TITLE: PERCEPTIONS OF THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA: A STUDY ON DISCIPLESHIP IN CONTEXT USING THE KENYAN EXPERIENCE

Abstract

This is a study on contextual discipleship that seeks to explore perceptions of the discipleship process among Methodist church in Kenya members. Using a phenomenological approach, the study takes into account the context of the contemporary Kenyan society and investigates how the church members experience discipleship. Although there are numerous studies on different discipleship activities and programs, little has been done to explore the discipleship experience among the lay members or to understand what is perceived to be of value by these people at the grassroots level.

The study explores the activities and programs that members perceive to be effective in the discipling process. It also investigates the avenues and places that discipleship is perceived to be more likely to happen and the environment in which the members understand discipleship to thrive in. Rather than presenting what the institutional church or common literature says, I sought to explore the grassroots views of discipleship from the people on the ground.

To achieve this, I collected data using interviews and focus groups. These methods were more productive in data collection for a phenomenological study like this one. The methods enabled me to get rich data from the experiences and understandings of the interviewees. The analysis entailed interacting with the data keenly while making

some descriptive and conceptual commentaries. I then developed several codes that generated patterns used to formulate the major themes of the study.

The research further highlights some African ways of learning as demonstrated by the findings of this study which could be effectively utilized to do discipleship today. These grassroots recommendations are vital for the disciple-making process while being relevant to the Kenyan context.

Perceptions of the Discipleship Process in the Methodist Church in Kenya:

A Study on Discipleship in Context Using the Kenyan Experience

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary

Wilmore, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2019

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Abbreviations

AIC- African Instituted/Independent Churches

ATR- African Traditional Religion

C.U- Christian Union

EARF- East African Revival Fellowship

FOCUS- Fellowship of Christian Students

IAC- African Inland Church

IRB- Institutional Research Board

JSS -Junior Sunday School

KSCF- Kenya Student Christian Fellowship

MCK- Methodist Church in Kenya

MF- Men Fellowship

MUBET- Meru University Brethren Evangelistic Team

WF- Women Fellowship

Glossary

Thabiti- A Swahili word that means consistent, it's the name for the MCK Discipleship Training Manual

Kaumia- A Meru word meaning almost end of the week, used for Friday evening Bible study

Kesha- Swahili word for watchnight

Mwiji- Meru word for boy

Njuri- Meru word for council of elders

Nthaka- Meru word for young man

Passie- Slang name (sheng) for pastor

Roho- Swahili word for Holy Spirit

Sigana- An interactive participatory story telling

Acknowledgement

In Africa, we say that it takes a village to raise a child. I think I can say by extension that it took a village to write this dissertation. The work could not have been completed were it not for the great support from friends and family. First, I give all glory and honor to God for giving me the health, provision, and energy to do this study. May it bring glory to God. Special thanks to my loving husband Geoffrey Murithi Iringo who was my greatest cheer leader, encourager and support. Thanks for joyfully and patiently helping with the children when I went to the carrels to study and write. Our children Faith and Nem, you helped in the house and massaged by back and neck when it was sore from long hours on the computer, so thankful for you both. I thank my late Dad George Baariu who saw my calling to ministry and scholarship when I had no idea it was my calling. Dad this is for you. I thank my mom Dorcas Baariu who modelled to me what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Thanks mom for being an embodiment of true faith and a loving mother. Special thanks to my siblings Tim (Sue), Joy (Nick), and Mugambi (Cate) for always being there for me throughout this journey. Thanks uncle Peter and family for all you do, especially for introducing me to Asbury Seminary, and all my uncles and aunties for prayers and support. I appreciate my mom in-law, Jennifer Gakii and my brothers and sisters from Ruiri. I am blessed to be part of this family.

St Paul's circuit in Meru, you supported me financially and encouraged me to pursue this calling. Special thanks to Maingi Mugambi who is one of the most optimistic friends I know, you always see the positive side of things and are a great encourager. Thanks to Silas Muriuki for great support too. I thank Kenya Methodist University for releasing me for studies, Thanks Rev Stanley Naituli for believing in me as a young minister and nurturing me as a leader. Methodist church in Kenya and its leadership in both Bishop Stephen Kanyaaru and Bishop Joseph Ntombura for your great support. I also appreciate the members and ministers of Utawala, Kaaga, Charles New, Gitimbine and Miathene MCK churches for their invaluable help during my data collection period. Thanks Kunene MCK for all your prayers and nurturing my faith as a child.

I cannot forget Asbury Seminary for the financial support, ARP staff Patti Walker who was an anchor to me, ESJ professors, Dr. Jay Moon, Dr. Sue Russell, Dr. Steve Ybarolla, Dr. Steve Offutt and Dr. Timothy Tennent. You provoked me to be a deep thinker. Thanks to my reader Dr. Gregg Okesson for critical insights and Dr. Robbie Danielson for listening to me when I got lost in the journey. Thanks Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau for shaping my theological thought as my initial Mentor. To my dissertation mentor Dr. Mike Rynkiewich, you went over and beyond to sharpen my writing and thought construction. I am forever grateful for your tireless guidance and supervision. Last but not least, I thank Scholar Leaders International for their financial support without which I could not complete this work. Heartfelt thanks to my church family at Centenary UMC for great support during my time in Wilmore and to my other church families in Mentor and Gypsum during my writing period. I appreciate my DS Rev. Dee Williamston for her great support. Thanks to my friends Amanda Eschelbach, Julie Broderson, and Kimberly Walker for their undying support to me and my family. Grateful for my colleagues, friends and classmates for walking with me this journey. To these and many this page cannot contain, please feel appreciated. God bless you all.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my dad George Baariu M'tuamwari. You were a pillar in my life, you heard God calling me into ministry and into academia before my own ears were unclogged. You still live on dad… in me.

Chapter 1. Introduction and Methodology

My inspiration to study people's perception of the discipleship process in the Methodist Church in Kenya has to do with my own ministry experiences as a pastor in the same church. During my years of serving, I was aware of programs and activities that were designed to disciple the members. These included open air preaching events popularly called *crusade*s, catechism classes (which in local understanding includes confirmation classes), prayer meetings, Bible study programs and church fellowships. Evidently, discipleship was a key concern for the Methodist church as demonstrated in how they invested their energies towards the same. However, all these were determined by leaders. The members received what was given to them.

I wondered what the members themselves felt about these activities and programs meant for discipleship. Clearly, the charge to make disciples is one of the most overt injunctions by Jesus to his disciples and therefore significant for Christians. Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) takes the discipleship mandate seriously, but the members themselves are not involved in determining what activities facilitate their discipleship. There is no inquiry as to how the people in the pews perceive this process or how the process worked.

The basic assumption by MCK over the years seemed to be that the institutional church (MCK) had the knowledge as to how discipleship happened and thus their role was to implement it. It was also presumed that discipleship happens in the church and thus that is where the efforts on discipleship went. But was this a right assumption?

Background to the Study

During the 47th Annual conference in 2012, The Methodist Church in Kenya received numerous exhortations from the Christian education committee to commission the *Lay Training Department* to produce Bible Study Materials for the conference.[1] This Christian education committee also recommended that the conference should develop a sacrament training curriculum, discipleship training manuals and guidelines for *50 Steps* (A booklet used for confirmation training), catechism training materials, as well as Methodism and family life training materials.[2] Although I was not part of this committee, I was in attendance at the annual conference as an ordained minister (elder) in the Methodist church and I remembered that similar discussions had taken place in the previous years.

The committee's attentiveness to discipleship had been expressed in many forums especially in the *2010 Connexional June Committees Meeting.* Prior to connexional meetings are synod committees which meet to discuss the church business that is later forwarded to the connexion. In the synod reports, Kaaga synod (a regional church administrative office) asked that *kaumia*[3] 'Friday Bible Study', be re-introduced in the congregations "to nurture Christian faith and growth."[4] Additionally, Mombasa synod proposed that there be workshops for discipleship teachers, preachers, and catechists to

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[1] Christian Education and Communication Committee, Resolution 3/2012, In Methodist Church in Kenya 47th Annual Conference Minute Book. 2012, 28.
[2] Christian Education and Communications Committee, Resolution 3 and 4/2009 in Methodist Church in Kenya 44th Annual Conference Minute Book. 2009, 21.
[3] *Kaumia* is a Meru word for Friday Bible study program in the Kenyan Methodist church
[4] Christian Education and Communication Committee Minutes (Methodist Church in Kenya Annual 45th Conference: Methodist Church in Kenya, 2010), 90.

enable them to teach and disciple their congregations well. The Synod also proposed that churches start and maintain regular Bible studies.[5]

Two years later, in 2014, the annual conference proposed to form a committee that would address discipleship more directly. The church felt that although discipleship was happening, there was room for improvement on how it was done. Thus, after more than a century of the Methodist Church in Kenya ministering in the country, a new committee called Discipleship and Lay training was formed. Many speculated on what needed to be done in order to enable efficiency in this area, but what did the lay members think?

People at the grassroots level who had been discipled and therefore had some experience of the same would have some contribution to make. The committee's opinions though important would not be comprehensive. Committees in the Methodist church usually comprise of people from different social classes. In most cases they are made up of social elites who are especially elected as leaders of various groups in the church. But it is the local grass roots people's voice that was missing. I thus determined that since grassroots people possess a wealth of information about the process of discipleship, it was important to listen to them. Their insights would help to formulate a theology of discipleship that would be relevant to the people's context. This study recognizes that lay people at the grassroots level already have perceptions about how, when and where discipleship happens, and that this information can shape a theology relevant to their context.

[5] "45th Annual Conference: Christian Education and Communication Committee," 89.

Problem Statement: Where the Shoe Pinches

Christianity has shifted from being a Western religion to being a global religion;[6] It has grown from having its centers in Rome or Canterbury to having multiple centers in places like Sao Paulo, Manila, and Nairobi. According to Walls, "Christianity has… throughout history spread outwards, across cultural frontiers, so that each new point on the Christian circumference is a new potential Christian center, and the very survival of Christianity as a separate faith has evidently been linked to the process of cross cultural transmission."[7] In recent years, much growth seems to have shifted east and south of the globe to Latin America, Asia, and Africa. With this swelling population of Christian converts, there has been increased necessity to develop different approaches to discipleship.[8] Programs have been developed, both locally and abroad to try and address this need.[9] Whether through

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[6] Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002); Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2011); Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (New York: Bloomsburry Publishing, 2008).

[7] Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 22.

[8] Different authors have written about how to approach discipleship from an African perspective. See Laurenti Magesa, "Christian Discipleship in Africa in the 21st Century," *African Ecclessial Review* 36, no. 5 (October 1994): 283–99; Fredrick Charles Mangeni, "An Evaluation of The Evangelical Church of Kenya's Discipleship Methodologies Utilized in Selected Urban Centers." *PhD Dissertation*, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006; Nahashon Gitonga, "Making Disciples in Kenya," in *Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

[9] Nebert A. Mtange, "Exploring the Possibilities of Using Lisanga Small Groups in Disciple-Making among the Avalogoli People of Kenya" (D.Miss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2006), 123–33, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/304922513/abstract/55A12F1884342BDPQ/1. (Mtange has done a comparative study on some of the discipleship programs used in Kenya including Harvest Discipling Ministry and The Navigators.)

the well-known discipleship programs or through the local activities in the Kenyan church, discipleship is happening. The prevailing question however is how are the Christians experiencing these programs and activities, what is their perception of the whole process as it is being done, what works and what does not work for them, what discipleship issues need to be addressed and what is most meaningful for them?

This study is on a quest to understand the perceptions of the discipleship process and discipleship experiences of lay people within the local Kenyan Methodist churches. How has discipleship been done and what is their assessment of this process? What activities do they embrace as more effective for discipling? What is the lay membership at the grassroots saying to the church institution, leaders, pastors and the academy about how discipleship is being done in Kenya? Additionally, what does discipleship mean to the people and what is their role in it? How can discipleship be done in a most meaningful way according to the Methodist church in Kenya members.

Research Questions

1. The primary question for this study is:[10]

- How do Christians in the Methodist Church in Kenya perceive the process of discipleship?

2. Secondary questions:

- What activities or experiences in their lives are perceived to facilitate discipleship?

[10] The primary question is geared towards meaning rather than difference or causality. See Jonathan A Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* (London: Sage, 2013), 47.

- What might these perceptions portend for the next Christian generation?
- What is perceived to be the main unresolved discipleship issues?

Delimitations

The focus was on select churches in Nairobi, Kaaga, and Miathene synods. The three synods are not the only synods of the Methodist church in Kenya; they are however home to some of the older churches in the country. The same synods also have younger churches that have recently been started. Nairobi region would be considered a cosmopolitan area and so it represents a wider ethnicity more than some regions, such as the Kenyan coast where the MCK church actually began.

The research focuses on perceptions of MCK Christians on the discipleship process. I study these perceptions both as an insider being a Methodist myself a, and as an outsider being in the church hierarchy as clergy. I have also lived outside of the country and interacted with other Methodist Christians in North America. I will therefore intentionally bracket my pre-existing views so I can hear out the views of the participants.

1. This study does not seek to develop a new discipleship model but rather to understand existing perceptions of the discipleship process based on people's experiences and beliefs.
2. The study will be purposefully focused on select churches in the Methodist Church in Kenya.

A limitation of this study however is that I interviewed the people as one of them and yet as a pastor. Knowing that I am a pastor might have made them hesitant to share things that would be considered embarrassing, like consulting with traditional healers.

Significance of the Study

According to Lamin Sanneh, Christianity knows no end to expansion and attrition in its two thousand years history. It fits into the cycles of "retreat and advance, of contraction and expansion and of waning and awakening…. The religion's…future as a world religion is now being formed and shaped at the hands and in the minds of its non-Western adherents. Rather than being a cause of unsettling gloom, for Christians this new situation is a reason for guarded hope."[11] It is this hope that we are experiencing in the two thirds world, Kenya included.

The growth of Christianity in the majority world is happening at a high rate. Sanneh argues that the question the Christians in the global south need to ask is 'how they can be involved in the shaping of Christianity in a way faithful to God's kingdom agenda, which is to redeem the world. How well prepared is the church to launch at this World Christianity conversation table? One way to be prepared is to ensure good discipleship. And for this discipleship to be relevant, it needs to be based on a theology that is aware of the people's culture and environment.

[11] Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), xx.

To have a good theology in context, one needs to understand a people's needs and experiences all of which shape people's perceptions. These perceptions help one to formulate a discipleship theology that addresses a people's context and one that is in touch with people's situations and circumstances. Perceptions are not static, people's perceptions on different phenomena change over time. The way something was perceived a century ago may vary significantly with how it was perceived yesterday, and more so how it is perceived today. The views change as people interact with something over a period of time.

As such, understanding the contemporary Kenyan Methodist perceptions on the discipleship process is important. It is a precursor to comprehend what local members already know and desire. As the Swahili saying goes, *"kitanda usicho kilala hujui kunguni wak*e." That means that one cannot know the bugs in a bed that they have not lain on. The local church members therefore have insights towards their own discipleship which need to be heard. Their interpretation and judgment of how the church carries out her discipleship might bring helpful acumen towards developing a theology of discipleship in the context of the Kenyan church.

The perceptions of lay people in collaboration with the guidance of a local theologian who is usually the pastor on the ground are what bring forth a theology in context, the spontaneous and local theology that is driven by the local worldview. Theologians and pastors participate in giving both supervision and support to lay people. Likewise, lay people at the grassroots participate in giving their views and perceptions to the pastors and by extension to the institutional church. That way, both sides are

important to correct any lopsided theology and thus produce a healthy theology for the local people, a theology in context.

Paul Hiebert explores how the church has dealt with the issue of context while still upholding some standard theology throughout history. He notes that the church, especially the Anabaptists, responded by "establishing theological processes rather than forging dogmatic statements."[12] The processes involved the testing of theologies against the gospel by hermeneutical communities and not individuals. This involvement of the whole community according Hiebert served to check personal biases of individual interpretations of the Bible. Further, it enabled the Christians to develop a 'metatheology'. This is a "set of procedures by which different theologies, each a partial understanding of the truth in a certain context, could be constructed." [13]

Hiebert notes that there is a need to recognize the "right and responsibility of the church in each culture and historical setting to interpret and apply the scriptures in its own context."[14] Schreiter likewise suggests that local theology should emerge from the energies of the community and not only from the professional theologian such that the community is a theologian.[15] He, however, recognizes that the community on its own is fallible and could make misinterpretation and thus the need for a trained theologian to work with them. The theologian cannot create a theology in isolation from the community's experience; but the community has need of the theologian's knowledge to

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[12] Paul G Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1994), 95.
[13] Hiebert, 101.
[14] Hiebert, 101.
[15] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 16.

ground its own experience within the Christian traditions of faith. On so doing, the theologian helps create the bonds of mutual accountability between local and global church. [16] Developing local theology is a complex endeavor; it takes into account contexts, histories, experiences, and the traditions of faith in other believing communities.[17] However, a theology in context is contagious because it is experiential and relational. It is developed from a symbiotic relationship of two aspects; people's experiences and their understanding of the gospel in relation to others and to the world around them, and the guidance and support of trained theologians who in most cases are the pastors and representatives of the church.

Lay people find ease in living out theology in context because they understand it fundamentally. It is a theology that answers their specific questions rather than other people's questions. Unfortunately, a theology that does not take the two sides seriously falls short of its full potential for discipleship. Usually, the most compromised aspect is in the area of garnering the perceptions and views of lay people such that there is a clear understanding of their theological sensitivities and passions. When this happens, theology becomes merely the ideas of the theologian or the pastor without the input of the lay members who are ultimately the users of this theology.

Andrew Walls tells of an imaginary people in a theater that he calls the 'Human Auditorium'. People seated in different parts of the theater will see different things from those in another part. Some will see more than others. Those in the balcony will have clear sight of some scenes and not of others. What one sees is affected by where they are

[16] Schreiter, 18.
[17] Schreiter, 20–21.

seated.[18] Hearing the voice of lay people and also the theologian is important, it makes the picture clearer as diverse people share with the rest what they see from their position in the theater.

Theology in context is also popularly known as "Contextual Theology". Lamin Sanneh and Andrew Walls argue that the Christian faith has thrived over the years due to its translatability to different languages and contexts.[19] Contextual theology enables the gospel to be relevant to a people, thus text and context always go hand in hand.[20] The place of context in theology is crucial. In fact, Flemming notes that the only theology we have is a contextualized one.[21] It is developed according to a particular people's understanding of the gospel in relation to the world around them. It is a theology that answers those people's specific questions and not, other people's questions.

Contextual theology is a creative interaction between reflection and action in a particular society. A contextual theology of discipleship is therefore necessary for any region that wishes to disciple effectively. Beattie observes that, "each Christian community must present and live out an authentic version of Christian discipleship in its own context

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[18] Andrew Walls. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History; Studies in the Transmission of Faith*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 43.
[19] Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*; Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002); Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*.
[20] Gregg Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity Within Akamba Christianity in Kenya* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).
[21] Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2005).

as well as being concerned with the wider world…."[22] As such, the theologian and the grassroots people are to collaborate in developing a theology in context that addresses the needs of that community.

Good contextual theology is like an efficient computer software. It updates itself to fix bugs and defend against malware so that it can continue to work effectively. This study seeks to find out how Christians in the Methodist church in Kenya perceive Christian discipleship which is a critical step in developing a discipleship theology for the people in the said context. The results of the study can be used in training pastors in how to disciple their congregations. The study will also contribute to the literature and conversation on discipleship in the majority world locus in Kenya and its confines.

Definition of Terms

Perceptions

The choice of the word perception in the topic of study was intentional. The general understanding of the word perception has to do with how something is interpreted using a former experience. According to Smith, perception is intrinsically linked to evaluation. In other words, "perception is already an evaluation that primes one to act in certain ways…."[23] This view of the word perception is relevant for

[22] W.R. Beattie, "Disciple," in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations* (Downers Groove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2007). 101.
[23] James K. A Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013), 34.

this study because it seeks to understand the people's evaluation that primes them to act in certain ways towards discipleship.

The perceptions of the people at the grassroots will reveal their interpretation of discipleship practices and beliefs. Anthropologists and neuroscientists agree that people's perception of the world is about the interpretation they have done of the same.[24] The interpretation requires them to evaluate and critique what they perceive. As James Smith argues, perception "is not a clumsy unreflective judgment… it is the background that makes judgment, analysis and knowledge possible. "[25] Thus, the choice of the word perception in this study.

Discipleship

For the purposes of this study, discipleship is defined as the process of Christian growth and transformation into Christlikeness. The term 'Disciple' "is 'the root of the English word 'discipline,' adding an element of action or praxis to its meaning. The disciple accompanies the teacher, follows the teacher, imitates the teacher, practices what the teacher does, learns from her or his mistakes as she or he slowly and sometimes with difficulty learns the teacher's wisdom, integrity, and way of life."[26]

This means that Christ followers follow in his footsteps of doing what he did on earth including prayer, worship, and service. According to Bevans, "the disciple is one who *learns*, who constantly sits at the feet of the teacher (in Latin *magister* or *magistra*) who

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[24] Michael A Rynkiewich, *Soul, Self, and Society: A Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Postcolonial World* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2011), 12.
[25] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 42.
[26] Stephen B Bevans, "Transforming Discipleship: Missiological Reflections," *International Review of Mission* 105, no. 1 (July 2016): 75.

is constantly on the journey of wisdom and knowledge as the teacher teaches her or him."[27] In the Kenyan context, the word discipleship was familiar for many people because they identify it from the word disciple as used in the Bible to mean a follower of Christ. In addition to disciple, MCK Christians use phrases like growing in Christ, being a true Christian, and faithful following, all to depict discipleship. Those who were perceived to be discipled were people who went to church frequently, got involved in church ministries like Bible studies and fellowship, and participated in leadership and service. Participation was therefore seen as both a metric and an aid for discipleship. Discipleship was perceived to assist people exhibit Christ-like behavior like kindness to other people, good morals and love. The faithful followers were said to be grown or mature in faith.

The word "disciples" occurs some 250 times in the New Testament. This means that it is a significant word in the Bible. Both the Greek and Latin translations of the word mean to learn. As such, discipleship is a process of learning and growing. Wesley understood this process of growth in Christianity as the main point of the Christian religion. Speaking about discipleship in his sermon on patience, he sums it thus,

> Is it not the whole of religion, the whole "mind which was also in Christ Jesus?" Is it not "the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created us?" And is not the fruit of this, the constant resignation of ourselves, body and spirit, to God; entirely giving up all we are, all we have, and all we love, as a holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God through the Son of his love?[28]

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[27] Bevans, 75.

[28] John Wesley, "Sermon 83 - On Patience - General Board of Global Ministries," accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-83-On-Patience.

The terms used by Wesley himself and familiar in Wesleyan language for this growth would be sanctification or Christian perfection. For Wesley, sanctification like discipleship is an ongoing process in a Christians life, yet it also has as its goal entire sanctification. Methodist Christians in Kenya have a heritage in this Wesleyan understanding. They perceive the growth in a Christian to be enabled by the 'sanctifying grace' of God; it is the grace that equips the believer to become mature in Christ such that his/ her affections are all towards God.

Howard Snyder notes that sanctification for Wesley was identical with discipleship. "Wesley's stress on sanctification actually worked itself out in the system of societies… we are struck with the degree to which Christian perfection for Wesley actually meant discipleship. It was not just an interior work of grace in the believer, holiness in the Wesleyan terms is love empowered discipleship."[29] Additionally, Kenneth Collins argues that Wesley understood the process of sanctification as "growing more holy in increasing degrees."[30] This points to the fact that sanctification is not static but a dynamic process.

Heitzenrater explains the process of growth as Wesley understood it. "Regeneration takes place. It is the beginning of sanctification, the work of the Holy Spirit that brings a real change in the individual, who thereby begins this process of becoming righteous or holy. As the believer goes on "from grace to grace," entire sanctification is the goal."[31] For Wesley, sanctified Christians are those who consciously make efforts to be Christ-

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[29] Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley: The Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker*, 2nd ed. (Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2014), 131.
[30] Kenneth J Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville (Tenn.): Abingdon Press, 2007), 294.
[31] Richard P Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville (Tenn.): Abingdon, 1995), 220.

like in their lives. Wesley explained entire sanctification to mean a heart that is fully given to God, where the will of the believer entirely fits in the will of God.

Wesley also seems to link this Christian growth with Christian Perfection, whereby the latter is the goal of the former. Thus, the process of discipleship is the process of sanctification, whereas the goal of discipleship is entire sanctification or Christian perfection, which was more about a heart whose whole intent is God.[32] This was not to mean that the Christian was perfect or sinless. Rather, it meant that the believer's whole purpose is to do God's will. As Wesley explained in his sermon number forty-three, "What is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul… for as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin there in?"[33]

Discipleship for Wesley therefore revolved around these phrases. He sometimes spoke of entire sanctification in terms of freedom from sinful thoughts. Yet, he regarded entire sanctification… "as to do with the filling of the human heart with love for God and neighbor and the governing of all subsequent thoughts, words and deeds by that love."[34] This is what may be understood as transformation into Christlikeness or discipleship's chief goal. Thus, Wesleyan tradition refers to discipleship as sanctification with its goal as entire sanctification or Christian perfection. These terminologies are however used

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[32] Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*; Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*; Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[33] John Wesley, "Sermon 43 - The Scripture Way of Salvation - General Board of Global Ministries," accessed May 11, 2018, https://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-43-The-Scripture-Way-of-Salvation.
[34] Jason E. Vickers. "Wesley's Theological Emphases" in Maddox and Vickers, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*. 205.

more in scholarly writings than in everyday life among Kenyan Methodist Christians. Since this study is concerned with the understanding of lay worshipers and not academics, the word discipleship was used as it was more familiar to the people.

MCK

This term will be used to refer to the Methodist Church in Kenya including her administration as an institution and the worshippers that are present on Sunday worship. From here onwards, the acronym MCK will be used in place of Methodist church in Kenya.

Research Design and Methodology

In the previous section, I talked about the research problem, the background to the study, research questions, the delimitations of the study, research significance and definition of terms. This section presents the methodology used to conduct the research, data collection and sampling.

Research Design

This research was conducted as a phenomenological study. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin posit that phenomenology is a "philosophical approach to the study of experience. (Although) there are many different emphasis and interests… they share a particular interest in thinking about what the experience of being human is like… especially in

terms of the things which matter to us."[35] Although Edmund Husserl initially developed the Phenomenological method as a philosophical approach, the method has been useful in other fields of study and especially in the social sciences. In fact, most of the phenomenologists are either philosophers or psychologists, but they all have a different emphasis on either the existential or the embodied.[36] A phenomenological methodology proved beneficial to me as a student of discipleship in context. Its core approach enabled me to explore the experience of the people themselves rather than the already formulated theories.

This study is concerned with the Methodist church members' experiences. It seeks to explore their perceptions of the discipleship process as they have experienced it. The goal is not to reference or create a definition of discipleship, but rather to discover the members' experiences and perceptions. The study intends to understand how the people's experience of discipleship is peculiar to their own circumstances and context.

This research seeks the participants' perceptions rather than those that are expressed in written literature. In this practice, "the interpretation of lived experience (compared with, say, literary text) is shaped by contexts that may be relatively fixed, that mediate reality production accordingly. The accomplishment of order and meaning is highly localized, artful, yet contextually conditioned."[37] As Holstein and Gubrium note, phenomenology does not presume the meaning of things to be 'out there' separate from

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[35] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, 11.
[36] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 34.
[37] James A Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, "Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology and Interpretive Practice," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research / Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln Editors*, 1994, 270.

people's perceptions. In fact, the meaning is contained in people's interpretation of things and events.[38]

The choice for phenomenological method was motivated by the fact that it takes seriously the context in which something is experienced. Initial judgment is suspended in order to focus on the participant's experiences. As a researcher, I was aware of all my presuppositions and held them in check until I heard what the participants had to say. Discipleship as a common everyday experience for believers comes to a point where a person can say, 'now that was impactful for me spiritually, or that formed me.' This is the phenomenon I seek to understand.

Both the experience of the part and of the whole was important to me for this study. To understand this phenomenon, I had to look at how this experience shapes the larger context. I also had to keep in mind how the wider context influences the particular experience. This brought in a more dynamic and non-linear thinking.[39] Of course I already had experiences from the past that influenced my perceptions before I went for data collection. I however gained a wider perspective as I moved from one individual's experience to the next.

I was the main instrument of data collection. And because there is a subjectivity that happens with this type of study, I was willing to use the first-person as I developed my arguments.[40] Data was used inductively to build themes as I sought to learn the perceptions from the people rather than bring my own perceptions based on personal

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[38] Holstein and Gubrium, 263.
[39] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, 28.
[40] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 41.

experiences. The research process was emergent and not tightly prescribed. For example, some questions were modified as the interview proceeded. The key idea was to learn about the perceptions of discipleship from my participants.[41]

In preparation for this research, I did the online IRB training and obtained an approval certificate which I submitted to the local IRB board in my school. Their consent was granted after they were satisfied that the study was conducted in such a way as not to cause harm to the participants. I then wrote a letter requesting permission to conduct my study to the officials of the Methodist church in Kenya through the presiding bishop. The church wrote back granting permission for research among her members. Both of these documents are available in the Appendices of this dissertation.

Population of Study

The population of study was picked from the Methodist church in Kenya, a church that began in 1862. Other than the *African Inland Church*, which is the largest protestant church in Kenya, Barrett lists the *Presbyterian* and the *Methodist* as the other significant protestant churches in their region. The Methodist church is known for her being heavily invested in education and social work, sponsoring 166 primary schools in the country and several high schools. [42] The Methodist church also has a university, several health

[41] See Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 75–76.
[42] David Barrett and George T. Kurian, Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia, 2nd Ed: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, vol. 1: The World by Countries, Religionists, Churches, Ministries (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 428.

dispensaries, an empowerment center for people living with disabilities in Maua and a hospital.

MCK has the third largest number of congregations, numbering 3500, only trailing Pentecostal Assemblies of God (5000) and African Inland Church (4325) in the number of congregations as of the year 2000.[43] The other large congregation would be the Anglican church of Kenya with a "membership of three million, making it the largest protestant church in the country."[44]The MCK is smaller than that with a membership of about half a million members[45]. However, this church is a significant population in that it is among the first mission churches to be established in Kenya and has made significant impact in the development of the country despite her numbers.

The church is sub-divided into regional administrative areas called synods. Out of the eleven synods in MCK, four are based in the Meru area and two in the coastal region, with Nairobi being a synod that is the most cosmopolitan. Thus, the Meru and Nairobi regions were identified as areas of study. Meru was selected due to its rich history in Methodism and Nairobi was selected due to its cosmopolitan aspect. The Older churches were selected from the Miathene, Kaaga, and Nairobi synods. MCK St. John's church-Miathene was selected from Miathene synod. The church began in 1938 on a public

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[43] Barrett and and George T. Kurian, Todd M. Johnson. Barrett, 430.
[44] John Karanja, "Evangelical Attitudes toward Democracy in Kenya," in *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 72.
[45] "Methodist Church in Kenya — World Council of Churches," ChurchMember, accessed February 4, 2019, https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/methodist-church-in-kenya.

ground commonly known as *Nyumba cia mpara*. St. John church was the first congregation to be started in the Miathene synod area.

