) Establishing follow-up courses to stay in touch with international migrants, 2) starting catalytic small groups in a cross-cultural setting, 3) preparing local pastors for global engagement, and 4) preparing local churches to host migrants in their own communities.

Postscript

How has it changed me?

From the time I started this journey on April 1, 2015, all the way to where I presently stand three years later, it has been an incredible journey. More than an academic or intellectual pursuit this doctoral program supposedly formed me to be, I think I am just starting a journey to be a better human being and a child of God. When we started the program, Asbury had arranged for an online video conference call bringing together our cohort for a brief orientation. A question that a cohort-member asked the Asbury faculty team was, “What would you intend the Doctoral program to accomplish in each of us?” I still remember the response of Dr. Ellen Marmon. She responded that by the end of this doctoral program, Asbury would desire each of the students to be a better Christ-follower and better Christian leader. I think that’s exactly what the program has achieved within me.

First, I have discovered that the ministry that I do is not dependant on me at all! A crucial step in my attempt to be disciplined in my study program required me to empower and mentor others to lead different facets of my ministry and church responsibilities. It required me to trust others to do what I do and watch them do better than me. Every week, when I observe my wife lead and coach, along with my pastoral colleague, and our youth core team to oversee all the elements of our youth movement, there is a sense of joy and pride at how much they can accomplish without me! When I witness one of my youth leaders administer leadership to the media and promotions department, I recognize that I need not be 'in-charge' of everything to bring effective leadership. When I hear reports of how some of my youth leaders and pastoral friends whom I have recommended, speaking at school chapels and youth conferences in my absence, do well and discover that they are appreciated, I realize God's kingdom is bigger than me trying to make it happen.

Second, and strangely, I recognized the importance of time management. These three years, had me divide my day into multiple half-hour slots where I tried to discipline myself to accomplish the different facets of my life, family, ministry, and study. A crucial feature of the doctoral program was guiding us to submit an assignment which helped us evaluate our rule of life. In my personal estimate, the developing of my rule of life in 2015, and my private revisions in 2016 and 2017, is probably one of the most important exercises I have done in the last decade. Prayerfully evaluating my rule of life periodically has helped me to be more effective as an individual and as a leader. At least in the last twelve months, after I have practised my rule of life for a considerable period, I privately and publicly coach leaders on expressing their own rule of life. The importance

of time management helped me even value other people's time by discipling myself to keep appointments and meeting times.

Third, I recognized the value of viewing every aspect of ministry, theology, and life in a holistic framework. The discipline of academic study and regular interaction with my cohort gave me a wide range of perspectives on issues which otherwise I would have a personal bias or predisposition. The more I involved with my course material and academic books, the more I was reminded of how much I did not know. As my pastor eloquently put it, 'my horizon of ignorance' grew the more engaged I was in the study of the program.

Fourth, I was increasingly learning the value of submission and honouring my ministry leaders. During these three years, on countless occasions, my personal study time was interrupted as I sought to fulfil my pastoral calling at my local church. I was requested to do pastoral visits, sermons, coordinate events, administer new responsibilities, attend conferences, address conflict issues and much more. Overcoming the initial hesitation, I discovered that on each occasion, God ordained a divine appointment to either teach me a new missional lesson or expand the boundaries of His kingdom.

Finally, the study of the program and especially my personal impassioned reading of the Gospel of John, drew me to love Jesus at a much deeper level. I am committed to pursuing these three goals for the rest of my life: to embrace the mission of God the Father; to be formed in the image of God the Son, Jesus Christ and follow the pathway of God, the Holy Spirit.

How will my ministry change?

These three years have not just changed me as a person, but I can sense the rudiments of my ministry being transformed to a brand-new level. When I started this journey three years ago, I was leading my ministry literally on an ‘empty tank’. I sensed I was just going through the motions with no Spirit-led perspectives for leading the next generation in India. This Asbury program was a dynamic watershed event to prepare me for the next phase of my ministerial journey.

First, I am committing myself to personally disciple young people face-to-face in informal settings beyond a classroom. For much of my pastoral ministry, I have disciplined young people more in formal classroom settings and very rarely in personal intimate moments. This partially happened because of my introvert qualities which discouraged me from pursuing personal one on one encounters with people. However, these three years, through a variety of learning moments I have discovered the significant value of sharing life individually with people around me. The Asbury immersion trips, and my online discipleship program has prepared me to understand the importance of personal discipleship.