Kaaga MCK was selected from Kaaga synod. This church began in 1912 at Kaaga area when the missionaries decided to expand the church inward from the Kenyan coast. The Methodist church has since grown in this area and began several development programs including the Kaaga Rural training institute and Kaaga girls school.

Charles New Methodist Church was selected from Nairobi being the oldest church in the synod. It is named after Charles New who was among the first Methodist missionaries in Kenya. It started in 1967 after several attempts to form a Methodist congregation in Nairobi. The members who first joined this congregation had been attending an Anglican congregation in the city, which was perceived as a sister church to the Methodist. This had historical roots as well since Methodism began as a evangelical movement within the Anglican Church in Britain.

The younger churches were selected form the Nairobi and Kaaga synods. The first Younger church was Utawala MCK in Nairobi Synod. Utawala is a small congregation which was started in 2013. The region in which the church is situated was initially a reserve zone set apart for the army and administration police training ground. However, the area is rapidly growing owing to a new road (Eastern by-pass) that has been constructed to ease the traffic in the city. With the new road passing nearby, the Utawala area has grown very rapidly as more people are finding it viable to live there. It has an easier commute to the city where most people work. Those who do not work in the city work in the Utawala area where they operate small-scale businesses like vegetable kiosks and small merchandise shops.

From the Meru region, Gitimbine MCK was selected to represent the younger churches. This church like Utawala also begun in 2013 and serves people working in Meru town. Gitimbine people are usually people who had attended older Methodist churches in the town but had to walk substantial distances to get there. When a new congregation begun in the neighborhood, they went to support it to grow. Additionally, many people are looking to join newer or younger churches because of the worship vibrancy that they bring. Gitimbine is a younger church in terms of both when it was started and also the age of the majority of its attenders.

Selected churches were chosen because they represent different constituencies, including older, younger, rural, and urban congregations. The rural churches include Kaaga and Miathene while the urban churches include Charles New, Utawala and Gitimbine.

Chart Showing Churches that Comprised the Population of Research

CHURCH	AGE	GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION
CHARLES NEW	OLDER CHURCH	URBAN (NAIROBI)
UTAWALA	CHURCH PLANT	URBAN (NAIROBI)
GITIMBINE	CHURCH PLANT	URBAN (MERU)

KAAGA	**OLDER CHURCH**	**RURAL (MERU)**
MIATHENE	**OLDER CHURCH**	**RURAL (MERU)**

Sampling

This research employed a purposive sample selection method. The method is appropriate for phenomenological studies where respondents are picked because of their experience with the phenomenon being studied. As shown above, a total of five churches selected for the study. Respondents were then drawn from these five churches in Nairobi and Meru regions. Focus groups were also drawn from the selected church's groups. The groups included the main church groups in MCK: men, women and youth fellowship groups. These were key to information concerning their experiences of discipleship. There was a total of one hundred and twenty-five people with each group averaging about eight people.

Additionally, fifteen interviewees were selected purposively from the same churches. The interviewees were mostly team leaders in the men, women, and youth fellowships. These were chosen because being leaders has exposed them to experiences of discipleship. They were also mostly members who were actively engaged in the church and had gone through the church's programs that are geared towards discipleship. Leaders in the church groups represented a particular perspective rather than a

population, so they are a purposive sample of experts.[46] The goal was therefore not to represent the whole church, though this might have happened, but to represent a perspective on discipleship, as is usually the case in qualitative research.

The sampling captured a group where all were Methodist church members with some experience in the discipleship process. They all were church members who had experienced discipleship in some way and the intent was to get their perception of the discipleship experience. There however were some variations in location, duration of the church's existence, and the age groups. The sample was drawn from the said churches focusing on the youth fellowships and adult fellowships of both men and women groups.

Methods of Data Collection

This study utilized focus groups and interviews. The choice of using both interviews and focus groups was to avoid reliance on one source of data as Creswell cautions.[47] The intention was to have varied ideas from focus groups as well as in-depth discussions from interviews. The interview method enabled me to "invite participants to offer a detailed, first person-account of their experiences."[48] It also provided the right atmosphere to acquire rich data from the participants' experiences as they narrated stories, and relived moments that they had encountered discipleship. Both methods of data collection were centered around the subject of investigation.

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[46] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, 49.
[47] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 175*.
[48] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, 56.

During the data collection sessions, I used a notebook to record my observations and my preliminary interpretations.[49] My research assistant was also recording what was being said and operating the voice recorder to ensure that we had data in different locations for safety purposes in case one failed. It also meant that I had to secure the data in different places to ensure its safety and to satisfy confidentiality concerns.

Focus Groups

Focus groups allowed "multiple voices to be heard at one sitting, drawing a larger sample into a smaller number of data collection events."[50] This was useful to generate discussions and get more varied views on discipleship. The method utilized units of already existing church fellowship groups which included Men, Women and youth fellowships. Some open-ended questions were formulated to facilitate fruitful discussion during the process.[51] The focus group discussions were semi-structured such that the participants had room to discuss whatever they wanted to but within the boundaries of the topic of discipleship. These mostly included memory of events and experiences that shaped their Christian life and discipleship. Recalling certain things meant that they had been "transformed into objects of consciousness. Recollection implied that what was recalled must have already been constituted as meaningful."[52]The focus groups met in church on their regular meeting days. The discussions happened before or after the usual

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[49] Paul D. and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod Leedy, *Practical Research: Planning and Design, 8th Edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2005).
[50] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, 71.
[51] Marion Carson, "Conversation on a Train: Reflections on the Bible and Christian Discipleship," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 15, no. 1 (September 2014): 58–70.
[52] Susan Kleiman, "Phenomenology: To Wonder and Search for Meanings.," *Nurse Researcher* 11, no. 4 (2004): 10, citing Burch 1989.

scheduled meeting of the group as I had already determined with the group leaders. The duration for the focus groups was sixty to seventy minutes.

Interviews

This was a supplemental method to the focus groups. To ensure a more engaged listening, I used a voice recorder. I chose face-to-face interviews rather than phone interviews so as to have a personal contact with the respondents.[53] The interview method enabled me to have back and forth questioning for clarity where more elaboration was needed. I wrote down the initial interpretation of what I noticed as conditions allowed. Taking some notes during the interview helped me to capture first thoughts and interpretations during the interview process. I however did not allow this activity to dominate the interview or compromise active listening. Although I knew that interviews had some limits such as filtered responses due to my presence, the disadvantage was overcome by the fact that I had a more engaged interaction that is crucial for a phenomenological study.

I prepared a semi-structured interview schedule prior to meeting the interview participants. The questions were more of a loose guide to the discussion. I presented the informed consent forms to the participants which they willingly signed and gave back to me. Arrangements for interview participants were done by phone calls to determine the best timing and place. Participants mostly chose their offices, church premises or a private space at a coffee place.

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[53] C.R Kothari, *Research Methods* (New Delhi: New Age International Publishers, 2004), 97.

The language of the interviews was varied. Swahili, which is the Kenyan national language, was more natural for some participants while others opted to respond in English, Meru (mostly for participants from that language group) and sheng', which is a Kenyan slang that combines English, Swahili and multiple languages.

Participants were encouraged to relate their experiences in sufficient detail and to share their perceptions of the same. I conducted the interviews by talking directly to people in their natural setting and in face-to-face interaction with the participants.[54] I interviewed at the preferred place of the participant. Most of the time, the interview questions were answered in the scheduled order, but at other times, the participant addressed them in their own sequence. Either way, they were addressed at some point in the discussion. The interviews took between forty-five to sixty minutes each.

Credibility and Trustworthiness (Reliability and Validity)

I chose the terms from common language such as credibility and trustworthiness as suggested by Flick and Kvale.[55] These terms are also more meaningful for qualitative research because of what its epistemological base is, i.e. constructivist in nature. Credibility and trustworthiness are terms more suited to judge the quality and rigor in qualitative studies.[56] The understanding of criteria in quantitative research is

[54] John W. Creswell, 175.
[55] Uwe Flick and Steinar Kvale, *The Sage Qualitative Research Kit 2, 2* (London: SAGE, 2007), 122.
[56]Klenke *et al* note that in "positivist research, there are objective criteria that allow researchers and reviewers of journals to judge the quality and rigor of a study. Reliability and validity are fundamental concerns in quantitative research but seem to have an uncertain place in the repertoire of the qualitative researcher. Karin Klenke, Suzanne

fundamentally different[57] from that of qualitative research. According to Morrow, qualitative research focuses on a small number of respondents or subjects, while quantitative focuses on large samples using categories from existing theories.[58]

Credibility

To achieve credibility, I sought to keep coherence of interpretations of the data owing to the fact that "findings are valid to the extent that they resonate with the experiences of others who have experienced the phenomenon in question."[59] Data was therefore evaluated by peers to establish how the interpretations resonated with them. I sent the data to a colleague pastor in MCK to look at it and give his interpretation. I also made phone calls to the participants to establish that the understanding of their responses was the intended one.

Martin, and Randall Wallace, *Qualitative Research in the Study of Leadership* (Bingley: Emerald, 2016), 38.

[57] For example, research in quantitative method may want to determine to what extent the change in a certain variable affects the control variable in the same study. This criterion is indeed necessary in cases where the researcher is seeking objective and knowable reality beyond the human mind. Klenke, Martin, and Wallace, 39.

[58]Morrow Explains that Credibility in qualitative research is said to correspond to internal validity in quantitative approaches, transferability to external validity …. These correspondences, however should not be taken to mean that these parallel criteria accomplish exactly the same goals as their corresponding standards of rigor in quantitative research. Qualitative research leads to different kinds of knowledge claims than those resulting from the use of quantitative methods. S. L Morrow, "Quality and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research in Counseling Psychology," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, no. 2 (2005): 251–52.

[59] Karin Klenke, *Qualitative Research in the Study of Leadership* (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2008), 231.

I did a critically and thoroughly detailed description of data analysis.[60] Having previously been a leader in the MCK church, I had preconceived notions about discipleship in MCK. A conscious effort was made to suppress these experiential and theoretical notions so as not to influence what was heard from the participants or bias the final conclusions of the study.[61] I sought to exercise 'bracketing' of prior knowledge about how I perceived discipleship.[62]

Bracketing is aimed at suspending all judgement and prior assumptions in order to fully enter the world of the participant.[63] Additionally, I checked my transcripts several times to ensure that I corrected any mistakes done during transcription. I also went through the codes several times to make sure that the meaning I had assigned them was consistent. I made notes to remind myself what each code stood for.[64] I made sure that I was thorough in my descriptions of the data.

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[60] Cope DG, "Methods and Meanings: Credibility and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research.," *Oncology Nursing Forum* 41, no. 1 (2014): 90.
[61] Leedy, *Practical Research: Planning and Design, 8th Edition*, 139.
[62] Kleiman notes that "withholding existential claims facilitates the analysis of phenomena that are not easily recognized as particular "objects' such as emotions, values, or experiences…None of the above means that one forgets all possible past knowledge, only that one holds in abeyance or brackets all past knowledge of the phenomenon that may influence its perception or originality in the present situation." Kleiman, "Phenomenology: To Wonder and Search for Meanings.," 12–13.
[63] Klenke, Martin, and Wallace, *Qualitative Research in the Study of Leadership*, 231.
[64] Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 190.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, I sought to ensure that this study investigated what it purported to investigate."[65] I did this by checking, questioning, and theorizing throughout the research process which enabled me "to counter selective perception and biased interpretations".[66] I was diligent during the whole process as I constantly checked the data for representativeness, followed up on surprising data, looked for negative evidence that went contrary to the rest, and sought feedback from the informants.[67] Themes generated from the data were sent back to participants so that they could verify whether or not the captured perceptions were accurate. I also used interviews and focus groups to make sure that I was not relying on one data source. I maintained a questioning attitude in search for misunderstandings, incomplete understandings and deeper understanding.[68]

Data Analysis and Presentation

My first step was to prepare the data that I was going to analyze. The collected data was in different languages according to location of collection. For the data that was gathered within the rural areas in Meru, the language was predominantly *Kimeru* with some scattered English words especially from the younger people. Data from Nairobi and Meru town was in a mixed language of Kiswahili and English. Sometimes participants

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[65] Flick and Kvale, *The Sage Qualitative Research Kit 2, 2*, 122.
[66] Flick and Kvale, 123.
[67] Flick and Kvale, 123.
[68] Klenke, *Qualitative Research in the Study of Leadership*, 232, discussing a proposal for phenomenological validity by Benner 1994.

used the common city slang popularly known as *sheng*. Basically, all the data needed to be translated to English. Data was therefore translated to English by me and transcribed.

The transcribed data was arranged according to its source. Data from the women, the men, and the youth was organized accordingly. The whole data set was then read through a second time to properly familiarize myself with what had been collected. Initial thoughts were recorded and the notes taken during the interviews revised. However, I did keep a record of the changes and how interpretations emerged over time. Interview transcripts were read in their entirety to get a wider sense of the whole. The wider sense was important for determining how the parts might be constituted.[69]

All the names of the interview participants were changed into pseudonyms to ensure that their privacy was not breached. The names were coded such that any one reading the report would not be able to identify the specific person who had given the report. The names however are corresponding in gender of the interviewees who participated.

After this process of familiarizing with the data, I fed it into *'Hyper-research'*, the coding software through which codes are generated and organized according to their sources. Although bracketing is a contested exercise within hermeneutic phenomenology, it served in this context because its' meaning was taken to a basic understanding of withholding prior knowledge of the phenomenon. I was careful not to use my personal biases at this stage. The study sought not to ignore accounts that departed from the

[69] Kleiman, "Phenomenology: To Wonder and Search for Meanings.," 14.

dominant story.[70] For example, if one participant said something was irrelevant while almost everybody else said the same thing was significant, I took note of it.

The views of the one participant who felt differently were to be put into consideration too. Different codes were considered for how they would possibly combine to form an overarching theme. I also engaged a fellow colleague with whom I had served in the Methodist church to look at the codes and give his critique on my coding and how the themes were developing.

Themes started to emerge more clearly at this point. Theoretical thematic analysis was used where the creation of themes was driven by the study's analytical interest in the area of discipleship.[71] Additionally the themes were identified at a latent or interpretive level rather than a semantic and explicit level.[72] That meant that the analysis always sought to "identify and examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations… and ideologies that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data."[73] This was important to note for deeper engagement with the data findings later in the study. With this frame of mind, I organized data into thematic categories, analyzed significant statements, and generated major themes. A theme was understood as a category set in an analytic statement that brings an important aspect of the data in relation to the research question while capturing some pattern within

[70] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 89.
[71] Braun and Clarke, 84.
[72] Braun and Clarke, 84.
[73] Braun and Clarke, 84.

the data set.[74] After generating the themes, I created a systematic report on the participants' perceptions of discipleship.

Themes were chosen on various bases. First, I considered their frequency, that is, how often terms were repeated. Second, I considered the degree of emphasis on the idea or thought. Third, I considered how well a concept captured the overall intent of the conversation in deciding which themes were important. Braun and Clarke argue that the determinant of how key a theme is, "is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question."[75] They assert that this aspect gives the researcher some flexibility, which is important in qualitative research; they however note that one needs to be consistent in what they do in the analysis so as not to be biased, or be imposing themes on the study.[76]

For each individual theme, I wrote a detailed analysis and showed how it fit into the overall structure that was developing. I sought to provide a "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data told within and across themes… (While giving) sufficient evidence of the themes within the data i.e., enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme."[77]

I identified statements that relate to discipleship perceptions by separating relevant from irrelevant information in the interview and then breaking the relevant information into small segments that each reflects a single specific thought. I followed these steps as

[74] Braun and Clarke, 82.
[75] Braun and Clarke, 82.
[76] Braun and Clarke, 83.
[77] Braun and Clarke, 93.

suggested by Creswell: [78] I grouped statements into 'meaning units', categories that reflect the various aspects of discipleship as it is experienced or understood, I sought divergent perspectives considering the various ways through which different people experience (understand) discipleship, and I constructed a composite using various meanings identified to develop an overall description of the phenomenon. From here, data was built from particular to general themes and then an interpretation was done to give meaning to the data in an inductive way. Hence showing the importance of the complexity of this situation.[79]

Summary Statement

This chapter has introduced the study, defined the major terms and laid down the methodology used to conduct this research. I have argued that a phenomenological approach was selected because of the nature of this research which is to explore the discipleship experiences and perceptions of the people in context. I now move to examining the context where this study took place. I will explore the theological context of discipleship and then the geographical Kenyan context, mainline Christianity in Kenya, its theological orientation, discipleship in Kenya and MCK structure and ministry in the next chapter.

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[78] Leedy, *Practical Research: Planning and Design, 8th Edition*.140.
[79] Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4.

Chapter 2. Context

This chapter explores the context of this study. First, it surveys discipleship in ancient times and then looks at the context of discipleship as a discipline among other disciplines including evangelism and mission. It starts from ancient times and moves on to contemporary times. Second, it examines the geographical context of the study including the Kenyan society, its mainline Christianity and the Methodist church.

Theological Context: Discipleship in Ancient and Biblical Times

Collinson notes that in the Ancient world, educational practices were mostly geared towards gaining skills for a particular work or practice. People would attach themselves to a certain professional and learn from him (usually male) about the specific occupation. But it was not until around 3000 BCE that reading and writing skills developed in Mesopotamia thus prompting the beginning of formal schools.[80] The school system had different learning categories, but as Collinson notes, learning by children from adults was not known as "discipleship." Usually, "it was the learning relationships of young adult males with older philosopher-teachers which began to be designated as disciple-master relationships."[81]

Education in these disciple-teacher associations usually occurred in a learner-master relationship where the master was viewed to have more knowledge about a certain area. These interactions transcended the conferment of knowledge to a kind of fellowship of

[80] Sylvia Wilkey Collinson, *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster press, 2004), 11.
[81] Collinson, 12.

life. Great philosophers followed this method. For example, "in their teaching, Plato and Aristotle both followed Socrates in his practice of sharing common meals. They encouraged learners to be with, and observe the teacher in the normal routines of his life so that a whole philosophy of life and behavior was communicated."[82] These ancient philosophers advocated a 'learning of life' rather than disseminating information about selected areas of life.

In the Old Testament, the word *Talmid*, which is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *Mathetes,* denotes a disciple relationship. Wilkins observes that the "word *talmid* in the OT indicates a student or apprentice in musical instruction (1 Chronicles 25:8)". "The other term that denotes disciple is *limmudim*, but this one specifically referred to disciples of Yahweh. They could however be disciples of both Yahweh and a human master."[83] In the Greek-speaking world, the word *mathetes* was used in three ways;

1. With a general sense of a learner.
2. With a technical sense of adherent.
3. With a more restricted sense of an 'institutional pupil' of the sophists.[84]

In the first century Jewish context, many rabbis had followers who had enrolled as disciples. John the Baptist, for example, had his own disciples long before Jesus started his ministry. The characteristics of rabbinical discipleship in the first century included; submission to the teacher, memorizing the teacher's words, learning the teacher's way of ministry, imitating the teacher's life, and replicating the process by finding one's own

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[82] Collinson, 13.
[83] M.J. Wilkins, "Disciples and Discipleship," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 202.
[84] Wilkins. 202

disciples.[85] The sign of a disciple's maturity would consequently be seen in his (mostly male in those days) ability to have students of his own. The more famous among the rabbis attracted more students to their "school." Normally, disciples picked their own teachers/rabbis, but the procedure of Jesus and his disciples was different from many other disciple teacher arrangements; Jesus picked his own disciples.

According to Keener, only the "most radical ancient teachers summoned disciples to leave their resources behind to follow them."[86] Jesus thus fell in the category of these radical rabbis who demanded total commitment from their followers. Reciprocally, Jesus showed his readiness to give his own life as a seal for his commitment to the relationship he had established with his disciples. None of Jesus' disciples attached himself to Jesus of his own desire or choice. "Those who followed were able to do so because they were called by him, because they responded to the command, 'follow me!' the choice was Jesus' not the disciples."[87] It is however important to note that the disciples had the freedom to honor this invitation or to reject it.

Wilkins notes that once Jesus' disciples decided to accept his invitation, he offered to teach them an alternative way of life. They had been welcomed to start living a kingdom lifestyle, which was going to be different from their former lives. Jesus welcomed his followers to consider the full implications of their commitment or what he called 'counting the cost' (Luke 14:28). The commitment to follow Jesus was a serious undertaking. Wilkins observes,

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[85] Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple-maker* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004), 13.
[86] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 55.
[87] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, 37*.

> Counting the cost of discipleship meant exchanging the securities of this world for salvation and security in him. For some this meant sacrificing riches (Matt 19:16-26), for others it meant sacrificing attachment to family (Matt 8:18-22), for others still it meant abandoning nationalistic feelings of superiority (Luke 10:25-27). For all disciples it means giving of one's life for gospel proclamation in the world.[88]

He further states that counting the cost meant being ready for discomfort and at times suffering as a result of witnessing to a new ethos of a kingdom unfamiliar to the world. The good news, however, was that while the disciple committed to follow Jesus through all circumstances, Jesus was also committed to do the same. The responsibilities assigned to the disciples varied. Jesus did not call his disciples to the same job, although all disciples were called upon to demonstrate their commitment to Jesus at some point, some would keep their positions of influence to use them when there was kingdom need. Others relinquished their positions in order to serve Jesus faithfully. As Wilkins notes,

> While all disciples were called to count the cost of their allegiance… leaving everything and following Jesus was not intended for all (Mark 5:18-19). For example, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea apparently became followers of Jesus sometime during his ministry… yet presumably they remained within the religious establishment and retained their wealth. When demonstration of their faith and allegiance to Jesus was required, they came forward to claim the body of Jesus and provide for him a burial place (Matt 27:57-60).[89]

Christians in Jesus' time understood a call to discipleship was a call to a transformed life, loving service, and living in fellowship with other believers. Discipleship was intended to "move beyond initial salvation and produce holy character, vital service in the world, and involvement in Christian community."[90] These were the basic identifiers of a life that had been given to the leadership of Christ. The disciple was self-abandoned to Jesus'

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[88] Michael J. Wilkins, "Discipleship." 279.

[89] Wilkins, "Disciples and Discipleship." 206

[90] Matt Friedeman, "Discipling," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2001).

control and direction. The leading of Jesus took precedence over pre-determined laws. This meant that Jesus' followers could be called to answer their calling in different ways as their master desired.

The gospels portray good and bad traits in the disciples, "yet they also show how Jesus taught them (Mk 4:10-12), corrected them (Mt 16:5-12), admonished them (Mt 17:19-20), supported them (Luke 22 31-34), comforted them (John 20:19-22), and restored them (John 21: 15-19)."[91] Jesus showed his willingness to work with less than perfect people. The only condition was the disciple's willingness to be committed to following him forever.

In Luke 10:25-37, a lawyer who had come to enquire from Jesus is depicted as knowing that true following would be through loving God with heart, soul, and mind. One however was to show their love for God by loving neighbor, illustrated in the Good Samaritan story. As Wilkins notes,

> Public statements of commitment were judged by the fruit of one's life (Luke 6:43-49, 19:11-27). That fruit consists, at least in part, in loving and doing good to others (Luke 6:17-36), proper stewardship of material possessions (Luke 6:35, 8:3), servant hood (Luke 22:24-30), prayer (Luke 10:2,11:1, 18:1-8), and testimony to the way (Luke 9: 1-6,10:1-12…).[92]

The witness of one's life was shown in how life was lived in integrity both in public and in private. Wilkins notes that the bond between Jesus and his followers as shown in the gospels was special. "Jesus developed a relationship with his disciples that was unique to his status as the messianic Son of God, whose disciples would ultimately worship him, an

[91] Wilkins, "Disciples and Discipleship," 206.
[92] Wilkins, 210.

action reserved solely for God with his people (Matt 28:16-17)."[93] Wilkins also notes that other disciple teacher relationships stopped short of the worship of the teacher. This is one of the ways in which Jesus' discipleship was unique.

Discipleship as a Process

According to Willard, the disciple of Christ is "one who intent upon becoming Christ like and so dwelling in his faith and practice, systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end."[94] This systematic rearrangement happens in a process. "In the N.T, the words connected with discipleship are applied chiefly to the followers of Jesus and describe the life of faith. The Greek word *Akoloutheo* (follow) denotes the action of a (person) answering the call of Jesus whose whole life is redirected in obedience. A *mathetes* (disciple) is one who has heard the call of Jesus to join him."[95] After responding to Christ's call, the student learns to model their life after Jesus and thus experiences transformation.

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[93] Wilkins, 202.
[94] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Family Christian Press, 2001), 261.
[95] Brown, Colin (Ed), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1986).

Christian Discipleship in Relation to Evangelism

The process begins when the gospel is heard. People are welcomed to 'come and see' or to give a chance to the Christian faith. This starting point is also called evangelism. According to David Bosch, evangelism can be said to be;

> That dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions and a particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as savior and lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace and justice on earth; and being committed to God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ.[96]

In his view, this activity presents an opportunity to people to respond to God's love, and welcomes them to be members of God's community, the church.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) committee on Mission and Evangelism understands evangelism as "sharing one's faith and conviction with other people and inviting them to discipleship, whether or not they adhere to other religious traditions. Such sharing is to take place with both confidence and humility and as an expression of our professed love for our world."[97]

WCC, which is an ecumenical body of different conciliar denominations, further nuances their understanding of discipleship.

> For some, evangelism is primarily about leading people to personal conversion through Jesus Christ; for others, evangelism is about being in solidarity and offering Christian witness through presence with oppressed peoples; others again look on evangelism as one component of God's mission. Different Christian traditions denote aspects of mission and evangelism in different ways; however,

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[96] Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 430.
[97] WCC (CWME), "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes: New Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism" (WCC Publications, September 2012), 30.

> we can still affirm that the Spirit calls us all towards an understanding of evangelism which is grounded in the life of the local church where worship (*leiturgia*) is inextricably linked to witness (*martyria*), service (*diakonia*), and fellowship (*koinonia*).[98]

Douglas Ottati however challenges the idea of evangelism with a goal to convert people to Christianity or what Bosch would call 'reorient them to embrace Christ as savior and lord'. Ottati notes that "for some centuries, the predominant meaning of the English word evangelist was something along the lines of 'one who brings, teaches, or preaches the good news of the gospel'. By extension then evangelism meant bringing the gospel, teaching it, or witnessing to it."[99] Ottati argues that conversion should never be the goal of an evangelist because that is purely the work of God to convert. Humans can only witness to the gospel and the grace of God will bring the conversion.[100]

The WCC expands evangelism or the invitation to include worship, witness, service, and fellowship, vouching for a more comprehensive and inclusive stance. Kenneth Frederick brings another nuance to the understanding of the two steps towards Christian transformation. He views the first step as 'the making of' and the second step as 'the teaching of' disciples. He observes, "The Lord Jesus Christ commanded his church to evangelize the lost and then to edify the believers. For each of these functions- Evangelism and Edification- the scripture employs the concept of discipling; i.e. we are told to make disciples (evangelism) and we are told to teach these converts

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[98] WCC (CWME), 31.
[99] Douglas F Ottati, *Theology for Liberal Presbyterians and Other Endangered Species* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2006), 52.
[100] Ottati, 56.

(discipleship)."[101] For Frederick, these two steps are important for discipleship, with discipleship seen as the holistic procedure of Christian transformation.

All these scholars bring different dimensions to the understanding of evangelism. Bosch does not mention evangelism as the next level to discipleship. WCC talks about discipleship as the next level but also says evangelism can be understood as solidarity with the oppressed. This makes one wonder if there is a next level with this kind of evangelism. The agent of evangelism advocates for justice but does not seem to invite the subject to a different way of living in Christlikeness. May be one can argue that the subject is invited to a life of freedom and so they are only a recipient of grace and not a giver.

Ottati seems to disagree with Bosch's idea of evangelism as inviting people to embrace Christ among other invitations, he chooses to focus on witnessing. This relieves responsibility from the evangelist and recognizes that it is God's work to convert. Although I agree with Ottati that it is God's work and actually an act of Grace, I do not see how evangelism can be what it is without inviting people to a change, to some kind of response. An apathetic witness of the gospel would not advance the cause of transforming people into Christ-likeness. Only evangelism with a goal to move people from unbelief to belief will work towards completing the three levels of discipleship namely; inviting, teaching and commissioning. A well discipled community is a worshiping community, thus the three levels make disciples worshippers.

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[101] Kenneth Frederick, *The Making of a Disciple: A Study of Discipleship from the Life of Simon Peter* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2001), 1.

Christian Discipleship in Relation to Teaching/Learning

To be a disciple of Christ is to learn and understand Jesus' way of life. Teaching is given to all those who have accepted the invitation into discipleship and especially the ones who are young in faith thus edifying them. The practice of teaching God's word in the scriptures provides the necessary second step of discipleship.

The learning in discipleship enables the disciple to grow. Growth in discipleship is not an event; rather it is an on ongoing process. There is no such time as a moment of full maturity where a disciple does not need to grow any more. Kenneth Frederick argues that though a time may come when the believer is matured and is released to go and serve God independently, they are still interdependent with other Christians.[102] Friedrick notes that disciples never graduate to anything else other than disciples. Disciples may lead other disciples, but both the younger and the older disciples look up to Jesus as the chief leader. Although disciples recruit others like themselves, their ultimate goal is really not to reproduce others like them but to reproduce others like Christ. They teach the ways of Christ rather than their own ways.

Teaching brings about formation. Robert Webber points to the early church where the disciple process involved these stages in summary, "an intentional process of evangelism, discipleship and Christian formation. The process of formation was not left to mere hope that the new converts would mature. Instead the church's approach to new converts was to take them by the hand and walk them through and intentional life-giving process of

[102] Frederick, *The Making of a Disciple*.

formation…"[103] The process of forming disciples ensures balanced teaching on matters of faith so that believers are not tossed by every wind of doctrine. Teaching leads to this life-giving formation where the main end goal is transformation into Christlikeness.

For teaching to be transformative John K.A Smith offers a different approach that is beyond the cognitive. He asserts that teaching appeals to the affective side of the human being as much as, or even more than the cerebral side. According to Smith, "education is not something that traffics in abstract, (preferably, it includes) our bodies in a process of formation that aims our desires, primes our imagination and orients us to the world… this is why educational strategies that traffic only in ideas often fail to actually educate; that is, they fail to form people."[104]

As articulated by Paul, there is need for Christ followers to grow to maturity in Christ. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, Paul while talking about the unity of the church implores Christians to equip the church for the ministry so as to build up the body of Christ. To equip and build believers is geared towards bringing them to maturity in Christ. He prays that all could grow to the full knowledge of Christ and to maturity in the full stature of Christ.

In verse fourteen, Paul asks them to seek to mature in Christ so that they are no longer tossed about 'by every wind of doctrine.' (Ephesians 4:14). The training and the equipping Paul talks about here was "sometimes used in the Greek world to describe training or discipline, including in the work of the philosophers and teachers."[105] The

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[103] Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*, 2003, 24, http://site.ebrary.com/id/10805945.
[104] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 39.
[105] Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 549.

maturity that Paul desires is for the church "to graduate from infancy and instability that is due to inadequate doctrine and inadequate experience of Christ. The spiritual novice is wide open to false doctrine…."[106] Paul was well aware that spiritual babies were bound to error in the faith. He therefore entreated them to desire growth in Christ.

Teaching also facilitates equipping for service in God's kingdom. It entails the "effort to nurture immature believers to maturity in Christ so that they are equipped to serve God effectively...."[107] The disciples make themselves available to God for use in God's own way.

If disciples do not proceed through all the levels of growth, people get arrested at the first level where every day, the gospel is an invitation to faith, and never progresses beyond that. But as the disciple grows from both the first and second step of discipleship, they proceed to the third step which is response. As their faith grows, discipleship invites the follower to respond to God's love. At this level, the disciple is ready to join God in what God is doing, in mission. The first level of invitation is evangelistic in its proclamation. It offers people to come and experience a deeper life in God. The deeper experience is transmitted through the second step of teaching. The two steps cannot be rightfully divorced from each other without collapsing the motif of Christian discipleship. But the fruit of discipleship is seen in one's participation in missions, which is the response of a disciple to the sending activity of God.

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[106] F. F Bruce, *New International Bible Commentary: Based on the NIV* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub., 1986), 1436.
[107] Frederick, *The Making of a Disciple*, 7.

Christian Discipleship in Relation to Mission

The Bible connects discipleship and mission in a distinctive way. For example, from beginning to end, Matthew talks about the role of Jesus disciples in his kingdom. Jesus asserts that all authority is given unto him; therefore, his disciples can go in the confidence of that authority. Dean Flemming suggests that the reading of Matthew 8:18-20 is always given preeminence over the whole message of Matthew, however, these final verses are just a capstone of what the whole gospel has been saying.[108] The whole gospel is an invitation by Jesus for his disciples to go tell it to others. (Matthew 28:10). He further notes, "From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus formed a missional community. Jesus' initial call to discipleship was a call to mission."[109] Discipleship is therefore the content of mission.

Christopher Wright argues that the whole Bible, rather than a few verses of scripture, is a missional document. He notes, "missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation."[110] Mission is therefore intrinsic to discipleship. It is not discipleship if it does not culminate in participation in God's mission. True Christian discipleship recognizes that to be a disciple of Christ is to join him in his mission to the world.

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[108] Dean Flemming, *Why Mission? Reframing the New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015).
[109] Flemming, 10.
[110] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 51.

Schmidt notes that discipleship goes beyond what people do; it goes beyond personal morality. Discipleship addresses the issues of justice in people's lives.

> Historically, the evangelical church has interpreted non-conformity as abstaining from drinking, smoking, illicit sex, dirty movies, pornographic books, dancing, and other personal ethical taboos. This stand is not wrong, but it does not go far enough… (Discipleship) applies to issues of hunger, war, poverty, racism, militarism, and anything in our world system which is contrary to the standards of a holy God.[111]

Good discipleship joins people where they are and addresses their struggles. Teaching people how to live a Christ-like life involves modelling that Christ-like compassion in their lives. Discipleship is not choosing the easy life and leaving the difficult areas out. It is living out that whole life as modelled by Christ.

This brings the disciple to the level of response. Although teaching and learning in discipleship does not end, a disciple who has received sufficient teachings about following Christ is moved by an urge to serve his/her master. According to John Stott, "Mission is properly a comprehensive word, embracing everything which God sends his people into the world to do."[112] It is never for personal and selfish enjoyment that God has called the disciple, rather, it is for the benefit of others whom God desires to be part of the kingdom too. Bosch notes,

> It has to be emphasized that the personal enjoyment of salvation never becomes the central theme in biblical conversion stories. Where Christians perceive themselves as those enjoying an indescribably magnificent private good fortune. Christ is easily reduced to little more than the 'disposer and distributor' of special blessings, and evangelism an enterprise that fosters the pursuit of pious self-centeredness. Not that enjoyment of salvation is wrong…it is secondary. It

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[111] Henry J. Schmidt, *Conversion: Doorway to Discipleship* (Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1980), 113.
[112] John R. W Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 35.

> is not only to receive life that people are called to become Christians, but rather to give life[113]

Bosch gives a sharp critique to evangelism that never progresses beyond itself. He notes, "the so-called evangelism, it appears, aims at satisfying rather than transforming people."[114] Disciples form a community called an *ekklesia*, and this *ekklesia* or church exists for the world. The disciple community therefore exists for mission. In Exodus 3:7-10, God demonstrates this to Moses. Moses who was not a slave at the time is sent by God to rescue his brothers and sisters from Egyptian slavery. The Lord said,

> I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So, I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians …And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt. (Exodus 3:7-10)

God hears the cry and sees the oppression of his people. God responds by sending Moses who God had already rescued from that fate himself. God had saved Moses from a genocide that had ravaged Israelite's children so that he could be useful to bring salvation to the Israelites at a later date.

David Bosch argues that the calling of people to Christ as disciples is an election for service. It is not exclusively to receive life that people are called, but rather to *give* life. They are to make life- giving the central characteristic of their lives, to live an exocentric as opposed to an egocentric life.[115]

According to Wright, God chooses to involve God's elect to be participants in God's agenda of redemption. In the OT, God chooses Abraham and makes a covenant with him.

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[113] Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 424.
[114] Bosch, 427.
[115] David J Bosch, "Evangelism: A Holistic Approach," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 36 (September 1981): 23.

The covenant God makes is that he will bless Abraham, and nations will be blessed through him. God thus calls Abraham to a life of righteousness and obedience; it is through such a relationship that the blessing will happen. Wright notes,

> On the one hand, God's initial choice, address, command and promise to Abraham were all unconditional in the sense that they did not depend on any prior condition that Abraham had fulfilled. Thy emerge out of the unexpected and undeserved grace of God and out of God's undaunted determination to bless this human race of divided nations in spite of all that has thwarted his goodwill so far.[116]

Here, God is determined to bless the people no matter what they do or do not do. But there is a sense in which this promise rests on the cooperation of Abraham too. Wright observes, "Bluntly put, if Abraham had not got up and left for Canaan, the story should have ended there."[117] And yet this is not to hinge the salvation of the nations on one person's obedience, for God made a promise to Abraham initially when Abraham did not even know who God is. But after that, it was important for Abraham to move in obedience, to participate with God. Disciples are called to participate with God too. Because "God's chosen people do not exist for themselves. Rather they exist for the sake of God's glory and his mission, and for the sake of others toward whom God's mission is directed."[118]

Disciples are blessed and privileged as God's children, but they are also responsible and sent to pass on that very blessing. Christopher Wright observes that the declaration of God through Abraham that Israel will be a blessing, and that other nations will be blessed through them was not confined to them alone. Passing the blessing to

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[116] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 206.
[117] Wright, 206.
[118] Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 26.

others is the mission that God has called the disciples into. Disciples are called so they can be sent.

Charles Van Engen, echoing this missional level of discipleship, observes that discipleship is never static but always in movement. "Discipleship must always be discipleship-in-movement-to-the-world."[119] The called community is also the sent community and therefore a community in motion to the world and passing across boundaries. He sees the church as a "missionary fellowship of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ."[120] The acknowledgement of the Lordship of Jesus immediately demands that this truth be communicated to those who are under his lordship, and that happens to be all people.

Ott *et al* note that after Jesus had called his disciples to himself, he sent them out to the world. "The purpose of Jesus' calling of the disciples is to send them… that they may be with him and that he might send them to preach (Mark 3:14) …. The ministry of the disciples was to imitate the ministry of Jesus."[121] God's mission of redeeming the world is therefore the chief business of the disciples. Jesus reminds them that he is sending them to the world just as he himself is sent. "As the father has sent me, so I am sending you" (John 20:21). The disciples are therefore to understand themselves as the sent ones and not the initiators of the mission. "This does not only justify mission but relieves the church of the sense that the success of mission depends on human efforts and

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[119] Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 76.
[120] Engen, 93.
[121] Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 72.

strategies."[122] The church therefore does not own the mission, but has been invited to partner with the owner of the mission. "It gives the church a deep sense of privilege and confidence that it is part of something bigger than itself."[123]The church has been invited to make disciples, who are to be part of God's grand plan which is his mission to the world.

Summary

The historical-theological context of discipleship began in the ancient world. It continued through OT times and on to NT times where Jesus called his own disciples to join him in his mission. Discipleship is a process that assumes the initial level of evangelism, which is an offer of a valid opportunity to all people to be challenged to a life in God. It progresses to teaching that anchor believers in the faith. Discipleship's ultimate goal is mission, which is service by transformed people to the world. There are no missions without disciples, but there are also no disciples who are not called into missions. Being a disciple immediately calls one to be in partnership with God. In this next session, we look at the context of study in terms of geographical location.

[122] Ott, Strauss, and Tennent, 75.
[123] Ott, Strauss, and Tennent, 75.

Geographical Context

The process of Christian discipleship happens in a particular culture within a particular context. Context evolves through time and is never static. Gehman notes that "contextualization is concerned with the dynamic, changing context of present day culture, and not merely with an imagined static, traditional culture."[124]It is for this reason that every generation of Christians must look afresh at their context and how the gospel can be lived out faithfully in it. Christianity itself is a faith that is strongly attentive to culture as displayed in the story of Jesus who was born as a specific human being in a specific culture. He was a Jew born in Palestine under the Roman rule and he practiced the culture of the land.

Context is important for the Christian faith. Good contextualization however recognizes that context changes all the time, it also recognizes that the gospel thrives where it is presented in such a way that the people concerned can relate to it.

According to Michael Rynkiewich, "Culture is a more or less integrated system of knowledge, values and feelings that people use to define their reality (worldview), interpret their experiences, and generate appropriate strategies for living…."[125] These cultural values and feelings are shaped by where the people are both geographically and socially, i.e. their context.

The context of the Methodist church in Kenya is influenced by what is going on in the country, in the continent of Africa, and elsewhere in the global church as a whole.

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[124] Richard Gehman, *Doing African Christian Theology: An Evangelical Perspective* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1987), 6.
[125] Rynkiewich, *Soul, Self, and Society*, 19.

In the African context, Christianity is vibrant. Jenkins claims that "by 2050 only about one-fifth of the world's 3.2 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic whites."[126] Evangelism is no longer in the hands of foreign missionaries as it has now been taken up by indigenous churches. As such, new converts are being added to the church daily. Sub-Saharan Africa's share of the global Christian population is forecast to rise from 24% in 2010 to 38% in 2050.[127]

Although the forecast on the prospects of African Christianity look good, there are also challenges that interrupt the discipleship process. But with the great prospects for Christianity in Africa as portrayed above, a country like Kenya is still hopeful of what is possible if discipleship happens efficiently. With her population of about 38 Million people, 82% of these are Christian.[128] We now take a look at the country of Kenya.

Kenyan Society

The Republic of Kenya is located in the Eastern part of Africa. Her neighbors include Ethiopia and South Sudan to the North, Uganda to the Western part, Tanzania to the

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[126] Jenkins portrays an optimistic presentation of Christianity, especially his confident prediction that in 50 years (2050), the non-Latino white will be minority and the Christian world will be dominated by people from Southern hemisphere. It provokes reactions and affirmations and even led to the production of other books. The catchy phrase that summarized his thesis, "the center of gravity of the Christian world has shifted …southward," Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

[127] http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf, 60. Accessed on January 18th, 2016.

[128] Kenyan census, "Https://Www.Scribd.Com/Doc/36670466/Kenyan-Population-and-Housing-Census-PDF#scribd," 2009, 33.

South and Somalia to the East. The Country has the Equator, latitude (0) pass right through it, and the Longitude (37) running from its north to the south. Kenya has a population of about 38 Million people. Eighty-two percent of these people are Christian, 11 % are Muslims and the remaining 7% are Traditional religion and other minority religions.[129]

Kenya is a country beautifully colored by a blend of people from different tribes and languages. The Kenyan culture is therefore a fusion of indigenous and borrowed worldviews from a variety of backgrounds. In villages, people tend to live with others from their own tribe and region. However, most people who move to cities in search of jobs or better opportunities find that ethnic boundaries are to some extent blurred. One might have neighbors from any one of the forty-two tribes since people's tribe of origin does not divide city housing. Offices, especially in towns, are filled with people from different tribes and regions of the country.

Mainline Christianity in Kenya

Mainline churches and their efforts at discipleship can be traced through their history since the time these churches were launched by the missionaries. Churches became the place that facilitated communal well-being. The mission churches built schools, hospitals and agricultural demonstration farms in order to take care the whole person. Mainline Christianity supported a holistic approach to the spread of the gospel.

[129] Kenyan census, 33.

Mainline Church's Discipleship and Justice (Development/Advocacy)

The mainline church in Kenya has been keen on development as part of her discipleship endeavor. Lonsdale observes that the mainline churches championed by the NCCK, have been passionate for development projects like schools and hospitals. [130] For example, "The Mission churches- Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodist, (even the Quakers) have a long history of development work in Kenya…. It is estimated that 64 % of all Kenya's educational institutions are church based."[131] This shows that the church is very much part of what is happening in Kenya in terms of alleviating illiteracy. Many schools that are reputed for having a good education were started by the church. Not everyone views the condition of the church this positively.

Gitonga, for example, argues that there are critical challenges in the Kenyan church's discipleship. Specifically, Gitonga sees the mainline church as having been affected by the East African Revival Fellowship (EARF) which has been in the country since the 1930s. This group emphasized the experience of receiving salvation in Christ at the expense of other tenets of faith and that became problematic for discipleship.[132] These missing tenets include issues of justice such as development and advocacy. The 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, which developed along tribal and ethnic lines,

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[130] John Lonsdale, "Kikuyu Christianities: A History of Intimate Diversity," in *Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in Honor of Adrian Hastings* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2002), 187.
[131] Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). 46
[132] Gitonga, "Making Disciples in Kenya," 30.

demonstrated that people did not mind about the justice of those labeled as 'other' at the time.

Onyancha and Shorter observe that discipleship in Kenya is lopsided. Many times, the emphasis is on the spiritual growth that takes no notice of the social aspect of the people's lives. They argue that integral discipleship in Kenya must seek the welfare of the soul and mind too. "Christian spirituality is also a way of speaking about discipleship- the following of Jesus-but discipleship is not an end in itself. It is a form of empowerment in the midst of life's struggles and challenges. This means it can and should be integrated with social praxis and the action for justice and peace."[133] This piece was seen to be missing in the Kenyan church context.

Looking at these challenges of discipleship in Africa, JNK Mugambi, argues that African Christianity may be suffering from a narrow perspective. He argues, "During the past thirty years, the economy of Africa has deteriorated at the same inverse proportion as church membership has grown. The more Christian the continent becomes, the more pauperized it is increasingly becoming. Is this a fact for Christians to rejoice about? If not, it is a challenge, which we have to take seriously."[134] Mugambi thus sees a challenge and seems to agree with both Gitonga, Shorter and Onyancha.

Although these challenges endure, not all has failed in African Christianity and discipleship. For instance, the Methodist church in Kenya has been on the lead in the area

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[133] Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyancha, *Secularism in Africa: A Case Study, Nairobi City* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publication Africa, 1997). 143

[134] J.N.K Mugambi. "A Fresh Look at Evangelism in Africa" *International Review of Mission (July* 1, 1998 342-360), 357.

of development. Nthamburi notes that MCK has in the past "made a great contribution to the development of our country in education, medicine and in social as well as economic fields. The church has been in the forefront in areas of human development."[135] The church's efforts are encompassing the total well-being of humans including socio-economic and spiritual.

However, the church's focus on development has been questioned with some people seeing it as a path towards secularizing the church. These people fear that the church may find herself less concerned with preaching the gospel and more involved in social work. The Roman Catholic church for example cautions against too much of a focus on development as this would make the church secular. In their papal nuncio to Kenya she states that "the role of the church is not just giving food and health services but also sharing its faith' since it works for the eternal salvation of mankind."[136] Gifford observes that there are those who feel that "it is not that Africans are noticeably becoming secularized, but much mainline Christianity effectively is. The identification of Christianity and aid obviously worries some…"[137] The fear expressed here is that the church may get absorbed with providing aid to people and get compromised in the faith-sharing aspect.

Secularization in Africa has a different meaning than it would be understood in the west. Initial secularization in Africa happened as missionaries provided distinctions between the sacred and the secular. According to Okesson, there was a tension among

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[135] Zablon John Nthamburi, *A History of The Methodist Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: Uzima Press, 1982), xv.
[136] Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya*. 50
[137] Gifford. 50

missionaries between putting a binary between the sacred and the secular even the divisions ultimately occurred. Okesson however notes that "any resultant secularization has already been modified… first by the missionaries and thereafter by the Africans."[138]

Shorter and Onyancha note that there are different definitions of secularism. It may "stem from explicit unbelief, the denial of the existence of God… an allegiance to a popular myth of science as the ultimate theory of everything, a conviction that the only truths are scientific truths, reality as accessible to scientific observation and experiment."[139] Such a belief is built on a premise that human development and progress is unlimited. As such, people devote themselves to acquiring material things and development, things perceived to have much power. As such, the most common form of secularism is therefore not formal unbelief; rather it is 'indifferentism induced by the preoccupation with material things.

Gifford further notes that development has some political implications in a country like Kenya. "This development activity lets the government off the hook. Quite simply, aid helps prevent the political reform that would most help Kenya. The political elite can simply continue its depredations, knowing that the essentials will be provided by agencies like the churches."[140] Would it then be accurate to say that the mainline church is doing more harm than good in propagating development?

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[138] Gregg Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity Within Akamba Christianity in Kenya* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 97.
[139] Shorter and Onyancha, *Secularism in Africa: A Case Study, Nairobi City*, 15.
[140] Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya*, 50.

Such an allegation for the Kenyan mainline church would not be totally truthful. Gifford makes an important point that the government may slacken and wait for churches to serve the citizens. But the church cannot be blamed for the government's inactivity. Her involvement in development does not hurt the sharing of faith as the papal nuncio might have feared. This is because sharing of faith and participating in development are not mutually exclusive activities. In fact, sharing the faith includes caring for the body, mind and soul. It is not healthy to take care of the body and leave the soul unattended, and vice versa.

Additionally, development as the legacy of mainline churches is faulted for not going far enough. Jose Chipenda laments that although the contribution of churches toward development is something to be celebrated in Kenya, it can also be retrogressive when the church's concern is only development without combining it with advocacy for justice. He observes, "most mainline churches have promoted development and not justice oriented programs."[141] This, without the pursuit of justice cannot take a community very far in progress. Chipenda thus notes that avoidance of advocacy weakens discipleship in the mainline churches.

Chipenda purports that development alone is powerless. It must be combined with advocacy for it to cause the aspired transformation. This is especially experienced in areas where the government authorities show little concern about the injustices happening to the poor. Systemic injustices usually witnessed in slum and poor areas are left undisturbed because the poor are most times without voice. Politicians offer empty

[141] Jose Chipenda, "The Church of the Future in Africa," in *African Church in the 21st Century*. (Nairobi, Kenya: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1993), 27.

promises to improve the situations but there is usually no real action following those promises. For example, poor people in Nairobi slums get water rations whenever there is water shortage. Further, these people cannot afford to buy water at the exorbitant prices that is sold.[142]

In such instances, the voice of the church is critical to unsettle the government over the plight of the weak in society. Jean-Marc Ela challenges that "Christians should not have personal interests but should champion the well-being of the entire community and bring the authorities to accountability of their deeds and treatment of the community. Christians should not only provide to the poor but they must challenge the oppressive situations making the communities poor."[143] The mainline church could in these ways be said to be lagging behind in her efforts towards advocacy for the poor and the weak in society.

But the Kenyan church is not entirely guilty of not participating in advocacy for the betterment of society. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the mainline church in Kenya began to get involved in the struggle for the country's political justice. It was at a time when Moi (then Kenyan president) abolished the secret ballot in 1986 for *Mlolongo*- a term that literally means a queue or lining up to vote. Churches opposed him on this move because it was geared to destroy the freedom of the citizens' voting rights. Notable

[142] "Leaking Pipes Worsen Nairobi's Water Problem," Daily Nation, accessed October 12, 2018, https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/nairobi/Nairobi-slums-water-problem/1954174-4267204-xyv5xs/index.html.
[143] Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 8.

in opposing this move were Anglican church leaders like Henry Okullu, Alexander Muge, and David Gitari.

The National Council of Churches –Kenya (NCCK) made their voice heard through Samuel Kobia, a Methodist clergy who was the General Secretary of the council (NCCK). Gifford further observes that a Presbyterian clergy named Timothy Njoya was the first to make the call for a new constitution in Kenya,[144] a move that came to be realized later in the 2000s. Njoya believed in the calling of the church to influence the political arena of a country. He observed that good politics facilitates a good church in society, however, the opposite is unfortunately not true, Njoya observes. "Bad politics create a bad church, but a good church doesn't create good politics… If this were the case, the church would have more influence, but worldly power is more influential than church power, rather than the other way around."[145] The two clergymen noted above were members of the Kenyan mainline churches. Advocacy in the mainline can thus be said to be attempted even though not fully achieved.

Mainline Church's Discipleship and Spirituality

Discipleship in the Kenyan mainline church incorporates the socio-economic but also the spiritual aspect of the human welfare. Gifford observes that the initial teachings of the mission churches in Kenya were more focused on sharing the faith. He references the prevailing spiritual weather of the early twentieth century where he observes that "in the

[144] Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya*, 40.
[145] Margaret Crouch, *A Vision of Christian Mission* (Nairobi, Kenya: NCCK, 1993), 216.

1930s, Kenya was profoundly influenced by East African Revival Fellowship(EARF), a pietistic movement originating from Rwanda."[146] Their emphasis of preaching in those days was repentance and holiness. Like Gitonga above, Gifford notes the great influence of the group albeit with important missing aspects in their theology.

For example, they never addressed issues of ancestral spirits or spiritual healings, aspects deeply rooted in African spirituality. They nevertheless preached holiness and provided leadership in making disciples in the mainline churches. Mika Vähäkangas notes that EARF was a strongly egalitarian group within the mainline churches as they supported the priesthood of all believers.[147] Their challenge was that being mainly a lay movement, teachings were centered on lay interpretation of Scripture.

EARF and other groups like it, however, missed an important part of addressing African spirituality and contextualization. A study by Nebert Mtange[148] notes that failure to contextualize negatively affects discipleship. Mtange worked with Western discipleship programs for a number of years, but he had witnessed little fruit. Among the Avalogoli people of Western Kenya, programs from groups such as Navigators Kenya, Bible League, Harvest Discipling Ministry, and Scripture Union had been present and yet according to Mtange, only twenty percent of Christians had been discipled. He attributed this to poor contextualizing and failure to use local means for discipleship.

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[146] Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya*, 33.
[147] Mika Vähäkangas and Andrew A. Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa: A Challenge to African Christianity* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2003), 81.
[148] Mtange, "Exploring the Possibilities of Using Lisanga Small Groups in Disciple-Making among the Avalogoli People of Kenya," 123–63.

This failure hampered the progress of discipleship in Kenyan Christianity. Omenyo observes that the missionary enterprise which was the god parent of mainline churches did not take seriously the African needs and thus left many African Christians thirsty for ways of expressing worship that were inherently African.[149] African Independent Churches (AIC) were happy to fill in this gap.

John Pobee notes that, "AICs played varied social-political, economic and religious roles in rural and urban environments…they represent the search of African people for a place to feel at home and where they have a sense of belonging."[150] AICS were not shy to address the area of African spirituality, a phenomenon Paul Hiebert calls the *excluded middle*.

Hiebert explains his struggle with his Western worldview on spiritual warfare, while he was ministering in a non-Western culture. "As a Westerner, I was used to presenting Christ on the basis of rational arguments… In particular, the confrontation with spirits that appeared so natural a part of Christ's ministry belonged in my mind to a separate world of the miraculous — far from ordinary everyday experience."[151] Hiebert tried to minister to people of a different culture using his cultural categories and that proved to be challenging. Mainline discipleship in Kenya initially adopted this Western model of discipleship and it gave little meaning to the native people involved. They had numerous

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[149] Cephas N. Omenyo, "Charismatization of the Mainline Churches in Ghana"," in *Charismatic Renewal in Africa: A Challenge to African Christianity* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2003).
[150] John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu, *African Initiatives in Christianity* (Geneva 2, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1998), 35.
[151] Paul Heibert. "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," *Missiology* (10, Jan 1982), 35.

experiences with this middle world including power encounters and the role of their ancestral spirits that neither science nor Western Christianity could explain.

Hiebert argues that there is need for "a holistic theology that includes a theology of God in human history: in the affairs of nations, of peoples and of individuals. This must include a theology of divine guidance, provision and healing; of ancestors, spirits and invisible powers of this world..."[152] The failure to include these workings of God leads to the limitations of Western missions which are based on their post-Enlightenment motif. Hiebert notes that there is a need for a serious understanding of the spirit world in non-Western spirituality. He suggests developing holistic theologies that address all areas of life and avoid the Platonic dualism of the West.[153] Worshippers in mainline churches seek to address the excluded middle issues too. Some consult with traditional diviners to have this need addressed. Others have found their answers through the space provided by charismatic Christianity which offers avenues for faith healing, casting out demons and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit.

Charismatic Christianity, especially the AICs address the spirit world in African spirituality and are not shy to address the excluded middle issues. AICs take "care of the suppressed spirit-power phenomenon that had plagued the African for many years. In this movement, many Africans found a spiritual home."[154] As such, it is not uncommon to

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[152] Paul Hiebert, 1982. 46.
[153] Paul Hiebert, The Flaw of the Excluded Middle Robert L Gallagher and Paul Hertig, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2009), 188.
[154] Omenyo, "Charismatization of the Mainline Churches in Ghana"."

find mainline church members who subscribe to AIC ideologies, specifically their teachings about the spirit world in relation to Christianity.

Jay Moon talks about the three-tiered belief system of the majority world that is different from the two-tier system of the western world. The second tier, which Hiebert calls the *excluded middle,* can be easily overlooked by Westerners. Moon notes that "this middle level is so important to discipleship and yet so often overlooked…."[155] This is therefore a significant part of discipleship among the African people.

Those in the mainline churches who have found the fulfillment of their spirituality through charismatic practices stay in the mainline church and influence others from within. According to Omenyo, charismatic oriented people who are still members of the mainline have taken leadership positions and some of these have become teachers in the seminaries and Bible colleges that train pastors to minister in these churches.[156]

Omenyo further notes that the mainline church has adjusted to accommodate the new phenomenon. Since this new wave was very appealing to the younger generation, the mainline churches welcomed charismatic activities like vigorous dancing in churches and spontaneous prayers. It is not uncommon for "the congregation to applaud the preacher by clapping… (Additionally there are charismatic activities in the mainline churches including) prayer meetings, revival meetings, open air crusades, and healing and deliverance services."[157] Omenyo thus concludes that the mainline churches have been

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[155] W. Jay Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation,* 2017, 28, https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=FEAF4E40-4830-408A-9BC1-5B55918D0EBA.
[156] Omenyo, "Charismatization of the Mainline Churches in Ghana"," 19.
[157] Ibid., 19.

'*charismatized*' by these individuals who, though remaining in their former churches, have charismatic tendencies. These charismatic practices listed above resonate with the African spiritual practices and are perceived to have capacity to enhance discipleship in the mainline church.

In an interview with some Kenyan mainline Christians, Okesson got this response about the place of spiritual power among the members,

> The diminished emphasis on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit can leave these historic churches with fewer theological resources in which to apply the gospel for human transformation, influence socio-economic status, bring healing or protect people from evil spirits: all key issues within an integrative cosmos where spiritual power connects humans with their world."[158]

Okesson further observes that "Pentecostal missionaries (western) established new churches while at the same time charismatic influences were simmering within the mainline church such as the Holy Spirit /*Roho* movement in Western Kenya...."[159] Although in many instances occurring as splinter groups, these movements had an impact in the mainline churches. Though initially accused of lacking in charisma, the mainline has been seen to provide biblical stability to the Kenyan church coupled with rational apologetics for faith critics through the word of God.[160] Both aspects are crucial elements of discipleship in the mainline church.

Albeit with its own challenges, discipleship in the mainline churches has sought to take a holistic approach addressing the socio-economic, political, and spiritual wellbeing of people. This is reflected in their efforts at development seen in building

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[158] Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity Within Akamba Christianity in Kenya*, 2012, 150.
[159] Okesson, 19.
[160] Okesson, 107.

schools and hospitals. It is seen in their advocacy for political justice as seen through the NCCK, a council made up of mostly Kenyan mainline churches, and the spiritual aspect seen in groups like the EARF and revivalist charismatic groups within the mainline

The mainline Protestant churches' interaction with others from Pentecostal and charismatic backgrounds has helped in the spiritual aspect of discipling in Kenyan churches. These interactions usually happened in school settings. Now we turn to look at the Kenyan school system and its impact on discipleship.

Mainline Christianity and Kenyan School system

Philomena Mwaura observes that the Kenyan learning institutions are some of the places where students from mainline churches first encountered charismatic Christianity. The students interacted with Christian movements in schools and brought the same practices back home. Movements such as Christian Student Movement, Campus Crusade for Christ and Scripture Union play an important role at the Kenyan religious arena.

The Kenyan school system is structured in a way such that faith and academics are joined. This is the model that was introduced by the missionaries who introduced both aspects at the same time to the Kenyan people. Things have remained that way such that faith and spirituality are encouraged among the students. In fact, Christianity was taught in schools and even to date, both Christianity and Islam are courses in the curriculum and tested in the final exam of both primary and secondary level.

It is therefore not uncommon to find teachers, especially Christian union (CU) patrons preaching to students during student fellowships. School was listed by participants as a place of deep disciple-formation. It is the place where they met age-mates and friends who were willing to talk candidly about faith. It was usually a high school friend, a CU official, the CU patron in their school, or a regular teacher in high school or college who talked to a student about God.

Due to the way in which the Kenyan education system is structured, students spend most of the year in school. Many Kenyan high schools and colleges are boarding schools. These schools have partnerships with Christian organizations like FOCUS (Fellowship of Christian Unions- Kenya), Scripture Union, and KSCF (Kenya Students Christian Fellowship) to help in the spiritual growth of the students. These organizations negotiate with schools to have certain times in the school program where they can hold faith enhancing activities for the students. Student leaders are trained to be lay pastors to their fellow students.

The activities usually happen after classes, especially in the evenings and on weekends. Since most Kenyan high schools and universities are boarding schools, the students' weekend and evening timetables are scheduled for them. Students are not required to attend these activities by the school, but they are encouraged to attend them during their free time. The activities include midweek Bible studies, midweek prayers events, Sunday afternoon fellowships, Sunday morning worship-a requirement in most schools, Weekend challenges that happen three times a year or once every academic term and rallies that happen as a weekend challenge climax on a Sunday afternoon.

Mwaura further discussing the early developments of Charismatic Christianity in Kenya noting that "there developed Christian ministries which focused on the youth and educational institutions such as the Kenya Students Christian Fellowship (KSCF), Campus Ministry, Trinity Fellowship, Life Ministry, Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS), Youth for Christ and Ambassadors for Christ."[161] These groups were very instrumental in forming the culture of a charismatic faith. The influence of the students was far reaching throughout the whole country as they went back to their rural homes with the same message. Among the very active organizations working in schools was KSCF. Mwaura notes that "KSCF is significant for it is still an active youth ministry today. It was officially inaugurated in 1958…. It encouraged formation of evangelistic outreach teams within educational institutions. The teams challenged students to have an evangelistic obligation to their rural home areas and churches."[162] With their enthusiasm for outreach, these student teams began discipleship programs in schools.