Second, I am committing to invest in younger leaders around me the crucial lessons of my journey. Lessons on discipleship based on the Gospel of John, the rule of life, and leadership principles are a few of the important lessons I desire to share with the next generation. In my ministerial capacity within the city and within the nation, I am honored to be part of significant leadership teams. The last two years, I have already begun to share my learnings with my network of leaders which has helped us grow as leaders.

Third, I am committing to cherish relationships around me more closely. During these three years, especially during my prolonged absence from my small kids (ages eight and four) for the sake of my studies or Asbury-related travels, I have sensed the all-important need to be available for them during this crucial phase in their lives. A vital longing at the end of this program, is to be more accessible for them as their father. God has also reminded me the importance of treasuring the close friends (at least ten of them around the world) He has brought into my life in the last twenty-five years. I am convicted of my failure to be available for them in past, and I want to change the trend in the next few years. God has convicted me that I interact with my ministry colleagues mostly only at an ‘official’ capacity and the need to build friends in ministry for a lifetime.

Fourth, and interestingly, I am committing not to take myself too seriously. The intensity of my calling and ministry often sucks out in me the joy of the “fullness of life” In the next phase of my life and ministry, I want to commit myself to be a more joyful person who reflects the joy of Jesus in everything I do.

Finally, I acknowledge an absolute dependence on God for every moment of my life and ministry. These three years has helped me to be sensitive to countless God-whispers guiding me in the smallest detail of my study and the biggest aspects of my ministry. I would not want to trade this “God-dependence” for any other academic framework or relational virtue. I desire my life-long pursuit to be like John Wesley, *“And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an interrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a*

continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!" (Wesley"
Sermon 55")

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: LETTER FOR EXPERT REVIEW

Jacob Mathew
Doctoral Candidate
Asbury Theological Seminary
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

September 4, 2017

Local Address:
16 Beniapukur Road
Kolkata – 700017,
West Bengal, India

Dear _____,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary and I am currently working on my dissertation project. As part of the research process, I am using two researcher-designed instruments to collect data. The first is a discipleship discovery assessment survey for collecting quantitative data. The other is a semi-structured interview protocol, which I will use to conduct two focus groups to collect qualitative data.

I am in need of expert reviews for the two instruments and I am inviting you to serve as one of my reviewers. I have included a copy of the following:

1. Problem statement
2. Purpose statement
3. Research questions
4. Definition of terms
5. Attached two researcher-designed instruments
6. Attached Evaluation forms for expert review.

Please kindly assess the two instruments using the evaluation forms included. Share freely any comments that you consider would be useful to improve the data collection.

Please kindly request you to email me back your response.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jacob Mathew

Problem Statement

Young believers who migrate from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata and move to other countries either as students or for better job opportunities often miss out vital Christian fellowship and struggle in their walk with Jesus and effectiveness for His kingdom.

Young India is positioned to make global impact in the next decade, with strong possibilities that twenty-five percent of the global workforce will be of Indian origin. The opportunity for an Indian believer to impact the international community is huge. However, the absence of a good local church system preparing young believer for a new culture spiritually, emotionally, socially, and practically, often results in them failing to live out their calling in life.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an online 6 session discipleship training program based on the Gospel of John to increase the knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices of young international migrant believers from the Assembly of God Church, Kolkata living in cross-cultural settings in international cities.

Research Questions

The key research questions considered to assess the effectiveness of this discipleship program are as follows:

Research Question 1

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices prior to the program on discipleship based on the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

Research Question 2

What were the participants' level of knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices following the program on discipleship based on the Gospel of John, in a cross-cultural international setting?

Research Question 3

What specific components of the program contributed most to the observed changes in knowledge, personal attitudes, and relational practices towards effective discipleship in a cross-cultural setting?

Definition of Key Terms

Young: A ‘young’ believer in the context of this project is a college student or a working professional or even a young married. The age category for this dissertation is ages 18-35.

Disciple: ‘Disciple’ is specifically mentioned here to distinguish between being a ‘Christian’ because of lineage and being a genuine Christ-follower by personal choice. In the Indian context, the term ‘Christian’ in popular media based on culture and history has the negative connotations of a person who is known for his loose morals and drunken lifestyle. A disciple also describes a person who absolutely committed to the vision of the local church and eager to live out their faith commitment.

Migrant: Young believers who move from India to another country as a college student or a working professional.

Discipleship Program: A systematic planned program to provide guided mentoring and discipleship to migrant believers.

Online: The platform of instruction for the discipleship program would be using the internet and social media as the main medium of communicating the program.

The Assembly of God Church: This is the name of the local church in Kolkata, India where the researcher serves on the pastoral team and his primary responsibility is to lead the youth movement in the church.

Kolkata: Kolkata is the capital city of the state of West Bengal in the eastern region of India.

Cross-cultural setting: Refers to the mix of cultures the student or professional experiences while living in an international city. The migrant disciple leaving the shores of India would be interacting with people from other cultures and very rarely with his original Indian culture.

International cities: International cities refers specifically to key global urban centres in different continents of the world.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (with Pre-test Survey)

ReBOOT ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

Welcome to ReBoot, a six-week online discipleship program!

I, Jacob Mathew, a doctoral student at Asbury Theological Seminary, would like to invite you to consider participating in the research I am conducting for my DMin dissertation project. The purpose of this research is to study the effectiveness of an online discipleship program to help international migrant students and professionals, like you, to be effective in your walk with Jesus in your cross-cultural setting.

Participation: Your involvement in this project is of your own free will. The program includes participating in two online Discipleship Discovery surveys (one at the beginning of the program and one at the end of the program), 6 online sessions (45 minutes each) and an online focus group (1 session of 1 hour)

You may decide not to participate in this program. If you do choose to participate in this research project, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

Procedure : If you are willing to participate, the procedure involves filling an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. The survey consists of 33 statements and you are free to give your personal response by clicking one of the five standard responses ranging from never, rarely, sometimes, mostly, and always. The survey statements relates to your current personal walk with Jesus. The online sessions will be accomplished using the medium of Google Hangout using the Internet. The sessions and the final focus groups would be video-recorded on Google-hangout and a private video link generated which would help give me a better understanding of the project.

Potential: There are no known risks associated with responding to this survey or attending this online program. However, by sharing your subjective perspectives about your experience of this discipleship program, you will help us as a church to evaluate the effectiveness of our ministry to migrant students and professionals. It also potentially helps me design an effective discipleship program to future migrants.

Privacy: Your name will be kept confidential in all of the reporting and/or writing related to this study and your privacy will be maintained at all times. Your responses will be confidential and will only be known to me for the purpose of the project. The video

recorded sessions and the focus groups would only be privately viewed by me to help me measure the purpose of the project. Your information will be confidentially maintained by storing all data in a password protected electronic format. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with Asbury seminary representative and the results may be published in the doctoral project.

If you have any further query about this project, please contact me at jacob.mathew@asburyseminary.edu. This research has been reviewed according to Asbury Theological Seminary IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "I agree" button below indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate in the online survey and the 6-week discipleship program
- you are at least 18 years of age
- you would allow me as the researcher to use your responses as part of the data source for my study analysis.

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by refusing to click on the "I agree" button and clicking on the 'I don't agree' button

I agree

I don't agree

Personal Information:

Name:

WhatsApp Number

Email address:

- A. Age Range
 - ☐ 18-25
 - ☐ 25-30
 - ☐ 30-35
 - ☐ 35-40
- B. Country currently in
 - ☐ USA
 - ☐ UK
 - ☐ UAE
 - ☐ China
 - ☐ France
 - ☐ Germany
 - ☐ _____(Any Other)
- C. Gender
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
- D. Marriage Status
 - ☐ Single
 - ☐ Married
- E. Current Profile
 - ☐ Full Time Student
 - ☐ Working full-time
 - ☐ Part-time student and working
- F. Duration in current country
 - ☐ 1-3 years
 - ☐ 3-6 years
 - ☐ 7 years above

ReBOOT Pre-Survey

Please respond to these statements honestly based on your personal faith-journey
(Circle the one that applies to you)