The Fellowship of Christian Unions that took care of college Christians "was part of the Pan-African Fellowship of Evangelical Students (PAFES). It gained autonomy to become a Kenyan movement in 1974. Both KSCF and FOCUS have been important bedrocks of the evangelistic activities operating in liaison but with independent church supervision." [163] which had great impact in both universities and tertiary colleges. Those who participated in these movements were more at home with charismatic tendencies.

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[161] Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "The Role of Charismatic Christianity in Reshaping the Religious Scene in Africa: The Case of Kenya," in *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 184.
[162] Mwaura, 184.
[163] Mwaura, 184.

Charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity addresses people's challenges in a different way in that they offer prayers to overcome the influence of evil upon people's lives. This evil could be manifested in poverty, disease, or corruption. The awareness of evil is one of the central beliefs in this group's conviction.[164] Apart from the awareness of evil is the awareness of power and its immediacy in working out miracles. These are features that have roots in African ways of perceiving spiritual realities. These charismatic groups launched in schools were also among the first to challenge students to disciple their peers at school and in their congregations back home, which included mainline churches. Religious teaching gotten from schools was prevalent among Kenyan Methodist Christians.

Mainline Christianity and Theological Orientation

Categories like liberal or conservative may be classifications that scholars and social elites appropriate on themselves. But rarely do ordinary worshippers in the church do this. Lay people in churches may not have these categories. Okesson notes that Kenyan Christianity does not have neat theological boundaries. He observes, "… evangelicalism correlates with a missionary tradition that received new interpretations through its contact with African worldviews. However, making demarcations between evangelicals and non-evangelicals in Kenya often proves problematic, since all the churches draw upon shared

[164] Sung Kyu Park. "Charismatic Spirituality: Could it be a Viable Option for Contextual Spirituality in Kenya?" *International Journal of Practical Theology*. 14, no. 1 (2010) 11

faith commitments emanating from their Christian heritage and express themselves with conservative credentials."[165]

Kenyan Christians have blurred boundaries between conservative, evangelical, progressive, and liberal orientations. Most work to bring justice, development, and the message of the gospel through proclaiming salvation in Christ alone without situating themselves in any categories. Mainline churches like Methodists organize open air preaching, build schools or hospitals, and take care of HIV orphans. An example is their ministry through hospitals like Maua Methodist Hospital, or the open-air preaching at Marakwet in the northern part of Kenya in 2013.[166] Independent churches also plan these same activities as part of their outreach for example the Nairobi Chapel's prison ministry that helps ex-convicts to find jobs after serving prison time while holding Sunday services in the same prison.[167]

As expounded above, many churches in conjunction with the council of churches stood and spoke truth to power requiring a new constitution. The lobbying for that revised constitution succeeded amid tough opposition by most politicians. It became a reality in 2011. But the church also struggles with issues like apathy towards the poor and general moral failure as seen in the 2008 post-election violence.[168] The church was mute in condemning the atrocities happening in the country. The church also struggles with the

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[165] Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity Within Akamba Christianity in Kenya*, 2012, xx.
[166] http://methodistchurchkenya.org/mission-in-marakwet/ accessed on 06/09/2018
[167] http://nairobichapel.net/ accessed on 06/09/2018
[168] "AllAfrica.Com: Kenya: Death and Chaos After Kibaki Win (Page 1 of 1)," January 3, 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20080103085403/http://allafrica.com/stories/200712310456.html.

aftermath of the greedy wealth and health preachers who worry about no one else but themselves while padding their pockets by extorting innocent followers.

MCK Structure and Ministry

The Methodist church operates under two documents; The Standing Orders and the Deed of Foundation. These two serve as the constitution of the church. MCK is a connexional church with the presiding bishop being the chief leader who is assisted by the conference standing committee. The standing committee is composed of both clergy and lay leaders from different synods that make the conference.

MCK is comprised of eleven Synods namely; Kaaga, Miathene, Nkubu, Nyambene, Nairobi, Western, Mombasa, Shingwaya, Kilifi, and two synods in the neighboring countries, Uganda and Tanzania synods. The synods are further divided into circuits and then into sections. The smallest unit of administration is the local church.

MCK ministry is executed through committees. The operational committees within MCK include Mission and Evangelism, Women Fellowship, Men Fellowship, Youth Fellowship, Christian Social Responsibility, Education and Scholarship, Language, Literature and literacy, Health and Wholeness, Junior Sunday School, Christian Stewardship, Christian Education and Communication, Rural and Urban Development, and Liturgy, Worship and Preaching. Although some of these committees were not formed at the initial stage, they were later added as the church saw need for ministry as

happened with the discipleship committee in 2014.[169] The committees work in collaboration and are mostly complimentary to each other.

MCK has her mission statement as 'Knowing Christ and Making Him Known'. The Mission and Evangelism committee is one of the active ones and has sought to expand their mission work beyond the borders. In an effort to revamp Mission in the church, MCK revised her Mission and Evangelism policy in the year 2010. The revised vision of the committee reads, "It is the vision and goal of the Methodist Church to aggressively carry out the command of Christ's Great commission. Therefore, we view missions as an essential ministry of our church and our individual members. We are committed to the mobilization of our own resources (prayer, monetary and human) for the objective of reaching all peoples of the world for Christ."[170]

Summary

This chapter has discussed the context of study including the Kenyan society, mainline Christianity and discipleship in Kenya, its theological orientation, and MCK structure and ministry. We now move to the next chapter that will explore discipleship as is already happening in Africa, the wider context of our study. We shine the light into African discipleship and try to decipher how this context imparts the Kenyan perspective.

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[169] "49th Annual Conference," Minutes (Nairobi, Kenya: Methodist Church in Kenya, 2014).
[170] Methodist Church in Kenya. Missions and Evangelism Policy, 4.

Chapter 3. Discipleship in Africa

From the Kenyan society and the historic overview of mainline Christianity in Kenya, to how discipleship was carried out in that context, we now turn to the wider context of Africa. As earlier noted, the church in Africa has grown rapidly in the last few decades. This happened mainly due to the efforts of the local missionaries and evangelists who have traversed the continent with the message of Christianity. Those who contextualized the gospel by forming indigenous churches and by bringing African aspects to the Western missionary way of Christianity experienced growth. With this expansion has come an equal need for discipleship. Churches in Africa understand that for Christianity to grow roots in the African soil, there is need to disciple people so that they fully understand what entails a Christian life in their milieu.

Discipling in Africa

I have already looked at the discipleship situation in Kenya in the previous chapter and highlighted how those impact the churches' discipleships. In this chapter, I will explore some of the things that have happened in the African continent, and some changes that have reverberated all the way to the village in the African rural society. Here I seek to investigate how the African specifically, and the African church in general has been affected by these changes.

Traditional African Teaching

The African society has varied ways of teaching and passing on valuable information among the community members. One of these ways was apprenticeship. To learn a new trade, one used to intern with someone who was already involved in the trade. Blacksmiths, hunters, or spiritual leaders walked with someone else who wanted to take that role. The interns learned from observing the experienced mentors. Lessons on good citizenship or being a good family person were passed on from the older generation to the younger one. Parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunties were critical in the learning process of the society.

Another important component of learning in traditional Africa was teaching a community rather than individuals. Godly principles were taught while working, eating, playing and just doing life. As such, education was more caught than taught. The whole community was involved in the process of teaching and learning. Communal learning was spurred by the African spirit of *Ubuntu*, a word among Bantu speaking Africa that connotes an aspect of communal living and appreciating the value of every human being. Although *Ubuntu* is a recent term popularized in late twentieth century as an African philosophy, its essence and meaning has been ingrained in African life over the centuries. It is understood as the honoring of everyone's humanity as authentic and important. John Mbiti argues that Africa operated on a philosophy of community. [171] Under this viewpoint, human existence is empowered by the connectedness with each other such that everyone owes his or her humanity to the other.

[171] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Johannesburg, SA: Heinemann Publishers, 1990), 2.

Akiiki notes that the African was taught to understand him/herself only in community. He observes, "to know myself, I must very seriously consider my relationship with others. In this sense, 'I' means myself in relationship to others. Thus, it is clear that my value is connected with the value of others."[172] Community is therefore the forum where learning happened. Songs, dance, and mimes used for teaching were mostly performed in groups and usually involving more than one person. This reinforced the communal aspect of learning.

Jean Kidula observes that the intrigue of African performance is that it happens outdoors in a circle. All people in the dance are important because the circle puts them at par. They do their dance individually and yet in community.[173] The community of singers understand the theme of their song and so no one needs to train them in the song in advance. It is a collective knowledge. If one has the knowledge then all have it. All the lead singer does is give one or two lines that the rest will repeat, and the song is complete. The leader can then add phrases as the music goes on.

All the learners were engaged in that the songs did not have one sing for others, or one dancer dance for others, all sang and all danced together. This was a major form of knowledge transmission. Songs and stories were the media through which the histories of the people were passed down to the younger generation. Parents told their history to their children, and those children likewise told it to their children. The stories told of the

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[172] A.B.T Byaruhanga Akiiki, "Introduction," in *African Church in the 21st Century.* (Nairobi, Kenya: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1995), 16.
[173] Jean Ngoya Kidula, "Music Culture: African Life" in Roberta Rose King et al., *Music in the Life of the African Church* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008), 50.

battles they had won and which warrior was instrumental in the victory. Songs about the battle successes and God victories were sung among the communities.

Teaching in African communities was also performative. Drama was a common medium used to pass important messages in society. Among the Agikuyu of Kenya, for instance, there was the *ituika* ceremony held every twenty-five years or so that marked the handing on of power from one generation to another."[174] These repetitive expressions carried out for days and sometimes months reenacted the teaching in the ceremonies such that it was ingrained in people's minds.

Ngugi wa Thiongo notes that drama was an integral part of the Kenyan community. There was not a planned drama session, for drama happened wherever there were people in a community. "It was an activity among other activities, often drawing its energy from those other activities. It was entertainment in the sense of involved enjoyment; it was moral instruction…this drama was not performed in special buildings set aside for that purpose, it could take place anywhere."[175] The fact that drama was part of everyday life and activities and also a tool for moral instruction meant that teaching and learning happened every day and in all places. Attempts to save this tradition can be observed in contemporary modes of oral communication in the Kenyan world of theater through a performance called *Sigana*. "*Sigana* is an interactive participatory storytelling form…it seamlessly weaves together acting, narration, music and other expressive techniques, in the form of traditional call and response, chants, role-play, banter and

[174] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Oxford; Nairobi: James Currey; EAEP, 1997), 37.
[175] Thiong'o, 37.

communal dilemma resolution."[176] This method of communication has been adopted by Kenyan theater world as an authentic way of communicating to the Kenyan people.

Roberta King notes that Africans enjoy a distinctive feature in their expressive means of worship.[177] She sees music and arts engaged in everyday contexts of people. King further notes that music is a life-processor. "It takes up strands of a people's way of life and weaves them together, revealing insights about levels of their thought life…."[178] African music is therefore a revealer of the culture of the people. It is the channel through which the African people's way of life and their history is preserved. Performance in Africa was not only a teaching tool but also a transforming and preserving tool for the community. In his work on Oral communication in Africa, Herbert Klem argues that the African community "defines itself both by these shared activities (artistic activities) and by the ability to use the oral arts associated with them"[179] This a very important piece for communal identity.

Further, performance and oral arts enabled a flexibility in teaching which appeals to oral cultures and more so to the African people. "A vital characteristic of African oral art is that it is flexible. It is expected that stories and poems will be different every time they are repeated."[180]An African story is a creative piece. It does not have to be told the same way all the time. Every time it is told, it addresses the present need and teaches the

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[176] "Sigana: Re-Engaging Contemporary Cultural Reality - Oby Obyerodhyambo," accessed August 3, 2018, http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/ls3_oby.htm.
[177] King et al., *Music in the Life of the African Church*, 7.
[178] Roberta King "Music Bridges in Christian Communication" in James R Krabill et al., *Worship and Mission for the Global Church an Ethnodoxology Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 115.
[179] Herbert V Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture: Insights from African Oral Art* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1982), 100.
[180] Klem, 118.

desired lesson. There was a lot of modification and creativity in these performances. These brought the desired teaching for specific occasions.

Teaching in the African communities was multi-dimensional. People engaged both their minds and their bodies in this learning process. The use of the body meant that learning was both a mind and a heart affair. Prayer for example was both spoken and performed. The African traditional society performed prayer rituals like pouring libation to the ancestors to appease them. Teaching the younger generation about prayer included showing them how to perform it. African elders poured libations facing down and then raised the calabash and eyes to the sky during traditional African prayers.[181] Prayers were an act of performance, they were not just recited, but acted out.

African methods of teaching and learning were effective for the African society. The people learned through apprenticeship, were taught together during regular daily life. Knowledge was collective and participation in the learning was by all. Learning was performed and expressive. It was also multidimensional in that it engaged the people's minds, bodies and souls using mediums such as song, drama, and dance. Most of these ceremonies did not need a stipulated place, for they just happened where people were while they performed their daily chores.

[181] Jacob Kofi Hevi, *The Challenge of Authenticity: African Culture and Faith Commitment* (London: Adonis & Abbey Publishers, 2004), 107.

Contemporary African Teaching and Discipleship Challenges

Teaching Christian principals and discipling in the contemporary African society has faced challenges over time. The colonization of the African people broke some of the strong pillars from which education in the African society stood. Additionally, the onset of globalization and urbanization has brought new challenges to this endeavor.

African Traditional Religion (ATR) was a holistic religion. The God who protected people was also the one who sent rains and the one who healed them. God was infused in every place of life and every moment of life. The Western ideology that separated the sacred and the secular did not resonate well with the African's worldview. People found it hard to compartmentalize life where some area belonged to God and the other did not.

Mbiti argues that the African Christian struggles with the new religion because it does not penetrate deep enough in the African's life. "It is not enough to learn and embrace a faith which is active once a week, either on Sunday or Friday, while the rest of the week is virtually empty… or one that is confined to a building, which is locked up six days and opened only once or twice a week."[182] The God that the African knew was not just concerned with the spiritual; God was concerned and involved with all aspects of human life. Due to all this change, some challenges have been identified as current hindrances that hamper the teaching and by extension discipleship.

[182] Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 3.

Departure from the African Ethos

Colonial masters came to Africa and altered the people's way of life, including African ways of transmitting religion. In their agenda of suppressing everything African and promoting everything Western, colonialists condemned the African culture as a whole. The colonial masters corroborated in a strategy to conquer Africa by teaching Africans that the good could only come from the West and not from Africa. To completely subdue the African, he/she was told to drop her heritage. Her methods were labeled as evil and her creativity was crushed as irrelevant. The African was carefully taught that the West is the best and that her gods, instruments and worshipping ways were demonic and naïve. Ngugi calls this colonial suppression a cultural bomb that kills a people's confidence in who they are and their way of life. He puts it thus;

> The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland.[183]

But distancing oneself from who they truly are can only create more problems rather than solve them. Culture is a big part of who people are and when this is destroyed, it is a challenge for them to be authentically themselves. The African culture was devalued and rendered evil by the colonial masters.

The young and budding African churches were not spared from this fallacy. They therefore learned to distance themselves from anything African. They embraced foreign

[183] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Oxford; Nairobi: James Currey; EAEP, 1997), 3.

worship ideas, foreign evangelism activities and foreign methods for discipling the young church. This has continued over generations resulting in the use of discipleship programs that are imported from another culture. These barely work in the African context which cries out for organic and creative concepts of discipleship.

There has been some critique from several scholars about using foreign methods and materials in the African church.[184] Gatu notes that "we in the third world must liberate ourselves, from the bondage of western dependency by refusing anything that stifles the development of our spiritual resources which in turn makes it impossible for the church in the third world to engage in the mission of their God in their own areas."[185]

J.N.K Mugambi agrees with Ngugi and Gatu noting that colonization caused the African to be embarrassed of her heritage. It was not civilized to engage African culture in Christianity. "During the twenty first century, African Christianity ought to stabilize culturally, by manifesting a characteristically African outlook in rituals, symbols, vestment, music, liturgy, architecture, metaphors and theological emphasis."[186] Mugambi further asserts, "No church can survive the challenges of history unless the gospel is effectively appropriated to the cultural religious heritage of its members in each generation. The acid test for the durability of Christianity in Africa is the degree to which it has become blended with the African culture."[187]

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[184] John Gatu, *Joyfully Christian Truly African* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2006); Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Orbis books, 1995); Magesa, "Christian Discipleship in Africa in the 21st Century"; J.N.K Mugambi, ed., *The Church and the Future of Africa: Problems and Promises* (Nairobi, Kenya: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1997).
[185] Gatu, *Joyfully Christian Truly African*, 174.
[186] Mugambi, *The Church and the Future of Africa: Problems and Promises*, 55.
[187] Mugambi, 55.

The church struggles to bathe clean of the colonial baggage so that she can be able to address her twenty first century challenges, which are unique and sophisticated. But there is hope, asserts Magesa, if Africa can awaken from her amnesia of how Africans ran their systems before colonization. He laments that Africa continues to adopt the systems of the foreigner rather than "modernize from the models of their own history, or invent new models. Or is it because Africa has been led to believe that all models of government have been invented and tried, and that it remains for us only to copy and adapt?" [188] But maybe the situation is not as bleak in terms of the possibility of Africa returning to her cultural tradition.

The Western agenda did not quite achieve its intention of completely destroying African culture. Berman observes that Africans did not just receive what was handed down to them without some input.

> "The Africans encountered, interpreted, and responded to the institutional and cultural intrusions of colonialism and postcolonial development… African cultures, contrary to Western expectations, did not disappear or go into terminal decline in the face of Western modernity, but have both assimilated elements of that modernity and reinvented themselves in the process.[189]

The idea that the original culture of the African society was all good and untainted might just be mere romanticism. It had its challenges like any other culture might have, but there were good elements of the culture which can be re-called to deal with the challenges of the present. Likewise, there are unfit cultural elements that have emerged with the breaking of the former social fabric and also just by the condition of today's

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[188] Laurent Magesa, 291.
[189] Bruce J. Berman, "'A Palimpsest of Contradictions': Ethnicity, Class, and Politics in Africa," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37, no. 1 (February 2004): 13.

lifestyles that affect not only the contemporary society but also the religious framework in the continent. Some of these challenges are explored below.

Bad Ethnicity and Tribalism Challenge

The African ethos of community has been altered thus bringing about many difficulties to discipleship. Rather than living together in harmony as brothers and sisters with those from other ethnicities, people tend to bond with only those in their ethnic group. It is difficult to disciple in an environment that lacks unity. W'Ehusha observes that many Christians in Africa have their first identity as their tribe rather than as children of God. Looking at discipleship in the African Great Lakes region, he argues that the current crisis in African discipleship is "caused by years of tribal and ethnic conflict and poverty, revealing how fragile and shallow Christian faith can be."[190]

Tribalism and ethnic favoritism challenge the notion of what people consider to be their identity. Are they Christians first or members of a certain tribe first? W'Ehusha notes, "Ethnicity can become a threat to discipleship in this context as the tribe requires from its members more allegiance to its cause than to Jesus and his kingdom. People participate in evil doing and elect wicked leaders both in the church and in the secular settings because they fear being rejected by their kin."[191] Favoritism towards one's kin and ethnicity have proved major challenges for discipleship in the continent.

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[190] Lubunga W'Ehusha, "Being a Disciple of Christ in the African Great Lakes," in *Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 22.
[191] W'Ehusha, 22.

This challenge was sharply witnessed in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and more recently in the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya. Both countries boasted a Christian majority and yet failed to stand against evil at the most critical moments. In a country like Kenya, which is said to have more than eighty percent Christians in her population, people killed each other because they were seen as threat to someone's tribe. Their first allegiance was to their ethnic group rather than to their Christian identity.

Gender Roles Disparity

The Pew research center did a recent study and found out that although one may find differences in places where the major religion restricts women, "there is a religion gender gap: Women generally are more religious than men… Overall, women are more likely than men to be affiliated with a religious organization; women also pray more and are more inclined to say religion is "very important" in their lives."[192] This trend is not much different in Africa and yet the number of women bishops and other higher positions of church leadership is minimal. Magesa observes that violence by men against women becomes inevitable when women are portrayed only as wives and workers.[193] But women are more than that. Although they are mothers and wives and are burdened with home making and child bearing, they are the care givers for aging parents and sick relatives.

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[192] Caryle Murphy, "Women Generally Are More Religious than Men, but Not Everywhere," *Pew Research Center* (blog), March 22, 2016, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/22/women-generally-are-more-religious-than-men-but-not-everywhere/.

[193] Magesa, "Christian Discipleship in Africa In The 21st Century," 292.

They are home makers-tilling the land, grazing the animals and doing homework with children. They are teachers to their children, neighbors and friends about God.

In the Kenyan setting, women are the back bone of society especially on the side of development. They till the land, plant and tend the crops to provide the family with food as their husbands move to the cities to look for jobs. They also send the children to school and perform other household chores. In the spiritual enrichment of society, women are the majority in the church community, thus ensuring the continuity of the mission. Hence, women are not support figures, they are actually disciplers and should be recognized as such. This could mean that they are affirmed and supported to do ministry right where they are, in doing what they do.

In African churches, women are in praise and worship teams, interpreters for preachers, especially in areas where the preacher speaks a different language from the people he ministers to, beautify the church for example cleaning it or cementing it with mud, and feeding the preacher especially if he/she has to travel a far way of. Additionally, most families thrive on the faith of the mother. Mothers teach the children to pray over dinner and prepare them on Sunday to go to the church. Women are the first preachers to the smallest unit of the church-family.

Even though women are gifted with tremendous gifts of ministry, they often lack the training needed for them to take up ministry roles, they have low literacy levels, and they encounter cultural bottle-necks in determining how much they can achieve, Women may feel inadequate to leadership roles because they feel ill equipped. They may also try to avoid controversy in decision-making and so choose not to lead. Many fear that they will be socially mistrusted if they strongly assert themselves. Men, therefore, take the

higher leadership roles even though women are the ones engaged in several ministries in the church.

Rich-Poor Discrepancy

Another challenge for discipleship is the apathy of the rich toward the poor. Africa has a wide margin between the poor and the rich which is a great opportunity for service among Christians. But many times, the rich Christians pretend not to see their suffering brothers and sisters. Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyancha note that as long as the rich stay in their cozy suburbs with no desire to know what is happening with their brothers and sisters in the less endowed neighborhoods, discipleship on both divides suffer. Shorter and Onyancha argue that affluent people in the church have little or no connection with poor believers in the same society. For they too are the beneficiaries of poverty in their brethren's lives. "Although they officially condemn corruption, they (rich people) regularly invite politicians, who are perceived to be corrupt, to conduct 'harambees' or fundraising events for them."[194] Selfishness drives their agenda and as such, advocating for the poor is flung to the peripheral.

The apathy among the rich for their poor brothers and sisters is further fanned by the insatiable appetite for material wealth. There is a maddening search for a 'good life' and not necessarily a 'godly life'. Robert Solomon notes, "The pursuit of 'the good life' can threaten the pursuit of Christ. Scripture demonstrates how godly knowledge and deep

[194] Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyancha, *Secularism in Africa: A Case Study, Nairobi City* (Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline's Publication Africa, 1997), 62.

insight are necessary to discern what is best (Phil 1:9-11, whereas the pursuit of the good life often inhibits interest in the best life, 'the life that is truly life' (1Tim 6:19)"[195]

The preaching of a gospel of goodies, also known as the Prosperity Gospel, with God as the supplier of all good things and humans as subjects seeking how to attain them can be harmful to the body of Christ. Those who do not have material goods are perceived to be of less faith while those who have view themselves as those who God must be very pleased with. Attainment of material wealth then becomes the ultimate goal in life and ill like corruption thrive in such soil.

Shorter and Onyancha argue that it is insufficient to condemn corruption and oppression while sheltering corruption masters as allies in the church. They further note,

> It follows that it is not enough for affluent Christians to avoid the abuses condemned by the church (injustice, corruption and abuse of power). Nor is it enough for them merely to give the poor material relief. They must be truly on the side of the poor, in solidarity with them. They must be committed to the liberation of the poor, and to the eradication of poverty itself. Such an obligation arises from their own privileged position of wealth and power.[196]

Meanwhile, the church is not doing much rather than token acts of justice and mercy, throwing metaphorical sympathy crumbs to the poor and oppressed in society.

Shorter and Onyancha reprimand the rich for not honoring their calling by using their status and influence in society for the sake of their struggling brothers and sisters.

> Wealthy Christians are called upon to live in solidarity with the poor, to be the voice of the voiceless, and to carry out a social analysis which leads to identifying their needs and taking appropriate action… they are the

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[195] Robert Solomon, "Making Disciples in Singapore; Challenges and Opportunities," in *Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011)., 107

[196] Shorter and Edwin Onyancha, *Secularism in Africa: A Case Study, Nairobi City*.49

> employers, managers and professionals who have others at their 'beck and call'… they cannot place economic self-interest above concern for other's needs, for example a just wage, more human working and living conditions, greater social cohesion and a more equitable distribution of wealth.[197] … It is strongly felt that "for affluent African to renounce their wealth it is felt, would be a retrograde step. Obviously, it will be very hard to indeed convince affluent African Christians to join the ranks of downshifters and to change a society's perception of what constitutes 'the good life'. Yet, the personal witness of only a few Christians on this matter would make a great impact.[198]

Shorter and Onyancha observe that the powerful and mighty, those who make policies seek to maximize on their gain and annihilate the weak. Balcomb agrees with this argument, he notes that the problem is that most churches preoccupy themselves with a pietistic faith that does not include concern for others. He reports,

> The emphasis, for example, on personal conversion, holiness and discipleship …is suggestive of both the strength and weakness of classical pietism. Personal encounter with Christ is indeed very important, but it should surely not stop there. What is missing from this view is any mention of the structural dimensions of sin and salvation. The problem with pietism is that salvation seems to stop with the individual. The journey inward is never accompanied by the journey outward. Spirituality in individual terms is surely the beginning of a process that reaches out into the world and penetrates the institutions of the wider society. [199]

Balcomb contends that discipleship in Africa is missing the holistic aspect. People are converting to faith, professing Christ and emphasizing personal holiness without this holiness affecting how they function in daily life. As such they are Christians with a discipleship that never touches the world. Balcomb asserts that the gospel should be translated to the people to address more than their daily material needs. He contends that the same gospel teaches that God's power is not only seen in giving God's people things, but in them forsaking things for the sake of the kingdom. He also notes that the church

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[197] Shorter and Onyancha. 51
[198] Shorter and Onyancha.54
[199] Anthony Balcomb, "'A Hundred Miles Wide but Only A Few Inches Deep! Sounding the Depth of Christian Faith'." 140 (July 2011): 25.

has not united against sin, especially structural sin, which is usually systemic and which calls for extra power from the Holy Spirit who gives unity.

Balcomb additionally notes that the African church, especially the Pentecostal strain, has understood the Holy Spirit power a little differently, as power for personal success rather than power to contend with disunity in the body of Christ and systemic injustices. He notes,

> The power of the Holy Spirit is power for service and not necessarily the power to succeed as especially portrayed in the Pentecostal stream of African Christianity. … In this context, "discipleship means not so much the discipline of self-denial as the esoteric knowledge of certain keys to self-advancement; and prayer is not so much to do with subjection of the will to the Lordship of Christ as the assertive announcement to the deity of one's particular needs, interests, and desires.[200]

To be fair to the African Pentecostal churches, not all of them subscribe to this self-propagation ideology as noted above, but there are overtones of this individualistic philosophy. This makes the church a club of those who are determined to avoid pain or poverty in their lives.

Shorter and Onyancha observe that due to the deplorable conditions that poor people live in, they preoccupy themselves with fending for themselves that they have no time to waste in worship or church attendance.[201] Although this might be true in some areas, many poor people crowd the church on Sundays to seek relief from a hard week and heavy burdens in their lives.

There are poor people in Kenya who go to church all the time even if that means losing their pay for that day at work. They go for healing and for deliverance from

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[200] Balcomb, 28.
[201] Shorter and Onyancha, *Secularism in Africa: A Case Study, Nairobi City*, 62.

poverty as promised by preachers of their churches. This invitation may be important for them because here they receive hope to face tomorrow, and to dream of the day that their blessing will arrive. But the distinction between the rich and the poor Christians sometimes get blurred as both corroborate on the sin of environmental exploitation albeit from different motivations. The rich degrade due to greed and the poor degrade due to need. Magesa puts it thus;

> The rich are destroying the environment mainly on account of greed. It makes them myopic so that they can hardly see beyond their noses in terms of ecological concern and care of creation. The problem is that even though they have enough and to spare, they want more out of the earth than it can reasonably yield and remain wholesome. The poor of Africa on the other hand are degrading the earth because of need. They are forced by need to overuse the earth to satisfy basic needs, and they hardly manage to do so. The point is that both rich and poor are engaged in detrimental practices.[202]

Although both poor and rich are degrading the environment, the rich are doing it out of ravenousness while the poor do it for survival. Somehow both groups end up destroying the environment. But the bigger burden is on the more endowed Christians who refuse to see the plight of their brothers and sisters. Wesley saw a correlation between apathy for the poor and being spiritually dead.

> Wesley reminds us of the complex interaction between spiritual deadness and social heartlessness, and of the ongoing threat that money and status pose to spiritual growth, holiness, community, and truthful seeing. By viewing works of mercy as a means of grace to the giver, the settings associated with hospitality, welcome, and care become holy ground, a place where everyone can expect to be transformed.[203]

The contemporary spiritual weather in the African church suffers from lack of concern for the neighbor, this problem cuts across the board and involves both the haves and the

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[202] Laurent Magesa, 298.
[203] Christine Pohl, "Practicing Hospitality in the Face of 'Complicated Wickedness,'" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 42, no. 1 (March 2006): 7–31. 30

have-nots. In the African philosophy of Ubuntu, everyone has something to give. Arichea notes that having the right attitude made the boy in the Bible share his fish and bread that Jesus used to feed the five thousand. "This unnamed young boy becomes the means of meeting the needs of thousands of people."[204] As such, "Poor people also know how to give, they know how to be concerned for others and they know what it means to be generous. The poor are equally capable of receiving and giving love."[205] This shows that the divide between the rich and poor is only acting as a hindrance to discipleship in the African church.

Denominational Divisions

The challenge of rivalry among denominations hinder discipleship in Africa. Without ecumenism, it is challenging to respond to structural injustices, which might surpass an individual's strength. A.O Balcomb argues that the gospel ought to be able to speak to structures of society in Africa, something that is not happening usually because the problems are beyond any one particular congregation or denomination. These challenges require a coming together of the whole body of Christ to address.

The Holy Spirit is there to help the church to act in unity and to serve each other, the wider community and God's creation at large. In 1Cor 12, Paul reminds the Corinthian church the body of Christ is called upon to unite as one and have a common focus of ministry. That even though there are many parts, they are serving one purpose of

[204] Daniel C. Arichea Jr, "Making Disciples in the Philippines," in *Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 97. Quoting Achtemeier, Harper's Bible Dictionary, 97.
[205] Arichea. 98

the one God. But the pursuit of unity in the body of Christ has not been observed as those in the hierarchies' harbor grudges and divisions, Unity therefore would mean less comfort for them.