DESCRIPTION	
1. I am called to live my faith in Christ in whichever setting I am placed in	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
2. Practicing intentional habits in my personal and public life will help me become more like Jesus	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
3. Showing love and care to people around me is a commandment of Jesus	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
4. I am called to do whatever Jesus wants me to do	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
5. I choose to follow Jesus based on Who He is and not just based on what He does for me	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
6. I know that God has called me to lead others to follow Him	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
7. I know helping and serve the people who live in my neighborhood will help me reflect the love of Jesus	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
8. Sharing life found in Jesus name with my networks is a mandate of Jesus for my life	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
9. In private and public forums where I am bombarded with conflicting belief systems, I know Jesus is the only door	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always

of salvation for eternal life.	
10. In fearful situations even of life and death, I know that God is my Resurrection and Life and He is in control.	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
11. I know Jesus is God and always guiding all details of my life.	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
12. I am called to encourage people around me to be like Jesus	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
13. I choose to believe in Jesus and His works even when things go wrong in my life	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
14. Leading others to follow Jesus requires me to die to my own plans	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
15. As a Christ-follower, following Jesus is the top most priority in my life	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
16. My workplace/university provides an opportunity for me to live out my walk with Jesus	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
17. I am motivated to have a small group of friends with whom I can share my life	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
18. Faced with difficult situations, I am confident that Jesus is the source of my satisfaction and fullness.	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
19. I have this calm assurance that inspite of	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely

compromising situations I am placed in, I will walk in the light of Jesus.	<input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
20. In circumstances where I am faced with pain, attacks, and crisis, I am dependent on Jesus for total shelter, care, and guidance.	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
21. I am called to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all areas of my life and work or study	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
22. I am called to be fruitful for Jesus in my private and public life.	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
23. God is at work in my life in tangible ways	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
24. I follow the pathway of the Holy Spirit and go wherever Jesus wants me to go	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
25. I am intentional about connecting my friends to Jesus	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
26. Making time for my small group of friends will help me share Jesus with them	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
27. I make time alone to grow in my walk with Jesus in prayer and Bible reading	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
28. I make time to build relationships with people around me	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always

29. I actively look for opportunities to share Jesus with people in my life	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
30. I make time to walk with others around me and show the love of Jesus to them	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
31. I spend time teaching others about Jesus and His words.	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
32. I help my classmates/office colleagues in any struggle they face	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always
33. I invite people around me to come and see the miracles that Jesus has done in my life	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Always

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. Have you noticed any change in your understanding about what it means to follow Jesus? Can you explain little more about it?
2. Did the study offer enough practical help for you to know what to do with what you have learned or become persuaded of as a result? Did it suggest any ideas?
3. How did your reading of the Gospel of John affect your personal walk with Jesus? Are there specific passages that impacted any area of your life? Please give an example.
4. In your friendships at work, college, or church, has this course developed your engagement and involvement in their lives. Please describe more about it?
5. This program invited you to consider becoming a catalyst that helps influence your friendship networks to seriously consider following Jesus. In your current work/study scenario, would you be able to do that? Describe more about it.
6. The discipleship program involved certain key components: online sessions; reading of gospel of John and recording your learnings; sharing life with friends and a mentor; and developing a rule of life. Have these components been helpful for you? Please describe more.
7. As a result of the program, have you resolved to proactively look for ways and settings for sharing your faith? If so, how did it do that.

**APPENDIX D: EVALUATION FORM FOR EXPERT REVIEW ON
DISCIPLESHIP DISCOVERY SURVEY**

<i>Question No.</i>	<i>Needed</i>	<i>Not Needed</i>	<i>Clear</i>	<i>Unclear</i>	<i>Suggestion to clarify</i>
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
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30.					
31.					
32.					
33.					

Recommendations (Questions that are not asked that need to be added):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Review completed by:

Signature:

Date completed:

APPENDIX E: EVALUATION FORM FOR EXPERT REVIEW ON FOCUS**GROUPS PROTOCOL**

<i>Question No.</i>	<i>Needed</i>	<i>Not Needed</i>	<i>Clear</i>	<i>Unclear</i>	<i>Suggestion to clarify</i>
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					

Recommendations (Questions that are not asked that need to be added):

1.

2.

3.

Review completed by:**Signature:****Date completed:**

APPENDIX F: ONLINE SESSIONS SCHEDULE

Code Name	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6
MMUAE	9th December	15th December	27th December	3rd January	16th January	16th January
LRUAE	13th December	15th December	29th December	2nd January	18th January	18th January
DRG	9th December	16th December	23rd December	30th December	6th January	13th January
STF	13th December	20th December	23rd December	4th January	6th January	Video
ABUS	9th December	15th December	5th January	5th January	15th January	Video
JJUS	9th December	16th December	23rd December	3rd January	6th January	13th January
SSUS	13th December	16th December	23rd December	5th January	6th January	19th January
EAUS	9th December	16th December	(Video)	30th December	6th January	19th January
MAA	9th December	16th December	3rd January	3rd January	16th January	16th January
ASC	9th December	15th December	23rd December	16th January	16th January	13th Jan
Group 1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Group 2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Group 3		3	3	3	3	3
Group 4			4	4	4	4
Group 5			5	5	5	5
Group 6			Video	6	6	6
Group 7				7		Video
Group 8				8		Video
Group 9				9		

**APPENDIX G: OUTLINE OF REBOOT ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP
PROGRAM**

Session	Theme Description	Key Question	Scripture Passage (For Online Sessions)
1.REDISCOVER	Restarting your journey – Following Christ Where you are	Are you a follower of Christ?	John 4:43-54
2.REDEFINE	Discover your CHARACTER in CHRIST	Who am I in Christ?	John 6:25-71
3. REDIRECT	Discover your LIFE'S CALLING	Why do I do what I do?	John 1:35-42
4.RECREATE	Discover your NEW COMMUNITY	With Whom do I follow Christ?	John 4: 21-26, 28- 30, 39-42
5.RETRACE	Discover your COURSE for life	What do I do as I follow Christ?	John 11:1-6; 12:1-11 Luke 10: 38-42
6.REINGNITE	Discover the CATALYST IN YOU	How do I follow Christ?	John 20: 1-6, 7-12, 13-18, 19-23, 30,31

APPENDIX H:

REBOOT ONLINE PROGRAM INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS



ONE

1. You will receive an **official email** inviting you to join the program. If you choose not to join the program(I hope you do!) we will still be friends.

The email includes a **Survey** to fill up and submit online(it should take you about 10 minutes)
(you have already done this...Well done!)

TWO

Based on your submission of survey and response, I will be **scheduling on Google calendar** the 6 weeks* for our online meeting.

*The **tentative dates** I am looking at are:

- December 9th
- December 16th
- December 23rd
- December 30th
- January 6th
- January 13th

(However if any of the dates don't work for you, please text me and I will work out alternate dates convenient for you – Kindly note how small I wrote this, as I am hoping you won't see this!!)

THREE

I would also be creating a **WhatsApp Group*** to help you and me interact better on scheduling and any other queries.

*Yes, I understand WhatsApp groups can be a pain. It's a temporary group, which you can leave at the end of the program.

FOUR

Every **Monday**(during the duration of the program) you will receive by **email a PDF file** which gives you a description of the Online Session and reading notes. Kindly do the following:

- **Read it.**
- **Respond** to the discussion questions in the document.
- **Write** down anything you would like to text me personally and discuss with me.

FIVE

The 6 Online sessions would be more **interactive** and aim to give you an opportunity to **share your journey** in your context and also I would lead in a short sharing.

SIX

Watch out in your WhatsApp/email for a **short video*** two days before the weekly session

*Amateur, One minute video!

SEVEN

I invite you to make **Four commitments** to the program **while you are offline** :

1. **Read a 40 page e- book** called '5 Habits' during these 6 weeks(I will email you this book)
2. **Read Gospel of John** - one chapter a day during these 6 weeks using the **YouVersion Bible Plan called ReBoot** (specially designed by me for this program)
3. **Share with your local pastor or leader** what you are learning in this program.
4. **Pray** for your closest 3 friends in your city.

EIGHT

At the end of the 6 weeks you will receive **another online Survey** for you to fill and submit

NINE

At the end of the 6 week online session you will be invited for a **7th session*** were you will be given the opportunity to share your personal experience with REBOOT.

*Tentatively I am aiming at January 20th

TEN

I would want you to enjoy this ReBoot program **freely** and **joyfully**. If at point you feel under pressure to continue, please let me know.

APPENDIX I: REBOOT BIBLE PLAN (on YouVersion Bible App)



REboot: Starting Over

25 Days

An opportunity for you to rediscover your walk with Jesus. ReBoot your life and start over. This Bible Plan gives you an opportunity to experience Jesus and His ways afresh as you read the Gospel of John. As you rediscover Him, seek to share the experience with your friends.

Start this Plan

[Save for Later](#) • [Sample](#)

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