Summary

Traditional African culture had ways of teaching important lessons in life. These were usually communicated through ritual, drama, song, proverbs, stories, symbols, and dance. Additionally, these lessons were communicated in groups; that is, by a community to a community. The culture was driven by a communal ethos which basically flourishes in unity under the spirit of *Ubuntu*. The African fundamentally understood following God as something done in community and not in isolation. The idea of faith as personal and salvation as individual choice is foreign and has caused some challenges to African discipleship. A faith that is the individual's business and not the concern of the community is both alien and superficial for African people. Faith is communal and it thrives interactively. This is not to minimize the idea of personal commitment and choice of faith, but to highlight the importance of communal relationships in this commitment.

Africans also learned in informal ways through everyday interactions with each other. There was flexibility in teaching and this enabled creativity. Media for communication including drama, song, dance, proverbs, symbols and story could be adjusted to bring about important lessons needed for specific times. Some changes to this ethos were brought about by colonization and the individualism of contemporary materialistic thought. This brought challenges generally to the African community and

also to the church and her effort to disciple. They include a betrayed identity, toxic ethnicity and tribalism, gender roles disparity, rich-poor discrepancy, and division among denominational lines. These are both evidence of poor discipleship, and challenges for the church to address.

We now turn the findings of the study about how the participants perceive the process of discipleship and they interpret their experiences of the same.

Chapter 4. Results and Analysis

In this chapter, I present the results on MCK perceptions and experiences of discipleship as demonstrated by my interview respondents. The chapter adopts a descriptive approach, to the data findings on perceptions of discipleship. The focus groups and interviews from the members of Charles New, Utawala, Gitimbine, Kaaga, and Miathene Methodist churches in Kenya revealed three major themes on how the people perceive discipleship.

1. Discipleship is experienced through relationships.
2. Discipleship is influenced by programs and activities.
3. Discipleship is experienced through participation and performance.

Relationships and Community

The Methodist church in Kenya interview participants conveyed their perceptions about discipleship as happening when there are abiding relationships and stable communities.

Home and Family

Kirimi discusses how his faith was impacted by family relations. He narrates how his mom and his sister-in-law who was a faithful Christian influenced his faith growth. He admired his sister-in-law's life and wanted to be a Christian like her. He says, "We went for fellowships with my mother and my sister-in-law. She was a mentor to me and watching her faith made me say, 'I want to be just like her'." (Kirimi, May 30th, 2016, personal communication). His family members were the Christian mentors that he came to emulate.

Urithi on the other hand recounted how he was born in an Islamic family and followed Islam for a while. He, however, started attending church services in the village and got converted to Christianity. It was from him that his family finally heard the gospel. His mom was resistant initially but later converted to Christianity. She grew so much in faith that she became his encourager. He says,

> I was born in a Muslim family. My mom was a witchdoctor. God called her from both Islam and a life of witchcraft. At first, she refused, but right now as we talk mom has accepted Christ. She is the one that has really strengthened me in faith. (Urithi-April 23rd, 2016, personal communication)

From these two respondents, a family member's faith influenced their growth. But there also were respondents who recounted that the lack of initiative from their families made them slacken on faith as seen in the case of Kimathi below. He attests to losing his faith after high school when his parents stopped being actively engaged in his faith as they had been before. He says that when his parents stopped encouraging him to participate in church as a Christian disciple, he felt no motivation to be actively engaged in his faith. He slackened slowly and progressively lost his faith. He says,

> After High School, I lost my faith. During this period, my parents had stopped following me or concerning themselves with my faith like they had done when I was younger.

Some family members were actively involved in disciple formation like those cited above. Others were passive but lived out their faith so well that their observing siblings or children admired it and lived by the same values. But family was also shown as having the ability to negatively influence one on their faith endeavors as seen above. Lack of interest in the lives of children or siblings as disciples sends a message that this is not an important family value.

In the case of Urithi above, his mother prayed for him and encouraged him in his faith journey. Although Urithi was the one who had initially introduced his mother to faith, she grew to be an encouragement. Uhuru narrates how his parents took the responsibility of taking him to Sunday school. He says,

> The disposition to be able to be in Christianity even passively was in wait of what God was preparing for me. My parents took me to junior Sunday school where I was exposed to basic Christian teachings. I also went through seminar teachings… all these played a big part in my being a disciple. (Uhuru, April 17th, 2016, personal communication)

Uhuru says that Sunday school is where he was exposed to Christian teachings and that played a role in his discipleship growth. Family relationships were more significant because they had a more prolonged proximity between people. In the story of Kiambi above, he felt encouraged when his family encouraged him to attend Christian activities but slackened in faith when they ceased to show interest in his growth

Charusi referenced the influence of his wife in joining the church or becoming disciples. He says, "my wife influenced me to love God and to be committed in the church. She rebukes me when I go astray." Here again the influence of a spouse towards one's faith is evident.

Learning Institutions/School

At school, student relationships with roommates, classmates, friends, teachers and Christian Union Patrons were cited as significant contexts within which discipleship took place. Maks talked about her faith experience during school years as facilitated by her teacher,

> I was somehow discipled even though I did not know for sure that it was discipleship then. When I was in high school there was a teacher who was a Christian union patron. We liked everything he said and trusted him. I think he is the one that I can say he influenced my growth in discipleship and faith. (Maks, May 8th, 2016, personal communication)

Although Maks did not know it at the time, she now interprets that experience as discipleship. Charusi also remembers his head teacher in high school who he says was his mentor.

> My high school head teacher was a good Christian was my mentor. He kept us spiritually awake, he gave sermons during morning assembly and enlightened us on the word of God. He shaped me in my Christian journey. (Charusi, May 19th, 2016, personal communication).

Charusi says that his teacher in high school not only lived out a Christian life worth emulating, but also preached to students during the school morning assembly. The morning assembly is a school-wide meeting that happens before classes every day to address the students about the day and motivate them to put hard work in their studies in Kenyan schools.

Charo also remembers that his high school teacher preached to the students whenever an opportunity arose. He says,

> I was mentored by my teacher in high school. He cheered me on in my walk as a disciple and encouraged me to start preaching the gospel not only to other students but also in churches. (Charo, May 19th, 2016, personal communication).

Some of these relationships went beyond the time that the participant was a student at school, to life after school. Unity remembers her teacher who was very intentional and sincerely caring about her faith. She says,

> I was mentored in discipleship by my teacher in high school. She walked with me spiritually when I was a student and even when I completed school all the way to my marriage. (Unity, May 8th, 2016, personal communication).

Unity's teacher continued the relationship beyond school days to ensure that she was walking in her faith covenant in her young adult life. Apart from teachers, friends and roommates also took the role of discipleship. Ubata talked about his friend at school who was interested with both his spiritual as well as academic welfare. He says, "I had a best friend at school who consistently invited me to join the Christian Union. He also helped me with my academic work."

Not everyone had positive experiences at school. For example, Karambu's experience in high school left her with little appeal for Christianity. She says that she saw pretense and mediocrity and decided not to join those calling themselves Christian Union members. She notes,

> In school, we had Christian unions and so I joined one when I went to high school, but then I learned that even the leaders in the Christian union were not upright in their ways. When I reached form three, I was elected as the head girl. I think people assumed that I would be the Christian union chairlady as this was the tradition. But I told the patron I wanted nothing to do with a Christian union leadership, nor was I interested in continuing being a member there. (Karambu, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

Karambu's experience had a negative impact on her discipleship. She felt that the Christians she encountered at school were not genuine and so she was not interested in joining their faith. This experience seemed to be different from all the others that participants talked about. Nevertheless, it was still an effect of relationships formed at school.

Church

The third venue of relationships was in worship places like the church. Personal relationships involve associations with friends from church, and with pastors and church leaders. Invitations from a trusted person were mostly honored. Carmen talks of how a pastor took time to teach her the Bible. She observes,

> A pastor discipled me. He walked with me and taught me a lot from the Bible. I learned that God is a God that hears prayer; only sin can make him not to hear. All these years, I have seen the faithfulness of God. (Carmen, May 21st, 2016, personal communication).

Kagwiria recollects how a lady in her village had befriended her and invited her to join the Methodist church and the fellowship for women. Because of this relationship, Kagwiria joined this friend in her church. She observes,

> When I got married I came to this village. My father in law was a Roman Catholic and I decided to join him in his church. One Sunday morning, a lady who was my neighbor and friend invited me to the Methodist church. She further invited me to the Tuesday women's fellowship. On Tuesday, she registered me in the Women Fellowship group and from that time I became a Member, this is where my faith has been nurtured. (Kagwiria, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

Calvin alludes that the growth in his prayer life as a disciple was influenced by how the pastor interacted with him and his friends.

> 'Passie' introduced us to prayer and fasting. It happened at every beginning of the year… We have a personal relationship with our pastor. He even asks us to pray for him. Nowadays when I need to tell God something I can pray and fast by myself, I don't need to wait for the beginning of the year to do the group prayer. (Calvin, May 21st, 2016, personal communication).

The pastor modeled prayer to this youth group as he interacted with them. Now they have adapted it as their own spiritual discipline. For Uhuru, what really helped was the way that his mentors were honest with him. They treated him as a friend. He says,

> Right now, I am going through a program in college where a pastor is training us. He is really deep in the word of God. The pastor and his team emphasize that it's all about Christ and that's the only one we can truly lean on. The pastor is free to share with us both his experiences and his weaknesses. That makes his teaching really authentic…these people are real. (Referencing the pastor and his team). (Uhuru, April 17th, 2016, personal communication).

For Uhuru, the pastor and his team presented themselves as ordinary people, only energized by the power of Christ. This made the goal to follow Christ look achievable.

Cate who is a youth recounts how she started taking her discipleship seriously because of how relational her pastor was. Prior to having this pastor, Cate went to church out of duty to her parents. Additionally, it was just a place to meet with other people. However, the new pastor was able to relate with the youth group so well that his preaching started to have an impact on them, or to 'sink in' as she puts it. She says,

> In my faith journey, I have come to willingly like church without being asked by my parents. Initially, church was just a social place. But the new youth pastor became more of a friend than an official pastor, that's when his preaching started to sink in… 'Passie's (pastor's) sermons are personal and not pushy. (Cate, May 21st, 2016, personal communication).

As seen above, most people perceived relationships as crucial for discipleship. The frequency of this perception was higher in young people. However, people in all age groups alluded to relationships being crucial in their discipleship experience.

In addition to one on one or personal relationships, participants talked about communal relationships. These were understood to be gatherings of people converging for a certain activity. They include cell groups, group fellowships, Bible study groups, and choir groups.

In bigger churches, however, group fellowships comprised more people than smaller churches did. In such cases, these groups were split into chapters within the group. For example, in the women's fellowship, the chapter system enabled smaller

groupings which seemed more conducive for deeper relationships among members. This is seen in Chanda's words; "Those who could not say a word before when there are many people can talk and give their contribution in a cell group." Chanda further speaks of how these small groups help in interaction with each other and participation. She demonstrates how important these smaller communities are,

> Cell groups are good for discipleship because we interact with people, here we grow because we participate in God's word and pray together. The cell groups provide us with community and belonging. (Chanda, May 26th, 2016, personal communication) .

These gatherings are usually smaller in comparison to the whole congregation. Chanda explained that in this setting, everybody, including people who would otherwise be shy or invisible in the bigger group, gets a chance to serve, interact, and explore their gifts. The need to be in a communal setting as people explore faith was significant as portrayed by both frequency and emphasis among the participants. They desired places where they could be in close contact with others exploring the same spiritual path and participating in faith fostering activities together.

Upendo said that what made her to grow was cell groups and house fellowships, because they were like family and had a lot of love. Upendo notes, "What made me grow spiritually were house fellowships and cell groups. These are family-like organizations in church, they have a lot of love."

People who show signs of spiritual maturity reflected in their life of service and prayer in MCK were mostly those who had engaged with a smaller group. It was interesting to note that although most interview participants appreciated community, some interview participants like Karambu felt differently,

> People join these things for social reasons. Like when people join the women's Fellowship, they are doing this so that when they have something going on like a problem, they have people to help them. Many women do not like to join secular groups because they like the good organization in MCK and so they want to associate with the women fellowship in the church despite the fact that they are not looking for Spiritual nourishment. (Karambu, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

The same sentiments were echoed by Mailutha who noted

> These church groups are just for social status, for community support, and for togetherness. Individuals want people in their functions like weddings, during sickness or when they have needs like funerals. They want a secure social group. (Mailutha, June 2nd, 2016, personal communication).

The two participants above felt that there were some individuals who sought community not to deepen faith, but to reinforce their status quo and exert power and influence.

Asked how discipleship was fairing in his church, Kaume felt that the search for power is pervasive in the church because people seemed to be disciples of Christ only to desert the faith when they get powerful, he says,

> That is a problem because the higher a person goes in the social ladder, the faster they lose interest in Christianity. When they come to Christianity they are looking for power and influence, not faith, it's very funny. I think they have lost focus.

These participants' claim is that some people join these communities to be elected as leaders and garner power in the community. Other people join in order to not be left out, and do not necessarily have no desire to grow in their faith life. The community provided by the church drew all kinds of people, including those who had no intention to be Christ followers.

Karambu alludes to this idea,

> I had been just a churchgoer. I really don't know why I was elected into a leadership position in this church. In fact, I always came to church late, as I just wanted to hear the sermon and nothing more. I heard my name mentioned during the election and I was surprised. So, I had to tell them my position and my life outside the church. The members never had any problem with that. (Karambu, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

This participant testifies that she did not consider herself a legitimate candidate for spiritual leadership. Having been in politics, she frequented night clubs and bars to source for votes and she felt that was questionable behavior to the church. It seems that this particular church was accepting her lifestyle even though she felt like it was not appropriate for church leadership. Karambu notes that people join community groups for various reasons. Some come to be transformed by Christ while others came for socializing and spending time with friends.

Discipleship Through Activity Programs

Programs are organized plans or curricula. They are models that are systematic towards a certain goal for example activities and forums geared towards discipleship. Participants discussed programs in the family, school, and church. The ones in families were not usually structured teaching programs. The school and church setting had more structure to their programs including Bible studies and fellowships. The second major theme was *program activities*. Bible study programs, fellowships, cell groups, choirs and group rallies were prominently cited as activities in the church setting that were experienced as disciple forming. Participants however noted that some of these activities like the rallies were designed for social purposes and not for discipleship specifically. MCK was

generally faulted for not designing disciple intense programs. These were listed as New-believer classes and disciple-focused Bible studies.

Home Activity Programs

According to Gatwiri, growing up in her kind of home where families shared faith helped her grow as a Christian. She says, "As for me I was born in a Methodist home. When a fellowship visited a certain home, either ours or our neighbor's, I used to join them and that's how I grew." The activities in the home were sometimes as simple as getting the children ready for church. Uhuru cited earlier remembered how his parents took him to church every Sunday. Although the deeper learning on matters of faith happened at church, Uhuru acknowledges that his disposition to be a Christian was due to his parents' diligence in taking him to church.

Mutuma also notes that his family acted as reinforcement for the things he had learned in church. He knew that they would be following up on the lesson he had learned in church and this motivated him to be attentive during church lessons. He observes,

> I loved it whenever we went home from the church as children and my parents asked what we had learned. Home became the primary place of teaching and discussion. (Mutuma, June 2nd, 2016, personal communication).

Whether it was through inviting fellowships in the house, ensuring that children were taken for lessons at church, or following up on the Sunday lesson for better understanding, family programs were perceived to have played a formative role in people's faith.

School Activities Programs

All levels from primary school, which is from first to eighth grade, secondary school, which is equivalent to a high school, and college were conducive for discipleship growth. Nevertheless, the higher the school level, the more the faith impact experienced as will be seen below. Events like pastoral programs in primary schools and Bible studies in high school/college were frequently cited.

Charlie, a youth fellowship member narrated his discipleship experience,

> The first serious encounter with the gospel was in high school. It was one of those weekend challenges that happen in high school, there was something about the way the gospel was communicated that jerked my conscious to life. That was the beginning of my Christian growth.

Charlie says he cannot really explain what it was but high school was the place that his faith was awakened and he made a conscious decision to follow Christ. Growing up, Charlie had never known how to actively introduce people to faith. When he joined a discipleship training in college, he learned that one can approach people and openly make an invitation to faith in Jesus. He recounts,

> I remember when we were in college we had discipleship class… I never knew about this way of making disciples. But because we had that discipleship class in college I learned about it. There were those guys who were making people to know Jesus more by openly talking about the gospel. I came to know that this method of discipling was winning many to Christ. (Charlie, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

Materials for Bible study programs and fellowships were significant in disciple formation. These materials were mostly developed by the Fellowship of Christian Unions or Kenya Students Christian Union. [206]

The effect of school reached beyond the students to their families and loved ones as recounted by Carol below, a Women fellowship member. She remembers how she came to grow in faith;

> My son went to form one (first year of high school), he got born again. He would pray at night, He also had moments of both fasting and praying. His lifestyle challenged me to move closer to God than I had been before. (Carol, May 26th, 2016, personal communication).

Although Carol does not claim the school experience for herself, her son who had encountered a formative experience at school came home and shared the same with his family, thus impacting his mother. She noticed that his life was different and wanted to live differently from how she had been before.

Kimathi began his journey as a follower of Christ in high school. He notes,

> I was saved when I was in high school, many years back. And I have tried to keep that faith. One day a preacher came and preached to us on Sunday. I felt I should give my life to Jesus and started following as his disciple. (Kimathi, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

Kimathi says that he had a born-again experience in high school and that influenced what he is today as a disciple. Mugambi as well notes that his discipleship happened in college. He accepted to follow Christ in college through events organized by a group of college

[206] https://kscf.org/index.php/pages/our-activities/bible-study

brothers and sisters called MUBET. The group was an association of college students from various Kenyan universities who gathered into a forum and held evangelistic meetings during school holidays in their home county. Mugambi notes,

> I got saved in the university through an event organized by the university brethren… my first discipleship reality was when I went to college after getting born again in the holidays. I had been invited by a friend to attend a student organized event called MUBET (Meru University Brethren Evangelistic Team). (Mugambi, June 2nd, 2016, personal communication).

For some participants, their faith experiences occurred as early as Primary school and for others as late as university or college. Kenyan schools have programs designed for spiritual growth of the students. These include weekend challenge events that happen once every academic term, Bible studies organized by Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS), new-believers' classes, fellowships and Sunday services at school.

Church Activity Programs

Participants perceived discipleship to happen in church events like *keshas* (overnight prayer meetings), fellowships, cell groups, choirs, Bible study, and catechism/ confirmation classes. Participants recounted programs in MCK that were disciple-forming. Mutuma says that catechism played a big role in his being a disciple. He says, "I have grown up in the Methodist Church since I was in junior Church, but my life changed when I was taught the catechism class." Muthuri remembers how teachings in catechism shaped him. "When we went for Catechism/confirmation classes, the teaching was really good and taught us to give our lives to Christ, I gave my life to Christ and from that time I have never turned back."

Participants noted how the Christian teachings received at an early age in Sunday school formed them in later years. Uhuru observes,

> The teachings I got from Sunday school, where I was taught the doctrines of the church prepared me. I have come to appreciate that period as a preparation… it created a baseline for me. (Uhuru, April 17th, 2016, personal communication).

Participants confirmed that initial teaching was a good foundation for discipleship. Sunday school for young children was viewed as the first place that participants got introduced to Christian faith. This is where young disciples are first formed.

Participants also said that the Methodist church was good in the quality of Sunday sermons because they preach messages that are diverse and not only based on money. Utamu says

> I grew up in MCK, both my mom and grandma were staunch members. but when I cleared high school I wanted to explore other churches, their singing was boring and they did not dance and or have charisma. But mom encouraged me to find a stable church. I got tired of these other churches and their preaching about money all the time. (Utamu, April 23rd, 2016, personal communication).

Utamu notes that she returned to MCK after she had left the church because she realized that MCK had good preaching. They were not centered on prosperity or money –making projects like the other places she had visited. Although there was a perception that MCK had poor discipleship programs, people felt that she was based on sound biblical preaching in her sermons.

Participants cited their JSS (Junior Sunday School) experience as a preparatory stage for their faith. It was typically where introduction to Christianity was done. Junior Sunday school is the evangelism level where they became aware of God, even though in very peripheral ways. Catechism and confirmation as youth members then provided the

grounding of faith. Youth group provided the same spiritual nurture and faith grounding as catechism.

Perceived Problems with MCK Programs

Programs activities in MCK were perceived to be poorly done for discipleship. Participants perceived them to be mostly focused on membership addition rather than transformational oriented.

Poorly Organized Programs

People like Caitlin felt that many of these were inadequate for discipleship. She says,

> MCK discipling is wanting, we have neither structure nor clear arrangement… We do not have trained people to follow the new believers. Even those who know how to disciple cannot do so because in the Methodist church you cannot do things that you are not assigned to do. We should have people specifically assigned this work. (Caitlin, May 26th, 2016, personal communication).

There was a feeling by Caitlin that new believers are often left to fend for themselves and nobody really cared for them. She also pointed out that discipleship programs in the church lack good structure and that the people who could help are not engaged or assigned this duty.

Catherine felt that discipleship in MCK is not a well-grasped concept. All that seemed important to the church was membership. There was neither recruiting new disciples nor having a program to grow those that already were disciples. She observes,

> MCK is not very aggressive and consistent with her discipleship. Discipleship is not a clear program. The MCK is good in maintaining its membership but not very much into hunting the new ones… I think making disciples is every believer's obligation. (Catherine, April 18th, 2016, personal communication).

Gitonga, another member, expresses his frustration with how the Methodist church conducts her discipleship affairs compared to other churches. He feels that although MCK makes attempts at discipleship, it does not go far enough into forming disciples. He, like the other participants above, tended to focus on new believers as those who need discipleship. But he went further to note that the reason young believers never become mature is because even when they go through training, they just become full members of the church but are still infants in faith.

Gitonga yearned for a teaching beyond full membership and catechism/confirmation classes. Gitonga desired more teaching, deeper teaching, and continuous teaching for discipleship in the church. Although membership and catechism/confirmation classes were perceived by some to be a step towards discipleship, Gitonga did not suppose it to be enough. For example, he wished there would be some teachings to continue after catechism/confirmation trainings are completed, and for them to be emphasized in the way catechism/confirmation classes are emphasized. He says,

> Other churches have trainings especially for new believers. These have not been designed in the Methodist church or if they are there, they have been largely neglected. This is a problem with the pastors. Our MCK programs are designed such that you attend classes and are baptized, then you get a few days of teaching and you are confirmed and called a full member. This means that even those who have completed MCK training for full membership are still infants in faith. We should develop a teaching structured in such a way that it picks up after one is confirmed to full membership, and there should be a recognition at completion, after the lesson, that the person is able to understand certain concepts of faith. (Gitonga, May 7th, 2016, personal communication).

Uhuru argues that discipleship is not taken as a chief priority of the church's mission. This is because there is no named status nor goal associated with that status achieved in being a mature disciple.

> We as Methodist try to do discipleship, but we have not made it central. We have displaced priorities. Every church program should be centered on discipleship. We do many things hoping to disciple, but we do not review what we are doing to see if discipleship that we set to do is happening. There should be frequent assessment to see how well we are doing what we set out to do. (Uhuru, April 17th, 2016, personal communication).

Charlie, a youth member says that he realized how much his youth group was missing when he attended a Bible study program from a neighboring church. He felt that it would be hard to grow spiritually without such teachings.

> You see some of the things that have influenced my growth as a disciple are like Bible study. There is a Bible study program called *mizizi* that is offered in Mavuno church. It's pretty good. When a friend introduced that to us, I realized there was something missing in our church. We don't have a solid program like that. If we miss things like that, we don't grow. (Charlie, May 20th, 2016, personal communication).

Uhuru, who was required to attend a Bible study program before he could be a leader in a college Christian fellowship, grew passionate about it with time. He could not envision any other way to start Christian discipleship without exposing people to God's word through Bible study.

> Bible study is crucial. It is a way that people decipher God's word as relating to their lives. If people do not study the Bible for themselves, they fail to understand scripture. This leads them to justify sin… laziness in studying the word of God and just swallowing what people say has consequences. One builds ideologies around God's word and really never comes to build a relationship with Christ. I find this disturbing because people fail to relate with Christ from the truth of his word. Good fruit comes from studying God's word. I wish more people could invest in Bible study. (Uhuru, April 17th, 2016, personal communication).

Learning about the Bible was mentioned both as a tool that had deepened the participants' discipleship but also as something that they wished they could have more of. Almost all the interviewees recommended having more purposeful study of the Bible in the fellowship. There was such a hunger for someone to guide the church into the truth of the scriptures.

Absence of New-Believers' Class

Gitonga notes that biggest challenge in MCK is that they do not have any program to nurture those who are young in faith. He notes, "Other churches have trainings especially for new believers. These have not been designed in the Methodist church or if they are there, they have been largely neglected." Another participant, Udia, said new believers class is necessary for their spiritual growth. She says "I am commissioned to speak the word and witness on Jesus behalf. Christians need training in order to grow, but Methodist has no new believers class. I do not know why." To her, the lack of these classes for new believers in MCK hampered growth.

Chao says that the MCK does not value the new believer's classes because it is not in their structure. She notes that the church does not do an invitation to faith every Sunday like other churches do. She notes,

> We are wanting in this area of discipleship, we have no structure and clear arrangement. Altar call is rare too in our churches. In some churches, every Sunday there is an altar call. We need a system. We do not have trained counselors who follow others as they get saved. Why don't we have those people, … I would like to do it but I cannot because in Methodist you cannot do things

> that you are not assigned. We should have people specifically assigned this work. (Chao, April 26th, 2016, personal communication).

She felt that there is no organization for this activity, the exercise of nurturing young Christians into maturity.

Lack of Bible Study

There was also perceived to be a need for a better structure in teaching the Bible. Participants pointed this out severally. Gitonga notes,

> To get people to Bible study, it has to be structured in such a way that there is a recognition of its need, and that person can understand such and such a concept and how it is used. Things people omit in their Christian life is because they don't understand them. (Gitonga, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

Ujana noted,

> The Bible study, I wish more people can invest in it. In college, I was required to attend Bible study as a leader, it was required at first but then I grew to like it. Sunday service is not enough, people are usually not even listening. (Ujana, April 17th, 2016, personal communication).

Gitonga observed that most of the things that people do not do in the Christian life are things that they are ignorant about. There is minimal understanding about scripture. Ujana noted that once he started to attend Bible study, he liked it and could not stop. He observes that it is futile to hope that people will learn about their Christian walk during Sunday service only.

Recruiting Disciplers

Some participants felt that there is need to hire fulltime workers to do discipleship since the general congregation was too busy to do it. Mailutha says, "Discipleship should be done by pastors and other fulltime employees who are employed to do that and so have the time." Discipleship is seen to be an official and separate activity. As such it was consigned to the pastor or other fulltime church employees. Furthermore, some participants felt that they were too busy fending for themselves and their families that it would be hard to engage in something else on the side. Discipleship was usually perceived as a program and therefore it was a scheduled activity. Most people did not understand discipleship as a lifestyle hence their felt need to have more staff that would disciple people.

Although there were perceptions of discipleship as the job of the pastor and fulltime workers, several other participants perceived themselves as having a role in discipleship. They said that they felt called to disciple, or that it was the role of the members in the church to disciple others. For example, Unita agrees with Uhuru above that discipleship is to be done by all Christians. Unita says, "my purpose on earth is to be a disciple, commissioned to speak the world, witness on Jesus behalf." Uhuru says, "I am a disciple, I know that God was filling me to go and minister to others"

Most of the participants who felt they had a role to disciple were from urban churches. This might have been because of their interaction with believers from varied denominations where discipleship is explicitly expected of all members as their basic Christian duty.

Teaching as Random Rather than Intentional

Caitlin noted that MCK does not have a good program to train people. She says, "MCK discipling is wanting, we have neither structure nor clear arrangement…. We do not have trained people." Catherine shared similar sentiments. She observes, "MCK is not very aggressive and consistent with her discipleship. Discipleship is not a clear program." Participants noted that there was lack of a clear structure or organization to help people grow, whatever growth that happened was random and unplanned. From programs and their role in discipleship we now move to the next point presented by participants as performance and participation.

Performance and Participation

Participants preferred to be engaged bodily in their faith fostering activities. From singing, dancing, and clapping, to spontaneous prayer, the participants loved to be engaged in activities. They also learned scriptures through doing rather than listening as participation produced a more lasting lesson and thus a more lasting impact in their lives as disciples. Performance for the participants meant both performing as a work of orality and performing as participating in activities like leadership or preaching the gospel. A few activities were mentioned as fulfilling this role. These were music, rallies, participant worship, and involvement in ministry.

Performance of Music

Singing was a prevalent activity discussed by participants and cited as a tool of transformation. The type of the music did not matter. Music encompassed personal singing, choirs singing in church, contemporary music during praise and worship sessions in church. Gakenia said that songs encouraged her heart and ministered to her faith. "Songs have words that encourage us. When I sing, I get strength. The songs minister to our faith." Unity said that the message in songs encouraged her to stand firm in her faith. "Singing in choir helps my faith and that of other church attendees because of the message in the songs…it encourages me to stand firm in faith. But I would love to see more lively praise and worship songs." Both participants alluded to the special role of music in their lives. Music gave them strength and encouraged them to be firm in their faith.

Participants viewed singing in church as a ministry. Music not only helped the people singing it, but also those listening to it. It was considered highly valuable to give others the gift of music. Participants thought that it was important to be able to minister to others through music. Charlie says, "For me it has been a journey and I have seen God finally help me to do things I could not do before like singing in church." He said the fact that now he could participate in church in this way was a point of growth. He saw singing as a ministry in church that is very important and participating in it was a victorious enablement from God.

Participation in Ministry

Ujana recounts how her discipleship journey began when she was invited to accompany an elder of the church to preach. She felt that her gifts were noticed and appreciated. She says,

> My growth in faith started when an older church leader asked me to accompany him to preach. I think this man really discipled me…Those who did not want any responsibilities did not want to be disturbed. The people who do nothing in church can be very problematic…they are there to criticize people. (Ujana, April 18th, 2016, personal communication).

Ujana said that inviting people to partake in ministry will make them insiders rather than outsiders, participants rather than observers, thus starting to deepen their discipleship. Charlie agreed with this observation,

> When I was voted for to be a youth leader, my walk with God improved because I got to a point where I realized that this is a church position and I needed to be that example. So, I have gone through that process of understanding what it means and that's how my discipleship has improved. I don't think my walk with God would be this good if I had not been elected as a leader. (Charlie, April 17th, 2016, personal communication).

Unity's growth as Christ's follower began when she participated as a Sunday school preacher during the rally season. She says, "Events that contributed to my spiritual growth as a disciple include preaching as a Sunday school kid during a Sunday school Sunday, an event that was a culmination of the Sunday School rallies." For Unity, preaching in a worship service ushered her to the world of ministry. She now knew that she belonged to those who were actively seeking to serve God in ministry as disciples.

Gitonga says that the reason why members do not understand themselves as disciples is because they are themselves not discipled. He offered his thoughts on what he perceives would help improve MCK discipleship,

> We should ground the leaders so that the people in leadership can achieve a certain level of growth. The biggest problem is that many churches do not have

> ministers. The church leaders are the lay ministers. Yet, we give leadership to people who are not even born again and these people cannot pastor people at all. The people who elect these leaders are also not born again, so they see nothing wrong with choosing non- born-again people. The church therefore ends up being conformed to the world's standards rather than transforming the world. If people are grounded in their faith, other things we want to start so as to nourish faith and discipleship will be easy because the people are already thirsty for God, they will already know him and they will be wanting him. (Gitonga, May 30th, 2016, personal communication).

Mugambi is a member of the men's fellowship in one rural church. Originally, he was drawn to his church through the activities of a rally. He loved all the fun activities that were happening there like Christianized folk songs, folk dances, dramas, poetry and competitive sports. He also met other strong Christians in this church-organized social event. These led him to start his Christian journey. Mugambi says;

> Initially, my father hated Christianity. He said that it disrupts children from the noble tasks like grazing cattle and brewing beer. At that time, I heard that at (Muutine) there were people, Christians who were singing, playing games and doing Sports. I joined them and their activities. We started travelling far and wide in the rallies. That is where I met this guy here (points at another brother) He was very firm in his faith and he led us and mentored us very well. (Mugambi, June 2nd' 2016, personal communication).

Participants like Mugambi experienced the rally as being there to usher him on the Christian journey. For others, the rally was the journey itself. Mutuma who is a member of men fellowship narrates,

> Rallies help us in many ways; first, they bring people together for better community among members. Second, they help those taking part to grow spiritually. For example, activities like drama require people to act a play from the Bible. This makes it real life. Additionally, rally songs are composed from the Bible. The words give life and make us grow. Personally, the songs are a teaching tool, I learn new things about God every time I participate in the rally choir. (Mutuma, June 2nd, 2016, personal communication).

Urru below says that the seeing of the dramatized word in the rallies makes it easy for people to understand the gospel. The lesson lingers in the believers' thoughts thus

shaping their Christian walk. He gives an account of his own experience when he participated in a biblically inspired play,

> Rallies bring people together to know each other and to be taught together. The songs and drama have especially a big teaching. These are drawn from the Bible. Those who cannot understand the gospel from regular teachings and Sunday preaching, have an opportunity to understand from acting. I remember when I was a young person we acted about Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel. It showed how people could live together and make right choices. That story also taught me that I cannot hide anything from God, I need to be transparent with God and not fear people but God. I had been acting as Adam in the play. I can never forget that lesson because I did it. (Urru, April 23rd, 2016, personal communication).

Upesi however cautioned that rallies can retrogress into empty competitions. He says, "Rallies should be done like youth and Junior Sunday school do theirs so that there is no fighting and competition, it should be actually called fellowship rather than rally. Here they grow through memory verse recitation and Bible trivia." Charlie agrees that the rallies can just be a competing event for social purposes, even though he brings it up as an important activity, he does not see it as helping people to grow in their faith as disciples. He says, "We are told that rally activities for the Youth are supposed to help in fellowship, but I think they end up being a competition and socializing but nothing for the spiritual edification."

Gitonga agrees with Charlie, He says, "Rallies have been reduced into social events, people just do things together and the rallies have nothing to do with individual faith or discipleship. I think a rally is a forum for spiritual people to socialize; it is a good fragrance to the society." Gitonga's reference to rallies being a *fragrance to society* meant that the church was offering an alternative social life instead of men going to socialize in clubs and alcohol selling bars, meeting for a rally practice became a better

choice for Christian men. Rallies were shown to be a big part of the Methodist tradition and thus an activity that was talked about as a discipling tool or as a non-discipling tool depending on people's experience with rallies.

There wasn't any notable distinction between older and younger churches in their perceptions of the discipleship process. However, people in the towns were particular about the role of group fellowships and how relationships formed in those forums facilitated discipleship.

Another notable thing was the understanding of the respondents' growth in discipleship and social justice. Although the institutional church views herself as one of the more sensitive ones in addressing people's needs through schools, hospitals and other development facilities, participants said that the church could grow her discipleship more by having ways of helping the poor. Kimathi says

> *The* weak and the poor need more attention than a simple prayer from people who go to visit them. We need to take notice of members who need more help and take pastoral visitation. We need to help these people materially.

According to Kirimi, more could be done than just saying a prayer with a poor person during pastoral visitation by the village "shepherds". Kinoti agrees with this thought, he says,

> If you preach to a person about going to heaven and he has needs or the guy is hungry, they will not be listening. Also, when people are talking about giving in the church and this person has nothing to give he just thinks he is in the wrong place.

There was also a perspective that people who are poor lack the faith to trust God for blessings. This is a spill-over from the prosperity gospel teachings that associates blessings with faith and poverty with lack of faith. Udia says,

> People emphasize a believer should not be rich, as if planting the seed is bad. This is not foreign in the Bible. A believer shouldn't be poor. But some people don't have faith God can bless, they are not ready for blessing.

Kirimi and Kinoti above brought to the fore the role played by a church's attention to social justice. It is obvious that this attention or lack thereof affects the discipleship process. In Udia's thoughts however, the poor should be helped to have faith in God so that they can be blessed to get out of poverty. Blessing here is not the wellbeing and goodness which come as a result of being at peace with God, rather, they are material goods that come for comfort. The idea of planting a seed in order to be blessed has been very prevalent in Kenya's religious circles, sometimes with gross abuse.[207]

In this chapter, I have given some candid descriptions and expressions from the respondents to show what they thought and what they said. In the next chapter, I will discuss those findings and analyze their deeper meanings.

[207] "Kanyari: All Churches Eat 'Seed,'" Daily Nation, accessed October 16, 2018, https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Victor-Kanyari-churches-eat-seed/1056-2511152-dtfidy/index.html.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Three pivotal components of discipleship emerged from this study. These are *Relationships in Community, Well-designed Programs Activities, and Performance in Participation*. The three components combined seemed to dominate most respondents' experience of discipleship. The results were interesting because contrary to what the institutional church promoted as important aspects of discipleship, participants pointed out at some unexpected factors. MCK has held that her churches need more programs or improved programs. The 2016 annual conference resolutions on discipleship were as follows[208];

- To outsource T.O.T (Trainers of Trainers) to enhance discipleship programs at all levels in order to equip members on sound doctrine using *"Thabiti*" (A Bible study teaching material)
- That *Thabiti* (a Swahili Bible study manual) be translated to other languages in order to reach out to all communities.
- That *Thabiti* be introduced as a tool of training for discipleship in our sponsored schools.
- That Methodist Ministers/Chaplains start discipleship programs in Methodist sponsored schools using *Thabiti* as the formal tool for training.
- That the Conference office should supply enough *Thabiti* materials to Methodist Church in Uganda (a branch of MCK).

[208] "51st Annual Conference: Discipleship and Lay Training Committee Resolutions" (Nairobi: Methodist Church in Kenya, August 2016).

The following year in the 2017 annual conference, similar resolutions came up from the discipleship committee;

Res.1: The Church to come up with discipleship programs in stages that will address Christian and Church doctrine in the Church.

Res.2: The church to intentionally come up with discipleship programs for the Methodist sponsored schools under the chaplains assisted by conference.

Res.3: The ministers and chaplains within our Methodist sponsored schools to offer oversight on spiritual and discipleship matters in liaison with the management of the schools.

All these resolutions are focused on enhancing the programs or using certain tools. They addressed issues like training some people who would conduct discipleship in churches, (a point raised by participants too), translating *Thabiti*, a Swahili discipleship manual to indigenous languages, and charging pastors and chaplains to start discipleship programs and use the manuals *Thabiti* in schools.

There was a felt need to improve on the church's discipleship, but they missed the importance of creating relationships within those programs and inviting members to be active participants in them. The MCK has selected one solution to the discipleship problem and has staked all their hopes in it, i.e. the *Thabiti* program. This research reveals that program activities of their own accord are not effective for discipleship. Wholesome discipleship is experienced when the three components listed above work together.

Developing a Lifelong Practice of Nurture and Accountability

Relationships provide avenues for people to get mentors who guide and support them in the journey of faith. They also find in these relationships trusted mirrors for their faith where they can look and see what it means to live life as a disciple.

Family relationships formed through birth and through marriage are the most influential in people's lives because they tend to be more permanent. The home environment is therefore the cradle of faith growth because of the relationships that are fostered there. These relationships also have the greatest capacity to negatively influence discipleship. This happens when these are unhealthy and experienced as disruptive.

Relationships as mentioned above are not always healthy. Some relationships can be abused. Basic relationships that are built on trust for example parent-child relationships are an example. Respected leaders in the community like C.U. patrons and church leaders are believed to carry authority from God and this makes it easy to mislead young Christians. Okesson while studying the Redeemed Gospel church in Kenya observes that, "ontological associations between God and humans provide pastors, by the virtue of their nearness to God, with heightened or privileged access to divine power."[209] These leaders carry power to both mislead and also power to lead well.

Participants like Kaume above explained how some people use the church to just gain power or progress in their social status. For example, church elections which tended to favor those in higher social status and with more financial stability. Their biggest

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[209] Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity Within Akamba Christianity in Kenya*, 2012, 158.

ministry was perceived to be giving money to the church rather than winning disciples for Christ. Participants perceived that this giving was geared towards controlling other church members and that their goal was not discipleship or building God's kingdom. Some society elites were perceived not to care much about faith and yet they were still elected for their financial benefit or to maintain the status quo as observed by Kaume above. These people could be misleading to younger Christians whereby they pose as respected elders and yet their motive is different.

Good and healthy relationships are however significant in the discipleship experience. The role of the spouse was vital as they invited or encouraged their loved one to attend their church. For example, many participants referenced their husband or wife who constantly invited them to some church activity. Parents who wanted to commit as disciples usually involved their children such that the whole family grew together in faith.

Relationships had to happen in the right contexts for them to be formative for discipleship. For example, participants from families that conducted evening prayers with the children or that invited their neighbors for a home fellowship had disciple-forming experiences. Further if the same family with a home fellowship program encouraged participation where the members were given a chance to lead a devotion or sing a song, they were better formed as disciples, participants said.

Family relationships were shown to have played a big part in people's discipleship growth. It was either a mother who could not give up on her children's faith growth, a grandparent who was intentional with her grandchildren and their relationship to Christ, or a child who set a great faith example for his family. In the case of Urithi above, his mother prayed for him and encouraged him in his faith journey. Although Urithi was the

one who had initially introduced his mother to faith, she grew to be an encouragement. Family members thus influenced each other reciprocally.

School was the other place where long term relationships were formed. Students spent most of their time with each other and with teachers. That gave them a chance influence each other in matters of faith. Their formation happens on several levels; student to student, teacher to student, and student to a group of students.

Relationships fostered at school with Christian teachers and specifically Christian union patrons were perceived to be profound in that students aspired to be committed to their faith like their teachers were. Schools were also places where deep friendships were fostered. As youth and young adults in the school going age, people sought their identity and a clear definition of who they were. It was therefore common for people to choose to relate with those that they aspired to be like. Friends and teachers filled in this role. The extended periods of time spent together in these institutions provide both space proximity and time to foster those relationships. These relationships could be both personal and communal. Thus, the role of the community in discipleship was highlighted.

W. Jay Moon argues that holistic discipleship happens in communities rather than to individuals. He notes,

> Holistic discipleship also reveals that discipleship is a long-term process of community growth, which may not be evident in a short-term individualistic culture clamoring for instant results. It recognizes that individuals do not exist in isolation; rather, we are part of larger systems. Healthy, maturing disciples often arise from healthy, maturing communities. This requires the holistic disciple-maker to look at the larger community growth process that leads the community toward wholeness.[210]

[210] Jay W. Moon, "Holistic Discipleship: Integrating Community Development in the Discipleship Process," *EMIS* 48, no. 1 (January 2012): 19.

It takes patience and endurance to develop disciples. Short term investments based on quick-fix philosophies do not deliver. In the Kenyan context, relationships in community happened for example where one had several friends in the same group for an extended period of time like at school or in a neighborhood fellowship. Encounters that were more than a once off interaction were perceived to give a better discipleship experience, especially when there were patterns of relational encounters in the family, church, or school.

Relationships happened in the context of general life like for instance when a mother interacted with her baby-sitter or house-help as they prepared a meal for the family, or when the milkman delivers baby's milk every evening, or when conversing with the shopkeeper from whom one gets groceries every evening as they walk home from work or when interacting with the *bodaboda* (motorbike taxi) guy who ferries a farmer to their *shamba* (farm) every Saturday. These everyday relationships encompassed different aspects of life including the social, economic and cultural as avenues for discipleship.

Kevin Watson explores the value of small groups as tools of transformation. He argues that there are three types of small groups. The first one he calls affinity groups, which are organized around common interests and hobbies like book clubs and cooking clubs. He notes that these are the least effective in helping people become disciples of Christ. The second type of a small group is the information-driven groups like Bible studies and Sunday school classes. These are knowledge focused and are aimed at helping people know and learn about faith. The third group he calls transformation-driven groups. These are geared towards changing lives and highlighting people's experience of

God more than content mastery. It is this last group that Watson sees as the most effective small group. Examples of these include accountability groups, cell groups and class meetings.

According to Watson, the first category that he called affinity draws people with different interests and hobbies. He notes that when the Methodist church in America started to decline in the twentieth century, such non-effective groups had started to form where "instead of talking to each other about their experience of God and their pursuit of holiness, Methodists were talking to each other much more general and abstract ideas that were increasingly difficult to connect to the intimate and mundane details of their lives."[211] He likens these groups to a runner who does all the research about running and knows about it, but who actually never runs. Watson claims that many churches have groups at the second level of information acquiring, and challenges them to move to the level of transformation. He observes that as much as information about faith is important it needs to move beyond information to formation. He notes, "The Christian life is not primarily about knowing the right things. It is about living in Christ."[212]

The transformational group, and this really, he argues, is the goal of teaching. This is a good way of articulation of the small groups in churches. However, my departure from Watsons argument is that the three levels are not exclusive to each other. In fact, the first two levels could be viewed as progression towards the ultimate. I think that the three

[211] Kevin M Watson, *The Class Meeting Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience Kevin M. Watson*, 2014, 59.
[212] Watson, 8.

components are important for transformation to occur. Lack of affinity or information hinders transformation.

For example, some women groups in Kenya are formed initially for affinity reasons. The women that Karambu above talks about make some monthly contributions where by a member of the group gets a lump sum of money to be able to offset a major need like pay a child's school fees or buy a cow. The cow could then become a source of family income, she can later pay for it in instalments. This is probably a social aspect of the group that would fit in Watson's *affinity*.

The women would continue contributing this money in the group to give to another member the following week and so on. This continues until all the members have had their turn to receive the money. The group helps each other financially. This activity is called a "merry-go-round". The women groups hold seminars that teach members about how to be good parents or good wives. This cognitive-social level information level groups would fall under Watson's *informational* category.

The women's groups especially those founded in churches do not stop at information, they hold prayer sessions for each member and a time of testimony. They have one of them preach as the rest listen and appreciate the member's ministry to them that day and also study the word of God. In these instances, people share about their walk with God and the challenges that they might be facing in the journey. These are points of transformation where people allow fellow disciples into their lives, and on the other hand

offer themselves for other people's lives so that they can grow together in grace."[213]In transformative group meetings, "participants actively discuss the state of their current relationship with God and how they are living out (and sometimes failing to live out) their faith."[214]

The three categories build into each other. In the MCK context, there is need to offer information as happens in Bible study so as to give the basic information on Christian living. Then the information gained and the relationships made contribute to the transformation. Affinity category is important too because as a communal society, African Christians want to join with others who share the same interests with them more so if those interests are in pursuit for faith.

Discipleship is thus perceived by my respondents to be imbedded in ordinary life and fostered through everyday relationships. Healthy relationships were intentionally and purposefully sought. They were important in urban centers where people lacked tangible community in terms of relatives. Relationships with other believers became the substitute for extended family and nurtured people in their faith, especially during trying times.

Paul Chilcote argues that the communal aspect is important for discipleship. It offers a chance for the church to reach out with generosity to those who might need it. He says,

> Discipleship requires community, which is itself a profound implication of having been created in the image of God who abides in perpetual relationship… (the love of God in the community) compels it to reach out with glad and generous hearts

[213] Kevin M Watson, *The Class Meeting Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience (Franklin, TN: Seedbed*, 2014), 26.
[214] Watson, 9.

> to all. In this way, the Christian family becomes a disciple- making community as it bears witness to the good news by making room and creating safe space for the other (hospitality), by offering reconciliation and peace to the broken hearted and the oppressed (healing), and by living in and for Gods shalom- vision for all humanity and creation (holiness).[215]

As image bearers, we are called to live in community, loving one another and offering hospitality, grace and healing to those who are broken. Discipleship in communal relationships reflect God's image upon his people.

The image of God is an image of community. Those created in God's image too desire to live in community. It is the inescapable beauty of God and living in God's kingdom. It is so integral to the Christian faith such that one of the foundational Christian doctrines, the Trinity, portrays God as a community within the godhead. John Zizioulas notes that the "early church bishops such as St Ignatius, St Irenaeus and St Athanasius approached the being of God through the experience of the ecclesial community."[216] From that early period, the church fathers recognized that God could not be understood as a monad because God choses to reveal Godself as a community of the godhead.

Zizioulas further notes that the being of God is fused with the concept of communion for it is only as a community that people can talk about God's being.[217] The connection between father, son, and spirit helps us understand the idea of God's being. "The substance of God, has no ontological content, no true being apart from communion."[218] The early church fathers believed that "nothing in existence is conceivable

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[215] Paul Chilcote, *Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 7.
[216] John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 16.
[217] Zizioulas, 17.
[218] Zizioulas, 17.

in itself, as an individual, such as the *tode ti* of Aristotle, since even God exists thanks to an event of communion. As such, the ancient world heard for the first time that it is communion, which makes beings "be": nothing exists without it, not even God.[219]

Not only does God exist in communion, God choses to work through communities to execute his kingdom purposes. When God reveals Godself to Israel, God charged them to ensure that the whole human community gets the news of that revelation. To repeat Christopher Wright's words, they were blessed in order to be a blessing.

Leslie Newbigin notes that the emphasis of the Christian faith is not for solitary members to seek how they will attain their personal salvation but how as the body of Christ they can be an army of righteousness. "The belief that in the last analysis I am a solitary soul with my own relationship with the Transcendent… is false. It rests upon an atomistic spirituality that contradicts what is most fundamental in human nature, namely, that our life is only fully human as we are bound up with one another in mutual caring and responsibility."[220] We are human as communal beings and that is how God sees us.

Howard Snyder observes that "the Wesley's took their clue of making disciples… from the vision of God as a community of love who moves out in the dance of creation and redemption. Discipleship begins through an encounter with this God in the living word and in the joy of finding faith through relationships with companions in the pilgrimage of life."[221] God is the chief example of life in community, for God exists as a community.

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[219] Zizioulas, 17.
[220] Leslie Newbigin, "Religious Pluralism and the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13, no. 2 (April 1989): 54.
[221] Paul Chilcote, *Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 6.

Snyder further notes that Christians are to live now in the light of what will be, but what will be is affected by how they live now. He continues, "As a community, the renewal movement prizes face to face relationships, mutuality and interdependence. It especially stresses scriptures which speak of *koinonia*, mutual encouragement and admonition within the body."[222]

Wesley developed communities for accountability groups that acted like fueling stations for believers. These provided follow-up, encouragement, and exhortation for the believers. Without these groups, Wesley saw all the work of evangelism as going to waste. He records,

> I was more convinced than ever that the preaching like an Apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching has there been for these twenty years all over Pembrokeshire! But no regular societies, no discipline, no order or connection; and the consequence is, that nine in ten of the once-awakened are now faster asleep than ever.[223]

Wesley realized that whenever relationships in small groups and bands fostered discipleship by providing the well needed accountability. Otherwise faith quickly shriveled and died. Accountability was achieved through '*ecclesiolae in ecclesia'* which was crucial for spiritual growth among the Moravians, a group that had greatly influenced John Wesley.[224] A type of a small group called a class meeting played a great role in early Methodist's discipleship. Howard Snyder notes that the power of the class was in its ability to foster intimacy, mutual care, support, and discipline.[225] He further asserts that

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[222] Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 1980).139
[223] "Journal of John Wesley - Christian Classics Ethereal Library," accessed September 10, 2018, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.vi.xiii.iii.html.
[224] Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal*. 24.
[225] Snyder, *The Radical Wesley: The Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker*, 168.

class meetings provided a means of grace for many Methodists and served an evangelistic and discipling function.[226] It was this very thing of communal accountability that Wesley's contemporary George Whitefield lacked in his ministry.

Whitefield was a great preacher, even a better preacher than Wesley. Towards the end of his ministry, Whitefield realized the futility of his work for having not done as Wesley had. In a conversation between Whitefield and John Pool, Whitefield asked Pool if he was still a Wesleyan, to which Pool responded to the affirmative and expressed his joy for being connected to Wesley. Whitefield then said, "John, thou art in thy right place. My brother Wesley acted wisely; the souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruits of his labor. This I neglected, and my people are a rope of sand."[227] Despite the numerous converts by George Whitefield's preaching, there was no structure to nature them into Christian maturity.

The Wesley brothers formed bigger communities called societies. They however broke these to smaller classes and band units. "Since the primary point of belonging was this more intimate level of community, membership in a class was required before one could join the society… the class leaders (men and women) were pastors and disciplers."[228]

Wesley also knew that those communities he had formed were more than accountability forums. They were also training schools for leaders which were fashioned into close-knit fellowships to shepherd and develop them.[229] The class meetings were

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[226] Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal*. 56.
[227] J. W Etheridge, *The Life of the Rev. Adam Clarke*-- (Nashville: Southern Methodist Pub. House,1859), 189. Cited in Kevin M Watson, *The Class Meeting Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience. 21*
[228] Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal*.54
[229] Snyder, *The Radical Wesley: The Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker*, 99.

manufacturing plants for transformed communities. As Snyder notes, "Wesley's gift for organization was bent towards one objective of forming a genuine people of God within the institutional church. He concentrated not on the efforts leading up to decision but on the time after decision."[230]

For the early Methodist's, a life of devotion accompanied by accountability became a cornerstone for the band and class members. "The classes normally met one evening each week for an hour or so. Each person reported on his or her spiritual progress, or on particular needs or problems, and received the support and prayers of others."[231] The small groups were discipleship powerhouses. It was in these meetings that young Christians were expected to grow. Each member was answerable to those in his or her class meeting. Spiritual disciplines were nurtured in these settings. In fact, this is the place where people grew in intimacy with God. Wesley himself was converted at Aldersgate in a small group meeting.

Strong bonds among believers in MCK help them to know each other in deeper sense such that if one is struggling, the others would know exactly what they need. In the case of Kirimi and kinoti above talking about the place of social justice in discipleship, they convey that helping each other and bearing each other's burdens is perceived to be a good discipleship option. In a country like Kenya,

[230] Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal*. 2
[231] Snyder. 55

Udia's thoughts on the other hand seem to have overtones of the prevailing health and wealth gospel that teaches that people influence God to help them depending on how much faith they possess.

Asamoah-Gyadu notes how the theological worldview of NPCs, especially those in this wealth and health gospel lean towards immediate gratification. "This is reflected in everything they do. For instance, the words of the born again have performative effect, so debts, unemployment, unhappy marriages, and spiritual torments may all be cursed in prayer whilst blessings of money, children, promotions at work and happiness are claimed. The kingdom is seen in earthly terms and is established through the power of prayer and positive thinking ..."[232] It was surprising to note that though not prevalent, some members in the Methodist church subscribed to this teaching mostly propagated by T.V. evangelists. Ka Mana attributes this ideology to lack of critical thinking where the gospel is sometimes reduced to magic. He notes, "it is outrageous that many Christians with weighty and serious responsibilities in their society still hold into their childhood catechism without seeking to reflect on the Bible and the Christian faith with the understanding and mature mind of an adult. In their mind, Christ remains the reality of a magic formula; and his salvation, the reward of a magician"[233]

This may sound like a harsh criticism especially because most people did not really see this idea as a magic working but a cause and effect issue; that if one is obedient to God

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[232] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Born of Water and the Spirit: Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa," in *African Christianity: An African Story* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007), 349.

[233] Ka Mana, *Christians and Churches of Africa Envisioning the Future: Salvation in Christ and the Building of a New African Society* (Waynesboro, GA: Regnum Africa, 2004), 99.

and if one has faith, then their prayer will be answered and they will be delivered from their problem, be it poverty or otherwise. The worldview of the traditional religion also has an influence in this kind of thinking. For example, when farmers prepared their land and planted the seeds. They waited a little while for the seeds to sprout so they can start to weed. Before the actual weeding, the people invoked the blessing of God to enable them to get a bountiful harvest. This was done in form of a prayer saying, 'god of the heavens, god of the mountains, bless us with plenty of rain and a bountiful harvest.'[234] Although people worked hard on their farm, they also knew that a good crop ultimately depended on God's blessing. Thus, the place of community as a place of conveying blessings either by helping each other or praying for each other is highlighted.

The calling of God is to individuals who recognize that their identity as God's children is their identity as a community of faith. The image of God is the image of community. It makes sense that the discipleship of those that follow him is most vibrant when done through relationships in community.

Strategy, Creativity, and Evaluation

Participants expressed the importance of well-designed and contextually relevant programs for disciple formation. Although most people in the contemporary Kenyan church are not available for traditional Programs like midweek services and extensive

[234]Jane Zakayo, (Kenyan Matriach) Phone Interview on November 9th 2013.

catechism/confirmation, creativity with the programs may be a good strategy for the church.

There was a prevailing feeling that MCK needed to start new- believer's classes. Those participants who recognized their calling as making disciples said that nothing is done to ensure growth in MCK. They were frustrated that the new believers' class was missing in the church. MCK was seen to be doing a poor job in this area. Participants noted that many of the growing disciples in the church were those that had gotten nourishment from elsewhere and not from MCK. Participants noted that MCK invests more in catechism and confirmation classes as their forums to teach good doctrine and to usher people into church membership.

MCK pastors are usually free to determine the format, the depth, and the material to be taught in catechism and confirmation classes. Although the Methodist conference has a recommended book to guide the teaching of confirmation classes, the reality is that the Pastors determine what to teach. Furthermore, pastors get to teach those being confirmed for barely three days before the confirmation ceremony. They assume that new members have been trained in their churches by the class teachers as the Methodist regulation requires.

Class teachers are lay people appointed to conduct confirmation lessons for several months until the lessons are fully covered. But this is rarely followed up to determine whether it happened. The new members themselves get busy in life and miss on the lessons. In many cases, the class teachers are usually volunteers in the church, they are neither trained nor equipped to do this job. Additionally, most of the confirmation candidates are school going children in boarding schools. They only come home a few

weeks a year and so have little time to spare for this teaching. Confirmation training is therefore done at best in a rush and at worst haphazardly.

New believer's classes on the other hand are not meant to add members to the church but to form faithful disciples. The two are therefore set to fulfill different goals. Participants noted that new believers' classes are not even attempted in MCK and this is an important activity that is missing in the church. Although MCK hopes that confirmation training leads people to being quality disciples, the chief goal of the confirmation class is to add to the numbers of those who are full members. Usually this becomes the only goal that is achieved. Participants expressed that some people feel ill equipped as disciples even though they already are full members. Gitonga above talks about full members who have never been disciples because that has never been expected of them.

The example of Mugambi interviewed above is a case in point, He said that real discipling for him happened in college and not at his home church. He observed that it was the college brothers and sisters who took him through a Discipleship class comprised of teachings on how people can be Christ-like and how to grow in faith through Bible study. Mugambi notes that although he had been a Christian in MCK his growth never progressed for he had never been availed an opportunity to live a different life for God, even though he had attended catechism and confirmation classes to become a full member. His home church had provided an avenue for faith through all her programs, but these had not facilitated his growth as a believer. This is also reflected by Gitonga who argued that full members in MCK never get an opportunity to be discipled because everything stops at church membership.

This was however not an all-encompassing view. A few participants like Muthuri above noted that there are those pastors and preachers within MCK who invited people to make a decision to follow Jesus. These were also the ones who tended to focus more on nurturing the new believers who had newly accepted the challenge to live a Christ-like life. Gatobu agrees with this observation. He says that he was discipled when he underwent a confirmation class into full church membership. The difference between these two categories of people above is that their conversion experiences were different. Muthuri and Gatobu accepted their faith gradually while Mugambi and Gitonga had an instant conversion experience. Thus, their discipleship processes should have been equally different.

Participants noted that pastors who invited people to an instant commitment to faith and discipleship tended to structure catechism and confirmation classes differently. They did teachings about how to live as a disciple of Christ. However, for those pastors and leaders holding the view that conversion is a process that culminates in catechism and confirmation classes, seem to have nothing to offer those who convert instantly.

William James notes that conversion does not happen in the same way for everyone, some people "experience a moment of epiphany alone in their bedrooms or secluded place, like a flash of light or something they see as glorious… For others, they get a sudden conviction resulting from preaching in a revival."[235] Lewis Rambo in his book *Understanding Religious Conversion* engages different disciplines like psychology of religion, sociology of religion and anthropology of religion to help him understand

[235] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience; A Study in Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: International Society for Science and Religion, 2011), 133.

religious conversion. Although he argues for conversion as a process, he does not exclude the possibility of sudden conversion.[236] Citing the many meanings attributed to the word conversion, Rambo observes that the central meaning of the word is 'change'.[237] Rambo thus views salvation as both a process and an instant occurrence.

There are different understandings of conversion and as Rambo says, "Conversion is what a group or a person says it is."[238] The cultural, social, personal and religious systems are components that play a big role in religious conversion."[239] It is important to consider how people convert, and thus addressing individuals differently as per their felt need of discipleship. Those for whom the experience of discipleship starts with a sudden conversion, a new-believer's class is essential. For others whose discipleship is a journey and conversion to faith a process, catechism and confirmation classes became a section of the ongoing journey towards mature discipleship, and should be structured for them as such.

Participants noted that much time is spent in MCK congregations asking for money to support in putting up church buildings. As much as structures and buildings are important for an institution like a church, their value is minimal if relationships that nurture disciples are not fostered and enhanced. Elaina Heath argues that the belief that a congregation is not fully established until it owns a building with pews, programs and professional clergy leads to attractional model of ministry. In this model, non-believers

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[236] Lewis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1993), 1.
[237] Rambo, 3.
[238] Ibid., 7
[239]Ibid.

will come and hear sermons and music and afterwards support financially the programs, clergy and the building called church.[240] This however is not the definition of church.

Elaina further notes that "Bible teaches that church is organic, the body of Christ, the people of God who are created, called, gifted and sent out in partnership with God in God's mission to the world… the ecclesia is a God-gathered people, not a building, and our identity is rooted in God's healing mission."[241] Elaine sees no value in churches investing in buildings. It might be challenging to have gatherings without buildings as Elain argues, but when buildings take over every other ministry of the church and becomes the dominant thing, then there is a problem. It might be an invitation to rethink the theology of sacred space and what that means for the church in Kenya, where a lot of resources are used to build a facility that is useful one day a week. What if a part of that effort was used to build people in their discipleship rather than to build structures?

By the church venturing to creatively respond to discipleship opportunities surrounding them, partnerships could be formed to help in teaching the young believers how to grow in faith. Programs created to help teach people about faith are to be constantly assessed to establish whether they are accomplishing their goal of discipleship because what is important always gets evaluated. By the church fronting her expectation of all members to disciple, people know that is desired and expected. Structured

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[240] Elaina A. Heath, "Making Disciples in a Post-Christendom USA," in *Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 235.
[241] Heath, 235.

discipleship activities and programs were not common in homes. Nevertheless, there were a few of those house fellowships and prayer events.

Families organized some semi structured programs to facilitate discipleship growth among the members. Several participants mentioned their experiences in house fellowships not necessarily organized by the church, but a few neighbors getting together and deciding to meet often to pray and build each other spiritually. Although there were not many references of these, it was worth noting that people themselves got to organize programs like these for their discipleship growth. Of course, the people were usually members in the same church or from the same fellowship group.

Participants talked about their experience of growing in faith when families prayed together or invited fellowships to their houses. They learned how to pray, study the scriptures and share in Christian hospitality. Charlie above talked about how his first serious encounter with the gospel was in high school where he attended a weekend challenge. A weekend challenge is usually an all-weekend event like the name suggests. Preaching starts on Friday night, followed by Bible studies and more preaching on Saturday. On Sunday mornings, the students attend a worship service followed by a climactic event on Sunday afternoon called a weekend challenge rally. The program is very intense and schools permit and even encourage these events usually in anticipation that that when students get well formed in their faith, they will be better disciplined and ready to work hard at school.

Discipleship programs in learning institutions have a captive audience. Students are expected to attend these events at the stipulated times. Time is another factor that

plays favorably for school programs. Students at school have free time more than they would in regular home setting. It takes approximately three minutes to walk to fellowship venues from student dormitories. Since many high schools in Kenya have boarding facilities. Walking to the church for fellowships on the other hand for those not in boarding schools is tasking and sometimes translates to walking long distances and is time consuming.

Martin who experienced discipleship growth in college and became part of a discipleship class shared his story. He recounts how in the process he was both nurtured as a disciple and also trained as a disciple maker. It was after these programs in school that Martin started to see himself as called to make other people disciples of Christ. He learnt through observing and participating rather than through reading a book about it.

Discipleship programs designed by KSCF and Focus used in Kenyan learning institutions are intentionally designed to make disciples. The sole purpose of these programs is to nurture young Christians in schools to make a deep commitment to their faith and be good Christian leaders in society. School fellowships are mostly student led. The power of peer influence is at play here. At school, youths have a chance to interact with peers from diverse denominational backgrounds, and with others from diverse levels of discipleship growth. This gives them a richer experience.

Young people in high schools and especially in colleges are eager to establish what it is that they believe in especially as they approach adulthood. According to Setran and Kiesling, “emerging adulthood is a formative stage in which beliefs are solidified, life patterns are shaped and key decisions are made regarding spirituality, identity, church

participation, vocation, morality, sexuality, and mentoring.[242] The authors argue that this stage in life is the stage that young people can truly find who they are and what they believe in, it can also be a time where they lose themselves and their identity. Either way, time in high school and college is the time when young people are in a process to enter adulthood. It is also a time of transition which is vital for discipleship.

Church programs including Bible studies, choirs, cell group meetings, group fellowships, and rally activities are done in groups and therefore provide a community needed for discipleship. The church has however not invested enough in them. There is no intentionality or evaluation on how they were doing. Nevertheless, discipleship is happening through these programs seemingly by default rather than by design. It is interesting that respondents on one hand said that MCK was doing poorly on discipleship, on the other hand they cited experiences of discipleship in the church.

This may sound like a contradiction but it is not because there are multiple factors in a discipleship process. The first factor is the groups in churches that bring community. These themselves are powerful discipling tools. The second factor is careful planning of program activity, which MCK members feel is poor and needs improvement, the third factor is performance where people are active players in their faith, a combination of these three aspects enable a successful discipleship process.

School programs provide an environment for discipleship. Bible studies organized by student Christian unions in collaboration with outside organizations like FOCUS and

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[242] David P Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2013), 231.

KSCF, fellowships, prayer meetings and Christian leadership trainings[243] also organized by the same groups are experienced as discipleship avenues. In these forums, learning happens in groups as students learn together. This provided both relationships with each other and community.

The programs are developed by organizations outside the school. However, Christian teachers who are assigned the role of Christian Union patrons oversee them and give guidance. The programs are student led, a few leaders are elected from among the student Christian union members and trained as lay pastors, the C.U patron oversees that they are carrying out the program well, and the Christian organizations sponsoring the programs receive feedback of how the programs are faring.

Partnerships between the church and the school to develop Christian Education materials would be a good discipleship strategy. These could be used in to teach in church small groups and also in school pastoral programs. The school programs are allowed by the ministry of education about 30 minutes per week where local pastors go to schools to teach Christian lessons to the children.

The fact that students are able to lead others in these school programs gives them a chance for participation. The discussion is very relevant because it is led by peers, with occasional guidelines and input from the patron. Performance and participation is shown to reinforce memory of the teachings and also to foster community for those who perform and learn together.

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[243] **https://focuskenya.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2017-AGM-Handbook.pdf**

Participants felt that full membership does not equal discipleship. Most people are baptized because their parents took them for baptism when they were babies. They later become confirmed because it's a ritual routine before a Methodist youth joins high school. But then, the church does nothing else to intentionally invite people to active discipleship, to something they can participate in.

Participants did not seem to have a good articulation of how long discipleship took. For some it went on until one became a mature Christian, often understood as serving in the church in some way, for others, especially those who viewed discipleship as a new believer's class, it went on until the curriculum was finished. Those who said that discipleship continues until maturity did not know how to determine when an individual has grown and not in need of discipleship.

Bible studies were not seen to have an end like discipleship classes. There was an expression of needing a continued study of scriptures through Bible study. Many participants observed that the only teaching they got was on Sundays during the regular sermon lesson, and this was felt to not be enough.

MCK needs diverse programs and especially a creative strategy for these programs. Creative strategy ensures that the church is dynamic and ready for change in order to accommodate people where they are. Pastors themselves could be busy serving several congregations and stretched thin in trying to cater for all the churches under their care. The reality of ministry in MCK is that few pastors are trained and these serve several churches. Therefore, pastors serve too many churches and this hamper effective

shepherding of the members. As such, lay preachers and church leaders are the pastor's contacts with the congregation.

Pastors could disciple a few people who can disciple others and assist in preparing discipleship activities and programs. These in the MCK would be lay preachers and leaders. Training them would be a great place to start on discipleship because if they are not given the tools they need for the job, they will not succeed. Although the MCK preachers undergo some training before being approved as preachers on 'full plan', (qualified as properly trained), they are never involved in continuing education to keep them updated on new theology and emerging contextual issues.

MCK ministry however provided an environment for growth. This environment is presumed to be in the church and the church activities. Evangelism and open-air preaching is encouraged in churches. Some participants explained how they had left the church because they had felt that it was boring with routines and liturgies. After experimenting with the more dynamic prosperity churches, they felt overwhelmed with change and volatility. The prosperity preachers appeal to many people because they offer encouragement and hope for a suffering people, but nothing like tangible help is availed. The people who had explored this option came back later to MCK to experience what they called 'stability' as seen in the story of Utamu above. The churches they had relocated to were mostly preaching about giving money to the kingdom so one can be blessed. And this teaching dominated every other area of the church's life.

MCK was thus doing a better job in preaching the gospel, but challenged in the area of ensuring growth. Once new members join the church, they are encouraged to join the

church programs so they can have a discipleship environment. But the groups themselves may not be equipped to offer that discipleship through teaching and training.

Participants expressed that some members in MCK do not know the basic Christian tenets because they are not taught about it. They are ill equipped in conducting any discipleship. Without training, people and especially those in leadership lack a vision of where they are headed, or what to do in order to disciple the young converts to faith. This leaves the responsibility to the pastors.

Trained preachers and leaders are legible to be commissioned to disciple those whom they lead. MCK enjoys a lot of lay Christian's involvement. People like the chairman of the church are even recognized as local pastors in the church's standing Orders. The Arithi (Shepherds) conduct pastoral care to the needy and the sick church members on behalf of the pastor. These are an important part of disciple formation in the Methodist churches. As Meadows observes, making authentic discipleship the starting point of missional thinking eases the burden of the church."[244] If the church starts with teaching a few that their mandate is to go and train some more, it makes work easier.

When believers are trained to be trainers of other believers, then the chain-link proceeds forth unbroken. MCK resolutions on discipleship was to identify some to be trained so they can train others. This is a noble idea as long as this is not made to look like it is a reserve for a special few. It is people in their everyday world, the primary school teacher as she teaches, the hair salon and beauty attendants, the secretary at her

[244] Phil Meadows. "Wesleyan Wisdom for Mission-Shaped Discipleship" http://themissionalnetwork.com/index.php/phil-meadows (accessed on April 10th 2014-online)

desk, the construction worker at his site, these are the people who will be discipling others by living their lives in ways that reflect Christ.

Participants noted that MCK has teaching programs apart from catechism and confirmation classes for example as done in group fellowships. When teachings happen during devotions for group fellowships, they are sometimes treated as preliminaries before the real thing happens. This real thing in group fellowships is either to collect money for a 'Merry go Round' for women or to practice a Sunday song for youth. In Men's group, it is usually a preliminary before practice for rally events.

This reflected that discipleship, the Christian growth towards transformation is not perceived as the "main thing" for MCK church groups. Some perceived these groups as social gatherings with a pinch of discipleship, with discipleship being something that came as a secondary agenda. The leaders of these groups do not feel the urgency of discipleship. This aligns with W'Ehusha's argument above that some church leaders do not have neither training nor skill for discipleship, so they usually do what they know. It most certainly is not discipleship. This makes Christians in MCK uncomfortable to venture into discipling others since they themselves weren't discipled.

Participants felt that intellectual understanding of the gospel is important for discipleship to occur. Teaching was perceived to be a crucial part of discipleship. There was a deep desire for the church to be intentional in teaching God's word. As such, there was a prevailing perception that MCK lacked a clear structure for teaching and this was constantly cited as the reason for poor discipleship in the church.

One might argue that discipleship is more than teaching a class. Putting a class together and having the students complete some curriculum may leave them full of information and not transformed in any way. However, ignorance of the scriptures is not a virtue and is harmful for the church. It is better to be informed and not fully transformed rather than be non-informed and non-transformed. Lacking information that could lead to transformation is a double tragedy. The general perception of MCK members is that there is a great need to be taught especially when one is young in faith. That way they would be invited into a learning space where the chief purpose would be growth in faith. Participants felt that it was wrong for young and new believers to be left to fend for themselves spiritually because this left them vulnerable to wrong teachings from the religious market.

Concrete teachings for discipleship may cover areas like Christian doctrines and biblical teachings as people are thirsty to understand God's word. MCK members yearn for new believers training manuals and revised catechism/confirmation materials. These could be developed in such a way that they move people beyond mere membership to faith growth. Diligence in such trainings is a great discipleship opportunity for MCK. More so in young churches because they have great capacity for fresh ideas and views such that if they start well, their potential is unlimited.

This potential is however not limited to young churches only. The Methodist church in Kenya endeavors to be a disciple-making church for missional purposes as reflected in their mission policy document.[245] She recognizes that she is called to witness

[245] Mission and Evangelism Policy Document. Methodist church in Kenya

to what God is doing in the world and join him in his work of transforming and redeeming the world. As Bevans notes, the church can only be church when she realizes that her scope is beyond herself,[246] that she has a duty to the whole world and not just inside the four walls. "To the extent that the Jesus community responds to the Spirit's call to continue Jesus' mission in new and perhaps unthinkable ways, it becomes the church."[247]This invites the church to always explore new ways to think beyond the ordinary age-old tested ways and welcome new dynamics of outreach.

Revivals, lunch hour meetings, *keshas,* cell groups, fellowships, Bible studies and rallies are other programs that the church may invest in as teaching and relationship avenues. Focusing on these existing forums and yet being creative enough to make them intentional discipleship forums will help MCK move from just reaching people as a mere routine exercise, to reaching them for discipleship. This creativity has to engage context in order to ensure relevance of the programs. The creativity also involves the social, the cognitive and the spiritual aspects to reach people.

Traditional communities in Kenya had various ways of initiating new members into the next level of life. These were effective in introducing people to their new status and instructing them in their new way of life. In ATR (African Traditional Religion), people graduated from one level to the next in their formation. For example, the Meru people of Kenya had different age groups. In these groups, a person took on a new training for that level, achieved it, received the title and membership in that level of

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[246] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 10.
[247] Bevans and Schroeder, 30.

society, and then began training for the next level. Participants decried lack of clarity in how one advances as a Christian. In the Meru people of Kenya's culture. A child grows and graduates to be a boy (*Mwiji), (Nthaka*), then to a family person, and finally to an elder (usually as a *Njuri* person or a member of the council of elders). Even in the council were different levels e.g., *Njuri incheke, Njuri impere,* and so on. In all those levels or ages, there were teachings and responsibilities. One knew when they had graduated from one level to the next, and what was expected. Victor Turner talks about three levels that happen in rituals. He advances Van Gennep's idea that all rites of passage are marked by three phases: separation, liminality, and aggregation. He notes,

> The first phase comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual from an earlier fixed point… During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject are ambiguous; he passes through cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or the coming state. In the third phase, the passage is consummated. The ritual subject is in a stable state once more, and by virtue of this has rights and obligations…. He is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social positon in a system of such positions[248]

In this state, people know at which level they belong. Bauta Motty speaks into this situation in his context in Nigeria. He lays down a strategy of how traditional rites in his Kaninkon community could be used as a Christian rite in what he calls 'Christian socialization'. He argues that using these rites that are familiar to the people would be an effective means of discipling Christians and helping them to become more like Jesus.[249]

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[248] Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process.* (Chicago: University Chicago, 1970).

[249] Bauta D Motty, *Relevant Indigenous Disciple-Making in the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA): A Case Study of the Kaninkon People in Nigeria*, 2005, 232–34, http://place.asburyseminary.edu/ecommonsatsdissertations/710/.

In this model cultural rites are used to "help the new believer enter, progress, and be bonded to meanings of their new-found faith."[250]

This argument fits well with the expectation of MCK members who crave some order or ritual in discipleship that will enable them to go through certain levels towards a type of 'graduation'. They hoped that there can be a discipleship ritual that enables them to know when they have accomplished something, and when they can graduate from one level to the next thus attaining new responsibilities.

James K.A Smith above talks about teaching that is relevant and effective as one that engages the whole person. He notes, "education is not something that traffics in abstract, disembodied ideas; rather, education is a holistic endeavor that involves the whole person…"[251] MCK seems to be teaching in some ways but not in all ways that affect a human being. Education through ideas while neglecting the emotions? does not bring change in people. Likewise, education through affections only which is influenced by what people do with their bodies is ambiguous and incomplete.

Abandoning either side, the mind knowledge or the body/soul side of teaching makes education incomplete, and the people thirsting for more. More than ninety percent of participants expressed desire to be taught the scriptures more often and more intentionally for their discipleship growth. The question is how the Kenyan church can teach her members the scriptures while engaging both their affections and their bodies.

The use of rallies, group fellowships and choirs as discipleship avenues would be a good option. The choir songs could be composed with purpose to teach people. The rally

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[250] Motty, 245.
[251] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 39.

events are to be viewed and conducted as no less than discipleship forums. Leadership in ministry is a discipleship avenue and so is catechism and confirmation. The already existing forums might have been created for other reasons like social purposes, membership training or clean entertainment, but for a church whose members are thirsty to learn and grow as disciples, these forums could surely be used to accomplish that desire.

We now move to performance, which is an active participation in ministry. Performance moves beyond the cognitive e.g. learning church doctrines to the embodiment of the gospel where one learns with their mind but more importantly with their body.

Performance- Active Participation in Faith

Encouraging members to participate in ministry and leadership helps them attain ownership of their discipleship and realize that they too are called into the ministry of making disciples. Participation goes beyond listening and moves towards action or activity as prompted by an event. Participants talked about active worship and preferred being engaged than taking a passive role. Many people talked about how a song would make them reflect on the loving kindness of God just by meditating on the words. It was surprising that some respondents acknowledged the beauty of Hymns in the Methodist hymnbook. These were usually songs translated directly from English hymns and so were sung in more formal ways like standing straight with just a slight sway. As long as it was

music, it had its place at the African table too, albeit with many wishing that these hymns would be contextualized and sung with energy and gusto, as though singing to God.

A song like; *mataifa yote yanakutambua, kuwa wewe ni mungu usiyeshindwa*, 'All nations recognize that you are God of victory, you are never defeated'. which was sang frequently in the churches I visited reminds people that God is King even in the bleakest of moments. In communities faced with poverty and hopelessness, these affirmations of Gods power can be very meaningful for people. As Okesson notes, God's power situates humans within the epicenter of the cosmos, where they apply his nature to the various inconstancies of human existence.[252]

More prominently, participants pointed out that serving in church as a leader was formative for discipleship not only for the congregation but also for the one serving. It creates a sense of belonging. Some participants like Charlie recounted that someone had dared to trust them with leadership responsibility and that trust became the beginning of vibrant faith. When a person realizes that they have been trusted to serve, they want to do that work with commitment. But then there were others like Karambu who were given such responsibilities and detested it. They were surprised at why church members would want them to lead even though they have explained that their lifestyle is not what would be expected. It occurred that one cannot generalize this observation to fit all people. But when leaders are alert to detect budding talent and those young disciples with a desire to grow, it would help to invite them to some responsibility, to be participants in their faith growth.

[252] Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity Within Akamba Christianity in Kenya*, 2012, 71.

In MCK, it appears that younger people are more easily encouraged through being trusted with leadership. They showed desire to meet the expectations of the elders or those who relegated the responsibility to them. Age might have been a factor here, but the mentor had to be intentional to shape the young leader into Christian maturity. Older people who get assigned positions of leadership seemed to stagnate as seen in the case of Karambu. This could be because once they get into leadership positions, they are expected to know what to do and so no one guides them. Additionally, they have already established their belief system and so it takes longer for them to change. Being elected into leadership without prior commitment may also reinforce the false feeling that one is alright otherwise the church could not have elected them.

Rallies in the Methodist church in Kenya are events that are organized with a goal for Christians to socialize. They are what one would call clean entertainment. The groups in the church; i.e. Men Fellowship, Women Fellowship, Youth Fellowship and even Junior Sunday School are invited to participate and perform in activities like sports, dances, drama performances, choirs, and poetry reading. Members showcase their talents with the qualifying ones proceeding to circuit, synod, and connexional levels respectively. The churches that win all stages to the connexional level get to perform before the Presiding Bishop and win trophies.

The rally events happen between the months of July to September each year and most members look forward to them. This particular timing could be because this is the time of the year that the weather is dry allowing for outside events. It also corresponds with the timing for the August holidays when students are usually home on holiday and so enabling them to participate in these activities. But it seems that rally events are not

only fulfilling the social role, but a spiritual one as well. Group rallies were perceived by members as avenues of discipleship and revitalized faith in God.

Some of the rally activities included drama. Urru above remembers the Bible parts he acted many years ago in a rally play and these shaped the choices he made as a Christian. An old Chinese adage goes, 'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.' The human mind commits to memory what is acted upon or performed, more profoundly than it does to what is only heard.

For Urru, the performing of a Christian play left a lingering memory. The fact that performance uses the whole human body as its medium is significant. It is not just the ears or the eyes that are active but the whole body. This includes the mind such that it is not passively waiting for the lesson to end. As such, the word does not get forgotten immediately it is uttered because it becomes practical and part of people's lives.

Worship in MCK was seen in the people's commitment to sing their faith and share it with others. Charlie above ushers us to the African worldview of the power in music. Singing in church is like enrolling to be a lay preacher; it is a complete ministry. That is why Charlie is grateful to be finally able to sing in church. Music is his way of expressing his love for God.

Participation, which mostly comprised of performing acts like prayer, music, and drama, is an important part of African practice. Performance for the African church has a special place because it is ingrained in their culture. During prayers in African churches today, the leader may be heard declaring blessings, health, and safety. Those words are perceived to make the action happen because the biblical promise is invoked that words carry power. Phrases like 'I confess that by his stripes I was healed, therefore I possess

healing today.' Invoking words in Isaiah 53:5 "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

This declaration is not done on a bended knee and clasped hand, but in vigorous motions that convey an actual taking possession of the blessing. People joining the leader in prayer with affirmations like 'amen', 'alleluia', and 'praise the Lord'. All these show ways in which the African has made adaptations to make the prayer more relevant. As Jacob Hevi observes that Africans prefer spontaneous prayer because the prayer book may seem a little stifling.[253] It is easy for one to resign to a spectator and listen to prayers being read on their behalf, but participating in prayer with the affirming interjections makes the worshipper be fully present in the worship act.

Furthermore, there are personal needs that prayer in a book will not address. Although the written prayer serves its purpose in worship as being in agreement in a community, the personalized prayer is specific to the situation and the particular context. Oral worshippers will prefer spontaneous prayer where they can voice the immediate need or praise God for an immediate provision as is relevant in their situation. Hevi observes that these participating prayers, which he also calls spontaneous, are biblical. The psalms are rife with exhortations for people to raise their yes unto the heavens or raise their hands unto God.

Many participants noted that there is an attraction to preachers who address the existential questions like illnesses, evil eye, prospering in business, and fertility, and offer

[253] Hevi, *Challenge of Authenticity*, 100.

solutions. These preachers perform their prayers rather than just say them. Some are heard varying intonations, and doing such actions as laying hands on people to receive blessings. Considering that discipleship addresses all parts of the human welfare, praying for people in this way addresses the spiritual need and especially in tackling the area of the *excluded middle.* Participants explained how people in MCK are attracted to churches that lay hands on people and pray for their needs, taking their felt needs seriously. This notwithstanding that some of these churches may be seen as errant in their doctrinal standing as Utamu explains above.

Participants hoped that MCK could encourage her congregations to engage in worship activities so that they are participants rather than spectators. Ela notes the church in Africa has a challenge to have lay people undertaking different ministries in the church and not to wholly depend on ordained priest to carry out the ministry work. He observes that "the new Christian communities can never be truly themselves unless they invent new forms of ecclesial life…"[254] Jean notes this while acknowledging that there is a shortage of priests but argues that this should not hinder the ministry work from continuing because it belongs to the whole community.

Being a participant in any performance demands a good understanding of the undertaking. In theater performance, one can only be able to perform well by spending time learning their lines and also thinking of the character they are embodying. Skits and plays as practiced by Christians are a reflection of real life. For example, when Christians are acting a play about the Good Samaritan, they contextualize it to show a person

[254] Ela, *My Faith as an African*, 59.

helping a victim of violence from another tribe. This is their understanding of how a Christian ought to behave under such circumstances. They are therefore acting their faith, enacting what they believed. This influences even deeper what they initially believed. There is a depth when an event or a teaching is re-lived through acting it out. It is an aspect of local theologizing. For example, when people sing and dance about their redemption, the performance stands out as a mighty event as they rehearse the enormous work that Christ did on the cross on their behalf.

This embodying of worship shows that there is a direct relationship between what people do and what they believe. The performances by African people exemplify what they believe. MCK Members perceive that an encouragement to perform more in song, dance, drama and even prayer would facilitate more growth in people's faith. People want an opportunity to pray for themselves, sometimes in loud and audible voices within the worship service and other forums in the church.

The small groups used for prayer involve all people as there is ease of participation by all believers in the group. Everyone is important and of use. They all serve each other in mutuality. The prayer sessions are seen as significant because they draw even the most shy and distant members to participate. Here they realize that they too have something to offer. They pray for others in their group and they in turn receive prayer thus making it a reciprocal relationship.

MCK could build a discipling characteristic in the group rallies. This is the place where many seekers visit, and here they may find faith in God. Rallies are therefore not just social events. Performing in a rally play for example helps people memorize the

words at heart, making the lines of scripture a part of their memory, and something that lingers for a long time. Actors in the gospel script do more than recite the words of scripture. The Methodist church may want to invest in joyful worship and happy singing that lifts people's spirits, even the employment of drums to produce a lively worship because performance is a crucial part of MCK discipleship. 2nd Samuel 6 gives a biblical reference to when David was bringing in the Ark of the covenant while dancing with his whole heart.

> "David and all the Israelites were celebrating in the presence of the Lord. They were playing wooden instruments: lyres, harps, tambourines, rattles, and cymbals… Then David danced with all his might before the Lord. He had on a holy linen vest. David and all the Israelites shouted with joy and blew the trumpets as they brought the Ark of the Lord to the city. (2nd Samuel 6:5, 14-15)

This verse undergirds the truth that worshipping God involves the whole heart, with energy and with dancing.

Roberta King lists key patterns of musical orality that facilitate meaningful interaction with biblical text. These are call and response, participation, community, repetition, and aggregate development of the text.[255] Three of these are pertinent in the African setting, participation, community, and repetition are all kingpins in the African oral culture. King notes that participation, which is both assumed and expected brings about bonding and identity formation. She observes that the communal orientation makes the lead singer dependent on the responding group to come in at the proper time. This is what fosters interdependence. Repetition facilitates memorable learning of the text material.

[255] King et al., *Music in the Life of the African Church*, 121.

It is common to hear a type of song popularly called a 'chorus' in Kenya. The song is basically a call and response song where the congregation repeats what the soloist said, or answers a question that is asked. For example, a song like *Nikimaliza kazi nitavalishwa taji (*'When I complete my mission, I will get a crown of glory').

The soloist then goes on to list the tasks that Christians are called to do, and everybody joins in saying when I finish my work I will get the crown of glory. This is already a part of local theologizing. They take the scriptures that they know and relate them to the local context. It is to the advantage of the church community therefore if her singers know scriptures well, notes King. "African musicking fosters an integrative process of theological and creative contextualizing in which the biblical text is processed via an expressive cultural form, that of African song."[256]

The dynamic process of song composition in Africa keeps progressing as people interact with more scripture and new life realities. "music facilitates the integration of daily life with the word of God in the lives of African believers within their local faith communities. As such, music serves as a life processor."[257] In performing music, Africans teach what is of most importance and value to them.[258] Music lives beyond the time it is sang to days beyond because it is immortalized in people's memory. The people call a song to remembrance when a situation that needs it presents itself. For example, during moments of discouragement, participants referred to times that they remembered a song that they had sang before that corresponded to the presenting situation.

[256] King et al., 130.
[257] King et al., 138.
[258] King et al., 137.

The relationship between performing and community has been explored by Cristoph Wulf who calls the performance arts 'intangible cultural heritage'. He argues that "communal life is impossible without the practices of intangible cultural heritage."[259] The identity fostered here is a strong force in the community. As such, performance sustains community.

On the other hand, community interprets performance. James Maxey notes that when performance is understood as fostering a cultural identity, "it cannot be seen simply as entertainment, it is an aesthetically appealing means of social change."[260] In Oral cultures, every performance is interpreted by the community and appropriated with some meaning. There are however possibilities of getting inappropriate interpretations. So how can one determine which interpretations are appropriate? Foley argues that not every interpretation is appropriate, but that is corrected by the traditions of the community. "it is the traditions of the community that set up the parameter of acceptable interpretations… in this way, tradition is the decisive authority."[261]

The community not only interprets but also translates performance. Interpretive Theory has established that "translation consists of understanding an original text, de-verbalizing its linguistic form and then expressing, in another language, the ideas grasped

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[259] Christiane Brosius, "Performativity and Dynamics of Intangible Cultural Heritage," in *Ritual, Heritage and Identity: The Politics of Culture and Performance* (India: Routledge India, 2015), 76.
[260] James A Maxey, *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible* (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2009), 85.
[261] John Miles Foley, Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic, 44. In Maxey, 99.

and emotions felt."[262] Although linguists might argue that interpretation and translation differ in that one involves oral and the other written text, the two terms are closely related in that both seek to give meaning to the language, ideas and emotions being expressed.

Lamin Sanneh talks about translation as the ability to be culturally relevant to a particular context. He seeks to take translation beyond the narrow technical bounds of textual work and portrays language as the intimate, articulate expression of culture.[263] Creative translation produces a community that is engaged in wrestling with issues that affect her within her culture. It is a journey to be walked with great patience.

According to Vanhoozer, theology should be seen as faith seeking and showing understanding. Theology informs and is informed by doctrine. Doctrine is crucial for the faith of the church because it shapes their actions. Martyrs died for doctrine. That is how powerful its influence can be, a cause to die for. Their belief and doctrine informed their actions. Kevin Vanhoozer advocates for performance of the gospel in what he calls "Theo-drama," a way of interpreting the gospel.[264] In this Theo-drama of life, God is the scriptwriter. Vanhoozer's analogy of Theo-drama of the gospel is very creative and relevant for discipleship. With God as the scriptwriter, all the scripts are constant. The difference is with the actors and the location of the play. Pastors and theologians are

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[262] Marianne Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model* (Hoboken: Routledge, 2014), 1, http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzc1NjA5OV9fQU41?sid=b597eb92-940c-4183-af2f-f812c6d44388@sessionmgr101&vid=1&format=EB&rid=5.

[263] Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 3.

[264] Kevin J Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

dramaturges or assistant directors of the play. The chief director is the Holy Spirit who keeps the church faithful to the script.

Vanhoozer further argues that the play must be performed creatively not woodenly, faithfully not irresponsibly. The spirit is seen to be the 'executor' of the word, much like a director of the play. He "prompted the canonical authors, enlivens the canonical script and brings out the canonical improvisations through the dramaturgical performances."[265] Although the Spirit is the enabler, human beings are the performers.

The church is "a company of players gathered together to stage scenes of the kingdom of God for the sake of a watching world"[266] Vanhoozer demonstrates that the local church in different locations in the world is charged with the responsibility to perform to a world that is keen to see how the story in the script unfolds. In Vanhoozer's analysis of the Theo-drama, everyone is a participant; everyone has a part including the audience who happen to be watching keenly. He further continues, "we don't want to make the mistake of thinking that the clergy are the only ones who "do church," or that growth in discipleship is a matter of what we do (i.e., meritorious works). Doing church is rather a matter of participating in the triune God's prior activity. The church is ultimately a triune production, a theater of the gospel wherein we begin to see how God in Christ is "reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Theology is the attempt both to spell out and live out this knowledge of the reconciling God."[267]

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[265] Ibid, 55.

[266] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 32.
[267] Kevin J Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*, 2014, xiv, http://site.ebrary.com/id/10954713.

It is important to insert a word of caution though. Care should be taken not to make the gospel about entertainment or empty performing, which Vanhoozer calls bad acting, not fitting actors. It's also what Jesus called hypocrisy. Vanhoozer notes that "almost all of Jesus' denunciations of hypocrisy have to do with the lack of coinciding fit between outward appearance and inner reality. Hypocrites treat prayer as a kind of public performance because they care about being seen (Matt. 6:5)."[268] Vanhoozer argues that drama is of good service to theology. He notes that it should be used as an aid to avoid creating an idol of it. "Metaphors can be wonderful ministerial aids, but they make terrible masters."[269]

Performance and participation is significant for discipleship in the Kenyan church. Watching for young talent in ministry and leadership, or in worship activities is important for MCK discipleship. New spiritual songs could be composed more regularly. The church may also invest in worship leaders and do trainings for them so that they can gain a full understanding of music as a discipleship tool. Singing in MCK churches could be clean entertainment but much more than that. It does not have to be cold and lethargic but rather encourage people to be enthusiastic for the one they sing to, and about the one they follow.

Summary

I have discussed the three components that are perceived to offer a rich discipleship experience. These are relationships in community, well-designed program activities, and

[268] Vanhoozer, 117.
[269] Vanhoozer, 244.

participation in performing faith-inspiring activities. The participants responses reveal a need to develop a multi-faceted approach based on three major institutions in society; Home, School, and Church. This happen as one builds relationships through friends and mentors, engages in discipleship programs, and participates in faith-nurturing activities. The research findings show that both Informal (daily life) and Formal (programs) methods must be used to disciple well. People must be invited inside, become involved, and participate in the life of faith in order to experience discipleship. To elaborate more on these findings, I will use a term that may capture the essence of this discipleship process called *Participatory Performance*.

Participatory performance

This is an ideology coined in the world of theater. According to Breel, "Participatory performance enables audiences to make changes and contribute to the work, which means that their experience and responses become part of the aesthetic of the performance"[270] The idea is to involve the audience to participate. The audience is part of the story and are involved in creating meaning. Participatory performance in theater makes the participating audience insiders, like they are really part of the story. The actors and the audience become one in community. In participatory performances, the performer and the audience share in the power to shape the story.

[270] Astrid Breel, "Audience Agency in Participatory Performance: A Methodology for Examining Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 12, no. 1 (2015): 368.

Breel notes that "the interpersonal relationship between artist and audience is integral to the success of participatory performance"[271] As such, those who are the chief actors and the audience have a relationship fostered in this performance. Participatory performance also enhances learning. Kumrai *et al* notes that "participatory theatre can provide a paradigm shift in the depth of learning"[272] People learn more when they are participants in the activity. In a study about how participation shapes learning among young people, Kumrai *et al* concluded that "participatory theatre has the potential for enabling youth and community professionals to become more skilled at addressing anti-oppressive practices and enhancing the quality and range of services delivered to young people and their communities."[273] Theater helps people to think outside the box enabling them to see more possibilities. This is defined by some other scholars as popular theater,[274]whose chief goal is personal and social transformation.

We saw that drama was an integral part of the Kenyan society. Ngugi narrates how drama was really never a planned activity for the Kenyan people but an activity among activities. It resonated well with the people's culture because it thrived in community as each member participated. This is articulated well in the interactive storytelling model of *sigana*, again a way in which the community communicated important messages to each other through some planned communal activity which

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[271] Breel, 379.
[272] Rajni Rani Kumrai, Vipin Chauhan, and Jane Hoy, "Boundary Crossings: Using Participatory Theatre as a Site for Deepening Learning," *Teaching in Higher Education* 16, no. 5 (2011): 526.
[273] Kumrai, Chauhan, and Hoy, 527.
[274] Diane Conrad, "Exploring Risky Youth Experiences: Popular Theatre as a Participatory, Performative Research Method," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3, no. 1 (March 2004): 13, https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690400300102.

involved everyone's participation. Klem notes that performance is so important in the African community because it is the way in which they define themselves through the shared activities. Further, he notes that "the survival of the memorized and informal oral arts is vital to the survival of the group identity."[275] In other words, the survival of performance is vital for the survival of the community's identity.

That same idea emerged from the data as the participants talked about the need for participating in programs as a community, thereby enabling them to form nurturing relationships. Participatory performance enables flexibility.[276] This brings forth creativity in communicating important life lessons. The flexibility of participating in performance makes knowledge collective and expressive because it is learned multi-dimensionally.

In exploring the potential of theater for liberation theology, Gillespie shows how theater was used in collaboration between a university group and a community in Tanzania to explore the possibilities of social change. He argues that theater through performance created change because it provided 'spaces for freedom'. Participating as actors led people to reflect on their lives socially and theologically to realize that they can do more. The people became aware that they did not have to settle for misery and that they could take action and free themselves from what enslaves them. People became more proactive in solving their own problems through theater.[277]

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[275] Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture*, 103.
[276] Klem, 118.
[277] Charles A Gillespie, "Can Theatre Be a Project of Liberation Theology? Explorations in the Case of a Collaboration in Tanzania," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 64, no. 2–3 (2013): 15.

A similar approach to Participatory Performance is used in the world of education under the term PET. Participatory Educational Theatre (PET) is an educational theatre methodology which "uses a participatory approach to allow the audience to probe, reflect on and respond to issues which concern them. This approach poses questions and problems, rather than supplying answers and solutions. The aim is to bring about change in the target community's perception of the world and themselves as individuals within it."[278] This would be a good approach in the church with the goal of causing transformation. Participatory performance in the church means inviting people to do faith; giving people opportunities to lead and serve in the church, putting more planning in activities like rallies such that the goal of the dances and dramas is to move people closer to God, forming more community utilizing church groups and communities as avenues of teaching faith and providing accountability.

In so doing, participatory performance has the opportunity of affecting not only social change but also spiritual change. Ujana and Unity above demonstrate that it was not until they were invited to participate in ministry that their growth as disciples began to happen. Urru too after joining a group of other young Christians in a church learned corporately with the others. It is a lesson that has impacted his life up to date with far-reaching effects on him as a disciple. I now move on to a conclusion.

[278] Roger Chamberlain et al., "Participatory Educational Theatre for HIV/AIDS Awareness in Kenya," no. 23 (1995): 1.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In the last chapter, I have discussed the findings of this study and demonstrated how Methodist members perceive discipleship. According to the research participants, discipleship occurs through relationships in community, well-designed programs and by active participation in faith. The combination of the three aspects is what I have called *Participatory Performance*. For MCK discipleship, the research responses show that there is need for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to discipleship.

Going back to our beginning question on whether the institutional MCK church has the knowledge as to how discipleship happens, and secondly whether the place of discipleship can be assumed to be chiefly in the church and its confines, this study answers to the contrary. The church's effort to improve *Thabiti* (a Swahili Bible study program) shows that MCK wants to address discipleship task through Bible study. They see a problem with their discipleship but they suggest only one means to counteract it. The calls by leadership committees for Friday Bible Study *(kaumia*) to be re-introduced into the congregations and workshops for discipleship teachers, preachers, and catechists were all centered on enhancing or restarting already known church programs. This is however a narrow approach to discipleship and lacking the creativity that is necessary for addressing discipleship needs in the church.

One of my recommendations is for MCK to employ a multifaceted approach to address discipleship. That means that discipleship is not achieved only by designing programs in the church. Although that is an important aspect, there is need for the church to facilitate relationship building forums that foster community. The church should also encourage participation from the members by engaging them in their faith. The

incorporation of oral means of communication like drama, dance and music engages people and enhances community as the research participants noted.

MCK should grasp the fact that discipleship happens in different social settings at different times in life. It does not happen through a single program like a Bible study, a catechism or a confirmation class. It happens in forums outside the church environment including schools and homes. It is the responsibility of the church to support and facilitate these outside-the -church avenues of discipleship. Empowering families to do discipleship at home for example through supporting home groups and village prayer gatherings could inspire people to continue with this avenue of discipleship.

MCK also needs to form partnerships with other institutions that facilitate discipleship like schools. Volunteering by church members to help in the schools as mentors and guides is one way the church could creatively participate in her community's discipleship. The church can also partner with school discipleship organizations like KSCF and Focus-Kenya to develop Christian Education books to be used in pastoral programs in the schools. Kenyan schools have a weekly time allocated for religious teaching and this is at times not fully utilized as a discipleship opportunity. Additionally, young believers who come back home from schools and colleges having gone through disciple formation processes should be given a chance to share their faith and encouraged to disciple others in the local church. The church could also train campus ministers to help with this process of forming the students' faith.

Organizing the 'Weekend Challenge' events in collaboration with the schools is another avenue. The church can assist in creating the stipulated teachings where specific areas of faith are covered. These may include witness and advocacy for the poor in

society, growing in Christ, prayer, mission, evangelism, and challenging structural sin. These forums could be used to challenge weak areas of Kenyan discipleship like its lack of a concrete public theology. Events like these that are attended by young people are great avenues for creating awareness of the young people's role in partnering with God to be a voice for the poor and the disenfranchised in society.

Seminaries and theological schools that train MCK pastors should offer refresher courses. These refresher courses should be developed in a collaboration between the seminary, the conference committees, and the local leaders/members of the church. This way the whole church functions as an integrated organ where the discipleship needs as raised by these quarters are addressed and everyone's voice is heard. One suggestion would be to develop new curriculums for training pastors on comprehensive discipleship. Here, discipleship is introduced as broad and encompassing all areas that affect God's people. Discipleship as narrowly reading a book or going through a program should be challenged. The multifaceted approach of discipleship could be introduced whereby the cognitive and the affective faculties of learning are encouraged.

The results from this research indicate that learning that is transformational is not just cognitive. It includes other faculties like the heart and the body. Learning using the body means that people are taught to engage their bodies in their learning. For example, learning through music and dance falls in this category. Music is a medium that allows people to learn with their bodies, moving to the rhythm of a certain song takes the learning beyond the mind into the body. Events in the rallies like drama and folk dances can be creatively used as discipleship forums and not just as clean social events. Other activities like prayers of healing and deliverance involve touching the body through

laying on of hands. Participants reported that some people in MCK go in search for churches that pray with more than words including laying on of hands and using anointing oil because these people believed these active prayers to be more effective. All these are activities that go beyond the mind to involve the body and thus are participatory and transformational.

MCK should also endeavor to develop well-structured teaching programs including the new believer's class which many participants identified as needed. MCK members who experience a transforming faith encounter should never be left to fend for themselves. There should be a class that teaches them the foundations of faith so that they can grow in their discipleship. This need was expressed very strongly among the research participants who felt that the lack of some instruction to the new believers was an undoing for MCK.

MCK may foster discipleship rituals which show that one has graduated from one level of discipleship to the next. Gitonga above talked about rituals that resemble rites of passage in African tradition whereby one progresses from one level to the next to ensure growth. This is not an entirely new thing as it has been used in junior Sunday school in some churches as they graduate from being children to being youth. The churches take the children through some teachings for a period of time and then celebrate their achieved milestone with a graduation party, a marking in the children that they are moving ahead, not because they have completed discipleship but they are going to the next level. This same ritual could be modified and used for men, women and youth fellowship so as to keep the fire of learning burning.

An area of further study would be to find out how these proposed curricula, that have stages like the traditional African rites of passage would look like for adult discipleship. A research to help flesh out those curricula that enable people to keep moving on their faith journey for a contextual Kenyan discipleship would be beneficial.

Another emerging lesson from this study is that the work of discipleship cannot be left to either the members alone or the pastor alone. It is not a one-person show but rather all people working together. Like theatrical participatory performance, discipleship participatory performance invites people to be part of the process. It binds people together enabling them to form a strong cultural identity. Participatory Performance is not one sided. Both the performer and audience are actively involved. The audience engages by participating in the interpretation of what they see using their cultural lens.[279] That means that when a performer performs, the rest of the community is empowered to make meaning, not as individuals but as a community. This process of meaning-making can also be said to aid in birthing a theology in context. Together, people in a particular community decide on what issues are relevant and employ the gospel in trying to address them. This agrees with Schreiter's idea of constructing local theology.

According to Robert Schreiter there is a great significance of constructing local theologies according to the context of the people. MCK has a challenge to unwrap the gospel from a foreign culture so that it is communicated in a language that the Kenyan Christians can understand and identify with.

[279] Maxey, *From Orality to Orality*, 98.

This study indicates that the Kenyan church needs to engage in the ongoing process of constructing her own theology. As an ever-changing phenomenon, local theology has no grand arrival at a constant theology because naturally, it is dynamic. Schreiter encourages enlisting the help of social sciences including anthropology and sociology to help understand the experiences of people in their local contexts. He observes that theology is as much "talk about God's people", as it is "talk about God". Schreiter's ideas are very important for the MCK context. The participants displayed the need for a contextual way of doing discipleship, that is by using traditional means of communication like drama, dance, song, and other acts of active participation. Using the social sciences mode of research, this study employed phenomenology as a way of understanding people's experiences.

Schreiter further gives criteria for determining healthy local theologies. He lists them as; the presence of cohesiveness (with other doctrines) of a Christian performance, the Lord's presence in worship, the impact on the community's praxis, willingness to be judged (read corrected) by other churches and willingness to challenge other communities in what Paul Hiebert would call engaging with *hermeneutical communities* to reach beyond oneself.

This research helps contribute to literature by offering the Kenyan experience as a discussion partner on the global table of contextual theology. It shows not only the value of doing theology in context but also exhibits how this can be done in the Kenyan experience. The engagement of both the grassroots people and the theologian is crucial. By consulting the people and listening to their voices about discipleship, we can be able to know what is discipleship for the Kenyan disciples and truly focus on that. The

integration of both the lay people and I as an academician was insightful for this study. As such, the voice from this study on the Kenyan perceptions on discipleship is a hermeneutical community partner on the contextual discipleship theology table.

The research has also established that the Kenyan church has a weak theology on social justice and advocacy. This aspect seems to be obscured and not treated as part of discipleship. There was minimum talk by the participants on the place of social justice awareness. Participants in this study seem to have been silent about advocacy or social justice. These are aspects that Christ himself was concerned about. There was little mention of addressing poverty or hunger by individual Christians.

Even in instances where poverty was mentioned, the emphasis was more on development than it was on advocacy. Women talked about the *Merry-go-rounds*, these are spaces where women contribute money to help each other tackle a pressing need with hope that them too will get helped on their day of need by getting the lump some money from their contribution. This is a way of tackling poverty through micro-lending. They grow their resources so that they can be able to help each one in the group. But there was no connection between this activity and discipleship. Additionally, they had very little to say about wealth distribution and equitable status which is more advocacy oriented.

Most respondents were more spiritually focused like living morally upright lives and walking in integrity. This transformation was seen to be enhanced by a life of prayer, worship and adhering to the teachings of scripture. Being disciples did not seem to have a direct connection with justice or fighting corruption. So why did the respondents not talk much about poverty alleviation, advocacy, micro-lending, or social justice? Christ's

concern for people went beyond spiritual welfare. He not only prayed with people, he fed them and healed them and addressed their physical needs. So why is the Kenyan church slow in this area? Why is there a disconnect between spiritual and material discipleship? Gregg Okesson sees this as a lack of a concrete theology of power and money. When the Christian is in a position of power, or is endowed with means, they see no connection between their money and their faith. Okesson argues for the churches in Kenya to embrace the image of God concept and appreciate power not as a right, but as a gift from God.[280] This would ensure that Christians do not see a dichotomized life where matters of wealth and matters of faith do not interact.

Paul Gifford notes that Kenyan Christianity lacks a theology of power and justice. He sharply critics the nature of Kenyan theology. He sees it as being only about culture and nothing more. He says that even on culture, Kenyan theologians "resolutely decline to address"[281] some aspects of culture like the enchanted nature of African Christianity and her patron- client relationships, an aspect that diminishes their prophetic voice.

This is a fair critique and an area that the Kenyan church might want to look into. The Christianity introduced by missionaries to Kenya following the revival in England during the eighteenth century was evangelical. "It emphasized plenary inspiration of scripture, the doctrine of original sin and human depravity, personal salvation by faith through Christ's death on the cross, public confession of sins and the proclamation of the gospel to those who had never heard it."[282] The idea of social justice was not included in their

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[280] Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity Within Akamba Christianity in Kenya*, 2012, 227.
[281] Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya*, 245.
[282] John Karanja, "Evangelical Attitudes toward Democracy in Kenya," 89.

teaching. The Kenyan church appears to be slow in integrating both personal and social holiness as critical aspects of discipleship. Discipleship in Kenya cannot be complete without addressing the whole person. It should rebuke those in positions of leadership who abuse power and injure God's people. Addressing such areas would be a good sign that discipleship is happening in the society.

Gifford notes that Kenyan Christianity in mainline churches like Methodist is concerned with being service providers and contributing to development. But the grassroots people are not quite as engaged in that and they do not recognize this as an aspect of discipleship. Asked what discipleship means to them or what activities the church engages in to nurture Christians unto discipleship, participants talked about fellowships and Bible studies. There was no mention of the role of the many Methodist schools or hospitals as discipleship activities even though the institutional church has invested a lot in these facilities. No one questioned corruption in the country nor the church's silence over the issue. There was a dichotomy between personal and social holiness in the minds of most participants.

The challenge is unto the church and her scholars to bring in the aspect of holistic discipleship, for it is not discipleship until it addresses the spiritual, social-economic, and physical needs of God's people. God looks at people as whole selves and not segments of the whole. Church institutions need to sensitize individual members and their congregations on the need to help the poor. Most MCK congregations raise a lot of funds to build church buildings. Building a huge and beautiful sanctuary is an important aspect of worship for the Kenyan church. Worshipping in temporal make shift tents is never

encouraged because of the interpretation that building a permanent building shows that faith is important for the community and that the God worshipped there is respected.

Although one can understand the ascribed importance of building a beautiful worship place for God, it is even more important to build up God's people. One recommendation could be for the church to set aside a certain percentage of every building budget to be used for building people. This could be in areas like empowerment of the poor, micro-lending and mission outreach. Equally important is creating an awareness of the theological understanding of why building up people is equally respectful to God.

But my agreement with Gifford on the argument above about a lack of public theology in Kenya does not mean I agree with his entire critique of the Kenyan Christianity. My push back on Gifford's thoughts is where he feels that Kenyan theology is only characterized by the study of culture. He argues that "Kenya academic theology revolves around culture. Taken as non-negotiable reality that is the foundation for all speculation. All the focus is on that reality, and only limited attention is paid to questions asked from another perspective or to issues arising from outside that frame, not least Kenya's place in a globalizing world."[283] Although I agree with the fact that Kenyan theology addresses culture, I disagree with Gifford's critique that Kenyan theology addresses only culture and that this is a non-negotiable reality that is the foundation for all speculation. First, I see nothing wrong with Kenyan theologians focusing on culture. Culture informs many aspects of a people's faith. In fact, it is the foundation from which all other issues of society get addressed from.

[283] Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya*, 245.

Andrew Walls warns that this is, and actually should be the case. He notes, "theology in the Third World will be as theology at all creative times has been, about doing things, about things that deeply affect the lives of numbers of people."[284] He advises that it is important to remember that African theology "will act on African agenda. It is useless for us to determine what we think an African theology ought to be doing … conversely the things that concern African theology may seem to us at best peripheral."[285]

As such, Africans may continue for an extended period of time to write about their culture and their African Traditional Religion. This is because "Africans identity is tied to their past, especially their cultural past. My response to Gifford would therefore be that it is for the good of the African church that her scholars are writing on what is the felt need of the community. Kenyan scholarship does not have to address what Gifford or the West feels is important. If culture is important for the African people themselves, then it is important for African theologians to study it. I wonder if there are some nuances of the African culture that Gifford himself might not understand clearly hence leading him to be dismissive of the same.

As Andrew Walls once said, "the major theological laboratory / workshop … lies in the life situations of believers or of the church."[286] It means that theology is out there where the people are. Contextual theology is shaped by the circumstances that a community finds itself in. That is why a contextual theology of discipleship has to employ creativity so as to address the prevailing needs of the society. Theological

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[284] Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 10.
[285] Walls, 11.
[286] Walls, 19.

engagement is thus a natural process that stems from people's needs in a particular context as they ask themselves; what does God say to us in the situation that we are in, how can we faithfully address it? Lamin Sanneh's translation theory argues that the success witnessed in Christianity has been enabled by the religion's translatability.

Translating the message for the Kenyan context in the 'language' of the said population is the only way to make a Christian impact in that arena. Sanneh draws our attention to realize that language is a mode of communication rather than mere grammar. The grassroots Kenyan Christian has a language that the church may have to learn if her message of Christ's gospel is ever to be heard. Part of this language is what this research identifies as participatory performance. MCK may need to teach people to move their faith understanding beyond head knowledge to actually doing. Discipleship is an active aspect of faith, it is lived out.

Vanhoozer in his Theo-drama ideology argues for performance as improvisation. Improvisation is more like continuing a play where there is nothing written for us. Vanhoozer further argues that it is the actors together that form the play. This idea agrees with Schreiter's argument for communities joining together to create their own theology according to their context. For Vanhoozer, living out the faith requires a community. This is reflected in the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I with them." So, community is crucial for performance or improvising. The participants reinforced this thought that performance brings community. Christian disciples are faithful to Jesus when they improvise and produce something fresh out of the script, in this case the scripture.

Activities in MCK like Catechizing and confirmation classes bring a didactic relationship. In fact, teaching is a relationship, while the Lord's supper is a type of a performance of belief. Drama tells the story with our bodies, it performs the story. In embracing Vanhoozer's theo-drama, participatory performance recognizes that words don't just say things, they do things. God does things in scripture. Vanhoozer notes that God's people are called to be imaginative. Imagination is bigger than theory and practice. In real Christianity, people do more than believing things, it's the living them out that is important. Participants showed discipleship is evidenced by living out faith, doing faith through participation. No one is a spectator, all are actors. This happens in the spirit of acknowledging the 'priesthood of all believers.

Lamin Sanneh observes that the "(Christian) religion is now in the twilight of its western phase and at the beginning of its formative non-western impact. Christianity has not ceased to be a western religion, but its future as a world religion is now being formed and shaped at the hands of its non-western adherents. Rather than being a cause for unsettling gloom, for Christians this new situation is a reason for guarded hope."[287] The new hope that Sanneh talks about calls on the Christian community to be ready, to strategize and to prepare on launching to the future. This will happen through doing a thorough assessment of our current situation in different contexts.

The question the Christians in the global south need to ask is how they can be involved in the shaping of Christianity in a way faithful to God's kingdom agenda. This research contributes to the Kenyan church's voice on how discipleship could be done

[287] Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*, xx.

more effectively in her location and others similar to it. It also adds to the area of contextual discipleship, specifically discipleship in the African continent as informed by her culture. Finally, it shows the relationship between community and performance and how the two birth deeper ways of learning rather than memorizing literature. This it does while shedding light in the area of grassroots perceptions of the Kenyan Christians.

In future studies, one may want to develop a discipleship model for MCK that allows for a participatory performance as it incorporates community, activity programs, and participation. Other studies may investigate discipleship perceptions and understanding of AICs or Pentecostals to see if they match with a mainline church like Methodist, or if the denominational foundation affects how people perceive discipleship.

This research has established that the MCK members perceive discipleship to happen through an environment of participatory performance. The environment is created through: 1. Building relationships in different places like homes, schools and churches. 2. Investing in training and teaching people the tenets of faith through well-designed, culturally sensitive program activities, and 3. Encouraging contextualization of discipleship by investing in oral culture tenets like performance. There is also a need for the Kenyan church to develop a strong public theology that is sensitive to the socio-economic needs of her people. Being aware of these perceptions will lead the MCK to disciple her members in ways that are relevant and meaningful, bringing true transformation into Christlikeness, which is the main goal of discipleship.

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Appendix 1

Focus group interview schedule for Members (May 2016)

1. Could you please tell me about your faith journey?
2. Could you tell me about your best discipleship experience?
3. How has been your discipleship experience in MCK?
4. What is your perception about discipleship in MCK,
5. Given a chance what would you change in MCK's discipleship processes?
6. To what extent has discipleship in MCK been what you expected it to be?
7. What activities does your church have for nurturing Christians unto discipleship?
8. What is the role of the church in a disciple's life

Appendix 2

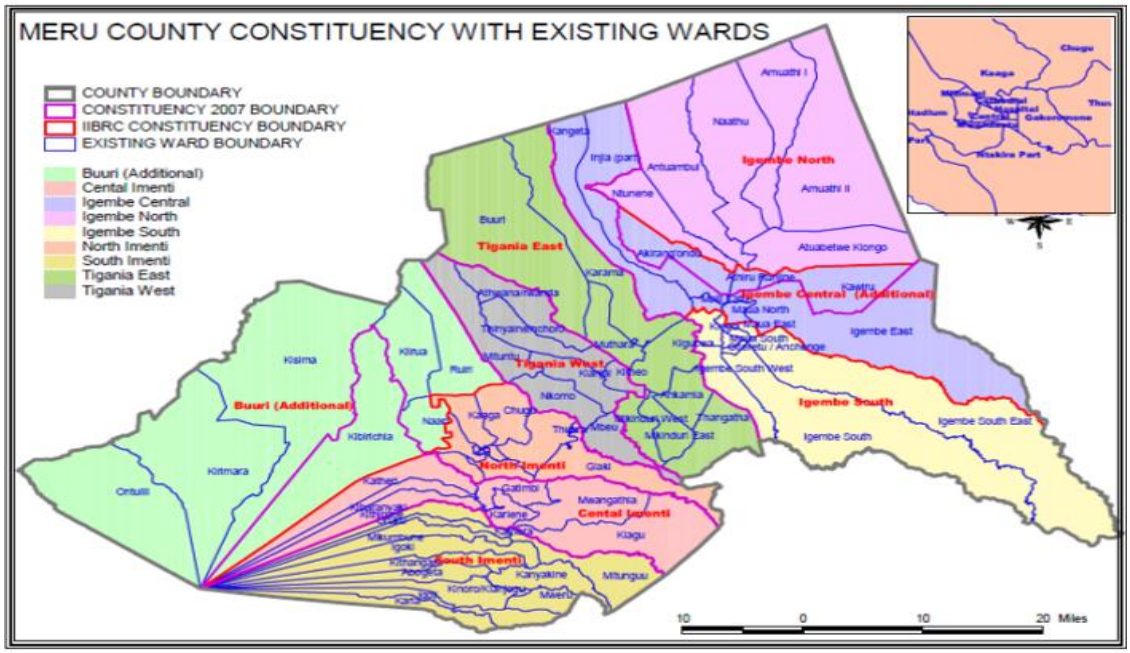
Interview Questions (Leaders) May 2016

1. Tell me about how you came to be a Christian
2. What do you think has influenced the discipleship of Methodist members?

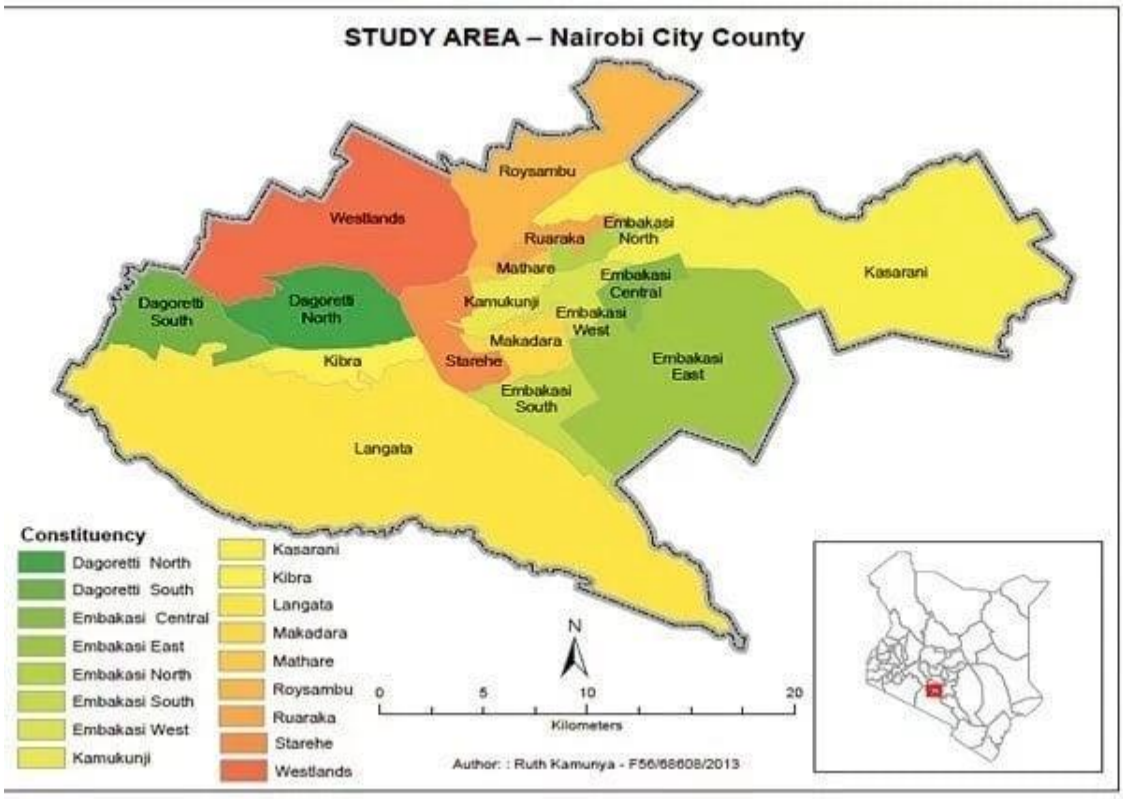
   Prompt; what activities, practices or people?
3. Please tell me what discipleship means to you?
4. Whose role is it to disciple?
5. Tell me about your discipleship experience?
6. How is discipleship in your local Methodist church?
7. How do you think Methodist members assess the spiritual nurture in their church?
8. To what extent has discipleship in MCK been what you expected it to be?
9. Is there anything that the Methodist church needs to change in their discipleship?
10. What role does the church play in a disciple's life?

A Map of Kenya Showing her major towns and her neighbors

A Map Meru County, the first study region



A map of Nairobi, the second study region



A church group performing a song in an ordination service

A family gathering together for evening prayers

Youth and young adults ready to praise God with a song during a Sunday service

A great grandmother ready to speak a blessing to her children, grandchildren and great grand children

Church Members line up to take their fund-raising offering to the altar

Junior Sunday School children performing a poem and singing a song in church

Informed Consent Letter

Asbury Theological Seminary Susan Murithi - Ph. D Intercultural Studies

I am a PhD student in Intercultural studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. I hope to research on the perceptions and people's understanding of the discipleship process in the Methodist church in Kenya. The study will conduct interviews among Christians from select churches in Meru and Nairobi regions. The research will be seeking to understand how Christians perceive the process of discipleship. It will then identify the common themes that emerge from the responses.

To this end, you have been selected as one of those who can give insights in this endeavor. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential. The data will be collected and the information will be coded. Interviews (both recorded and otherwise) and focus group responses will be collated to give a blended view rather than identify any one person with specific information. I believe the findings will enable me to identify major themes concerning the discipleship process in the Methodist church. Finally, I will analyze some potentially effective ways through which the church can be prepared to disciple the 21st century Christians while being contextually aware. The raw data will be destroyed once this study is complete and only remain with coded findings from a pool of responses.

Please know that you are free to either decline or accept this interview. I realize that your participation is entirely voluntary and I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Feel free to call or write me at any time if you need any more information. Phone -…, email- susannkatha@yahoo.com

If you are willing to assist me in this study, please Print your name, sign and date this letter below to indicate your intent to participate. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely, Susan Murithi

I volunteer to participate in the study described above and so indicate by my name, signature and date below:

NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE